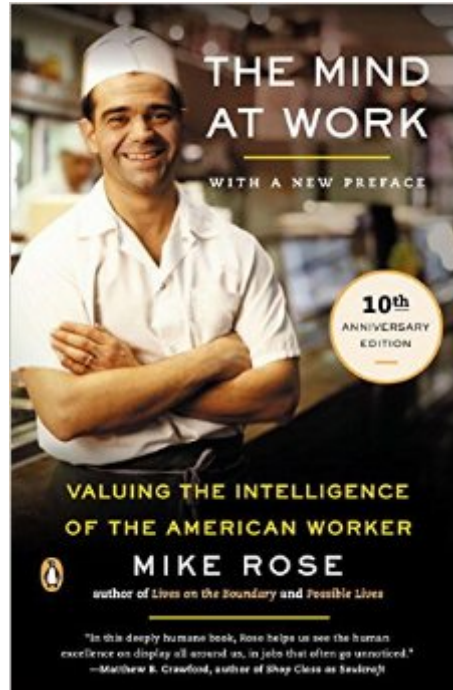


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# The Mind At Work: Valuing The Intelligence Of The American Worker



## Synopsis

Featuring a new preface for the 10th anniversary As did the national bestseller *Nickel and Dimed*, Mike Rose's revelatory book demolishes the long-held notion that people who work with their hands make up a less intelligent class. He shows us waitresses making lightning-fast calculations, carpenters handling complex spatial mathematics, and hairdressers, plumbers, and electricians with their aesthetic and diagnostic acumen. Rose, an educator who is himself the son of a waitress, explores the intellectual repertory of everyday workers and the terrible social cost of undervaluing the work they do. Deftly combining research, interviews, and personal history, this is one of those rare books that has the capacity both to shape public policy and to illuminate general readers.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book forces you to look at things in a new light. When you hire someone to do some work around the house, cut your hair, or bring food to you in a restaurant; you really don't want someone that's too dumb. Otherwise your house, your hair, or your food isn't right. But we have been conditioned to think that these kinds of workers do not need any brainpower. In this book, Mike Rose, a member of the faculty of the UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies grew up in a working class family and witnessed first hand the skills it takes to do the manual work about which he writes. With that as a basis, he begins to look at intelligence in a new, broader sense. Perhaps our traditional IQ tests are wrong. And if we think of these workers, these people as being not too bright, then we shut down opportunities for advancement and it makes you think seriously

about how people will vote in the upcoming presidential election. This is a seminal book. It establishes several points, but it is just a first step. How should we change education to be more meaningful to people who are just as smart but not oriented the same way. Are the traditional three R's simply not applicable? If not, what should we do? We don't want to condemn people who are just slow starters on the traditional path, yet we want to provide the best education possible for all.

Mike Rose is a kind of mix between Studs Terkel and Antonio Damasio, the guy who wrote *Descartes' Error*. In this book he documents the intelligence it takes to do blue-collar and service industry jobs like being a waitress or a hairstylist or a plumber or a welder. While he does this he also pays tribute to his own family, all of whom worked in manufacturing or the service industry. I found the chapter on his mother, a career waitress, especially moving and beautifully written. Rose dispels the notion that blue collar or service industry labor is "mindless" as he provides an inspiring and personal account of the lives of workers -- from the shop floor to the diner to the beauty salon. His discussion of education is wonderful. Rose provides a vision for moving beyond the "skill and drill" approach to education usually doled out to the sons and daughters of the working classes. A terrific read from a writer with deep, first hand knowledge of the lives of America's workers.

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We read *The Mind at Work* in Comp 201 at SUNY Potsdam. Here are some informal comments

from students in the class:--He does belabor his main point--It is an eye opener--It changes the way you think about the working class--Rose backs up his work by using documented research and real experiences from real people.--Dr. Springsteen did not appreciate the citation style--We gave it 3.5 stars as a class average--It could be useful for high school students who have to choose between academic and vocational tracks--Rose's writing style was kind of boring, but easy to understand. He wrote in a person-to-person style, like you were talking to him.--Some of the writing was too technical (but maybe that's because I am a creative writer)--wouldn't recommend to an average person...it's like an acquired taste, you really have to be interested in learning about society and the ideas instilled in us by society--it reads like a textbook until the 7th chapter when you get to hear his argument--with the section on vocational education, he tied in younger generations; interesting generational approach

Mike Rose is a just a plain wonderful writer. He knows how to really evoke a scene, and bring his ideas to life through the stories he tells. In this book Rose explore the idea that much of what we call blue collar and other manual labor can entail high levels of intelligence. In this he is attempting to blur what has traditionally been seen as the hand/brain divide in occupations and study. He engages in this exploration by interviewing and observing people engaged in a variety of trades, from hairdresser and waitress to plumber and welder. He also explore what this might say about our traditional school curriculum and specifically vocational curriculum. A very thoughtful and delightful book.

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