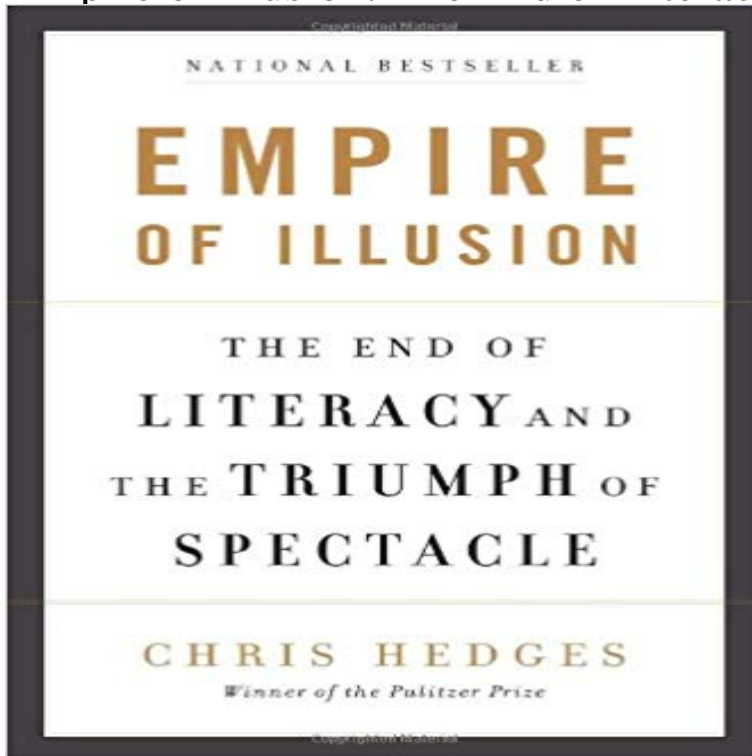


Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle



We now live in two Americas. One now the minority functions in a print-based, literate world that can cope with complexity and can separate illusion from truth. The other the majority is retreating from a reality-based world into one of false certainty and magic. To this majority which crosses social class lines, though the poor are overwhelmingly affected presidential debate and political rhetoric is pitched at a sixth-grade reading level. In this other America, serious film and theater, as well as newspapers and books, are being pushed to the margins of society. In the tradition of Christopher Lasch's *The Culture of Narcissism* and Neil Postman's *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Pulitzer Prize-winner Chris Hedges navigates this culture attending WWF contests, the Adult Video News Awards in Las Vegas, and Ivy League graduation ceremonies to expose an age of terrifying decline and heightened self-delusion.

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