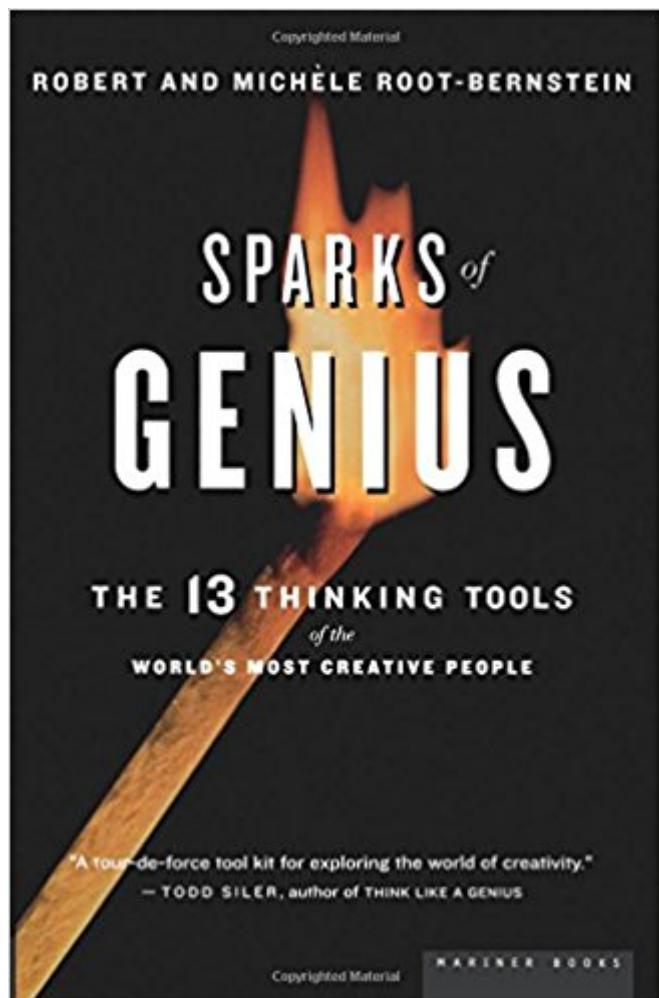


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# Sparks Of Genius: The Thirteen Thinking Tools Of The World's Most Creative People



## **Synopsis**

Creativity isn't born, it's cultivatedâ "this innovative guide distills the work of extraordinary artists and thinkers to show you how.Â All the imagination needs to be fruitful is exercise. Robert and Michele Root-Bernstein identify the thinking tools employed by history's greatest creative mindsâ "from Albert Einstein and Jane Goodall to Amadeus Mozart and Virginia Woolfâ "so that anyone with the right mix of inspiration and drive can set their own genius in motion. With engaging narratives and ample illustrations, Robert and Michele Root-Bernstein investigate cognitive tools as diverse as observing, imaging, recognizing patterns, modeling, playing, and more to provide "a clever, detailed and demanding fitness program for the creative mind" (Kirkus Reviews).

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Operating on the arguable assumption that creative thinking is essentially pre-verbal, intuitive and emotional, the Root-Bernsteins (Honey, Mud, Maggots, and Other Medical Marvels) outline 13 "tools" that help translate spontaneous imaginative experiences into specific media, such as painting, music, scientific experiments and poetry. Among the techniques they identify and describe are "imaging," "abstracting," "body thinking" and "empathizing." Although there is considerable overlap between categories (for example, in the sections on "analogizing" and on "recognizing patterns"), the Root-Bernsteins succeed in defining each category's uniqueness. Freely acknowledging that they are not asserting anything startlingly novel, the authors present an impressive number of firsthand accounts of the creative process, from Albert Einstein and Merce

