

Brilliant: The Evolution of Artificial Light

By Jane Brox

Download now

Read Online 

Brilliant: The Evolution of Artificial Light By Jane Brox

Brilliant, reminiscent of Lewis Hyde's *The Gift* in its reach and of Timothy Egan's *The Worst Hard Time* in its haunting evocation of human lives, offers a sweeping view of a surprisingly revealing aspect of human history--from the stone lamps of the Pleistocene to the LEDs embedded in fabrics of the future.

Brox plumbs the class implications of light--who had it, who didn't--through the many centuries when crude lamps and tallow candles constricted waking hours. She convincingly portrays the hell-bent pursuit of whale oil as the first time the human desire for light thrust us toward an environmental tipping point. Only decades later, gas street lights opened up the evening hours to leisure, which changed the ways we live and sleep and the world's ecosystems.

Edison's "tiny strip of paper that a breath would blow away" produced a light that seemed to its users all but divorced from human effort or cost. And yet, as Brox's informative and hair-raising portrait of our current grid system shows, the cost is ever with us.

Brilliant is infused with human voices, startling insights, and--only a few years before it becomes illegal to sell most incandescent light bulbs in the United States--timely questions about how our future lives will be shaped by light.

 [Download Brilliant: The Evolution of Artificial Light ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Brilliant: The Evolution of Artificial Light ...pdf](#)

Brilliant: The Evolution of Artificial Light

By Jane Brox

Brilliant: The Evolution of Artificial Light By Jane Brox

Brilliant, reminiscent of Lewis Hyde's *The Gift* in its reach and of Timothy Egan's *The Worst Hard Time* in its haunting evocation of human lives, offers a sweeping view of a surprisingly revealing aspect of human history--from the stone lamps of the Pleistocene to the LEDs embedded in fabrics of the future.

Brox plumbs the class implications of light--who had it, who didn't--through the many centuries when crude lamps and tallow candles constricted waking hours. She convincingly portrays the hell-bent pursuit of whale oil as the first time the human desire for light thrust us toward an environmental tipping point. Only decades later, gas street lights opened up the evening hours to leisure, which changed the ways we live and sleep and the world's ecosystems.

Edison's "tiny strip of paper that a breath would blow away" produced a light that seemed to its users all but divorced from human effort or cost. And yet, as Brox's informative and hair-raising portrait of our current grid system shows, the cost is ever with us.

Brilliant is infused with human voices, startling insights, and--only a few years before it becomes illegal to sell most incandescent light bulbs in the United States--timely questions about how our future lives will be shaped by light.

Brilliant: The Evolution of Artificial Light By Jane Brox Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1046735 in Books
- Published on: 2010-07-08
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 1.13" h x 6.12" w x 8.68" l, 1.05 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 368 pages

 [Download Brilliant: The Evolution of Artificial Light ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Brilliant: The Evolution of Artificial Light ...pdf](#)

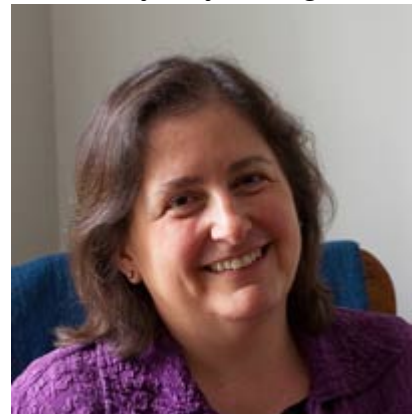
Download and Read Free Online **Brilliant: The Evolution of Artificial Light** By Jane Brox

Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Amazon Best Books of the Month, July 2010: In *Brilliant: The Evolution of Artificial Light*, Jane Brox illuminates the fascinating and forgotten history of man-made light, tracing its development through centuries of sputtering, smoking candles, to the gradual refinement of gas and, finally, electric light. Brox captures the sense of wonder that permeated the Chicago World's Fair as electric light lit up the "White City," and shows how quickly we became reliant on electric light, recounting the trepidation and anxiety that accompanied the mandatory blackouts of World War II and the power outages that have plagued New York City's power grid since the 1960s. Brox also addresses the unexpected consequences of light pollution, detailing the struggles of astronomers who are no longer able to see stars, and migrating birds that confusedly circle lit buildings at night until they die from exhaustion. *Brilliant* is an eloquent account of how a luxury so quickly became a necessity, and permanently changed human history. --Lynette Mong

Amazon Exclusive: A Letter from Jane Brox, Author of *Brilliant: The Evolution of Artificial Light*



Dear Amazon Readers,

So much of life as we know it--our long evening hours, our flexible working days, our feelings of safety at night--depends upon cheap, abundant light made possible by the incandescent bulb. Now that new government energy efficiency standards will make filament light bulbs illegal by 2014--and for the first time our new means of illumination may not be as satisfactory as the old--it's the perfect moment to look at the extraordinary story of how we came to inhabit our world built of light.

Just five hundred years ago almost everyone lived at the mercy of the dark. In a time before street lighting, travel at night was always perilous, and forbidden to all but a few. Most people were confined to their homes after sunset--authorities in some towns even locked citizens inside their houses for the night. Within their close quarters, many had no hope of more than a few hours of light in evening--meager, troublesome light cast by one or two stinking tallow candles or oil lamps.