Cunningham to Oliver Sacks and Charles Ives. Some may have trouble accepting the premise that all creative thinking--whether for poetic composition or scientific experiment, and regardless of the thinker's native culture or language--is "universally" categorizable, but the authors make a strong case for a view that is becoming increasingly popular. They conclude with a list of suggestions for how to transform education from the elementary level up so that it is better suited to our demanding, multidimensional culture. (Jan.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Are there special thinking strategies that characterize genius? How did the Einsteins, Freuds, Picassos, Galileos, and Mozarts come up with their ideas? The Root-Bernsteins, Robert (physiology professor, Michigan State Univ.) and Mich?le (history and writing teacher), have been studying creativity for more than a decade. Using results from these studies, they have identified the following 13 thinking tools to help us tap into our own personal genius and free our minds to be more creative: observing, imaging, abstracting, recognizing patterns, forming patterns, analogizing, body thinking, empathizing, dimensional thinking, modeling, playing, transforming, and synthesizing. The book is well written and easy to follow, with each chapter containing a thorough discussion of each tool. An outstanding section of "Minds-on-Resources" assists the reader in using the tools. Scholarly and inspiring, this book is highly recommended for psychology and education collections in academic and large public libraries.-Elizabeth Goeters, Roswell, GA Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

It is such a pleasure to write a review of a book of this caliber. I don't have to balance what is good with what is not so good, because "Sparks of Genius" is an excellent, superb book, from start to finish. I would have only one small addition to one of the chapters, which I will mention below. I think that "Sparks of Genius" is the first book I have ever read on the subject of how to develop genius, but I cannot imagine a better compilation of what it takes to foster and inspire genius and creativity in people. The main reason for this is that the authors base their material on how creative people in the arts, sciences, etc., acquire and develop their skills, and every chapter except the last one (appropriately) are full of firsthand examples from people of genius and creativity in (almost!) all walks of life. Yet the authors themselves exhibit their own kind of genius in organizing the material, writing chapter after chapter with genuine vision and clarity, and most importantly, after intellectually explaining "sparks" such as observing, imaging, analyzing, and empathizing, give specific, generally uncomplicated, exercises on how to develop these skills. Throughout the book the authors

demonstrate that people in very diverse walks of life exhibit the same "sparks of genius" in their work, which I find quite inspiring in itself. In this way they themselves exemplify the value of "synthesis," perhaps the key that links all the methods they depict. The book is a call to "rethink thinking," to teach cross-discipline learning, and I feel that the methods discussed in the book, and then discussed specifically in the context of education in the final chapter, would be invaluable as educational tools. I believe that if children's education could be fostered along the lines of these tools of creative genius, if children could be taught to use their own internal resources instead of relying on the obvious external garbage such as TV and video games, the improvement to society would be tremendous. My favorite chapter in the book is called "Empathizing," where the authors discuss what artists and scientists do to go inside of whomever or whatever they are portraying (actors), drawing (artists), treating (physicians), as well as other real-life examples. My only small addition to "Sparks of Genius" would be in the penultimate chapter, called "Synthesizing," some mention of the "gestalt" in experiencing the whole in music, art, etc. I liked this term from personal experience and from books on gestalt therapy that came out some time ago, and it's a very intuitive concept that fits in well with the chapter's discussion. I cannot recommend this book highly enough!

I agree with Robert and Michele Root-Bernstein: "By half-understanding the nature of thinking, teachers only half-understand how to teach and students only half-understand how to learn." If true and I am convinced that it is, the knowledge exchanges to which the Root-Bernsteins refer include both formal and informal education. Whatever the nature and extent of the given teaching-learning situation, "it is imperative that we learn to use the feelings, emotions, and intuitions that are the bases of creative imagination. That is the whole point of gourmet thinking and education." Since this book was published more than a decade ago, there has been significant research conducted on metacognition - especially creative thinking -- that adds to the support of several of the Root-Bernsteins' key points. For example, as they explain, "Creative thinking in all fields occurs preverbally, before logic and linguistics comes into play, manifesting itself through emotions, intuitions, images, and bodily feelings." Only by formulating a new conception of knowledge can we formulate a new form of both formal and informal education. The Root-Bernsteins wrote this book to explain how to do that. More specifically, they studied some of the world's most creative thinkers in the arts and sciences, then share in this book what they learned from them. Consider these two quotations, first from Paul Horgan: "Illusion is first of all needed to find the powers of which the self is capable

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