Since then, each century of painstaking progress in illumination has had its own drama. The 18th century's need for more and more light spurred a world-wide hunt for whale oil, which proved to be so exhaustive it

put the very survival of some whale species in peril, while the 19th century race to build a viable electric light involved the work of many scientists throughout Europe and America. In truth, Edison's bulb was not the isolated triumph it often seems to us now. His achievement was only possible after centuries of evolving understanding of electricity, and decades of experiments by dozens of scientists racing to fashion a workable incandescent light.

Edison's light assured cheap, abundant illumination for many, but not all. The democratic distribution of light in the United States depended upon the decades-long struggle by rural Americans to have the same access to electricity as those in the cities and suburbs. And controversies continue: as the demands for energy efficiency compete with our desires to have the light we want, we find ourselves in the midst of a new race for the perfect energy efficient light of the future. And as the grave consequences of light pollution become more and more evident we are faced with the question: How much light is too much?

When you read *Brilliant* you'll not only gain insight into the history of artificial light, you'll find that the surprising, complex story of our illumination is also the story of our evolving modern selves.

-Jane Brox

(Photo © Luc Demers)

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. A superb history of how the availability of ever more artificial light has changed our world over the centuries, from stone lamps in prehistoric caves to contemporary light-emitting diodes (LEDs). No simpliminded technological determinist, Brox (Here and Nowhere Else) appreciates how culture and technology have affected each other at every stage. She repeatedly reveals how humankind™s increasing ability to extend the hours of light available for work and for leisure has been critical to the evolution of societies almost everywhere. Her readings of, for example, prehistoric southern French caves, medieval and early modern villages, whaling and other ships, industrializing cities, Chicago™s White City of 1893, and wartime and peacetime blackouts are invariably fascinating and often original. In addition, she conveys technical information clearly and concisely. Brox™s concluding portions, about the unexpected negative effects of too much artificial light on observatories in southern California and elsewhere, are provocative and dismaying. With Brox™s beautiful prose, this book amply lives up to its title.

Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

Brox's intriguing blend of science, cultural analysis, and social history drew diverse reactions from critics. While the *Boston Globe* and the *Washington Post* would have preferred a tightened focus on technology, others applauded her ability to illuminate the relationships between and interdependence of culture, politics, economics, and science. Brox may not be an authority on such matters, but whatever she lacks in expertise, she makes up in enthusiasm and rigorous research. Her elegant writing, engaging characterizations, succinct technical explanations, and vivid evocations of a darkened nighttime world that no longer exists compensate for a meandering narrative and some debatable conclusions. Readers may never look at their bedside lamps in the same way again.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Mary Davis:

As people who live in often the modest era should be upgrade about what going on or info even knowledge to make them keep up with the era that is always change and move ahead. Some of you maybe will update themselves by reading through books. It is a good choice in your case but the problems coming to you actually is you don't know what one you should start with. This Brilliant: The Evolution of Artificial Light is our recommendation so you keep up with the world. Why, since this book serves what you want and want in this era.

John Householder:

Reading a guide can be one of a lot of pastime that everyone in the world adores. Do you like reading book and so. There are a lot of reasons why people love it. First reading a e-book will give you a lot of new data. When you read a book you will get new information simply because book is one of a number of ways to share the information or perhaps their idea. Second, studying a book will make you more imaginative. When you examining a book especially fictional book the author will bring someone to imagine the story how the personas do it anything. Third, you could share your knowledge to some others. When you read this Brilliant: The Evolution of Artificial Light, you may tells your family, friends along with soon about yours reserve. Your knowledge can inspire others, make them reading a publication.

Ann Foley:

Beside this kind of Brilliant: The Evolution of Artificial Light in your phone, it may give you a way to get nearer to the new knowledge or information. The information and the knowledge you can got here is fresh from oven so don't end up being worry if you feel like an old people live in narrow town. It is good thing to have Brilliant: The Evolution of Artificial Light because this book offers to you readable information. Do you at times have book but you would not get what it's exactly about. Oh come on, that wil happen if you have this with your hand. The Enjoyable arrangement here cannot be questionable, similar to treasuring beautiful island. Techniques you still want to miss the item? Find this book and also read it from at this point!

Hoyt Knapp:

Don't be worry for anyone who is afraid that this book may filled the space in your house, you can have it in e-book technique, more simple and reachable. This Brilliant: The Evolution of Artificial Light can give you a lot of pals because by you taking a look at this one book you have thing that they don't and make anyone more like an interesting person. This book can be one of one step for you to get success. This e-book offer you information that maybe your friend doesn't recognize, by knowing more than different make you to be great people. So , why hesitate? We should have Brilliant: The Evolution of Artificial Light.

**Download and Read Online Brilliant: The Evolution of Artificial
Light By Jane Brox #NR9H0WTJA3F**

Read Brilliant: The Evolution of Artificial Light By Jane Brox for online ebook

Brilliant: The Evolution of Artificial Light By Jane Brox Free PDF d0wnl0ad, audio books, books to read, good books to read, cheap books, good books, online books, books online, book reviews epub, read books online, books to read online, online library, greatbooks to read, PDF best books to read, top books to read Brilliant: The Evolution of Artificial Light By Jane Brox books to read online.

Online Brilliant: The Evolution of Artificial Light By Jane Brox ebook PDF download

Brilliant: The Evolution of Artificial Light By Jane Brox Doc

Brilliant: The Evolution of Artificial Light By Jane Brox Mobipocket

Brilliant: The Evolution of Artificial Light By Jane Brox EPub