



As you read *Proust was a Neuroscientist*, consider the following overarching questions.

1. At the beginning of the book, Lehrer sets out to show the relationship between science and art. How does he achieve this in each of the chapters?
2. How does the application of science to each of the artistic endeavors further the artist's product? Does the science in any way inhibit the artist?
3. Lehrer shows that there is a cost to reducing everything to atoms and acronyms and genes. What is meant by saying that measurement is not the same as understanding? How can our focus on measurement limit our true understanding of a concept?
4. How do you think American society views art and science? Do we think of these endeavors as complementary or mutually exclusive? How could we as a society improve ourselves and solve some of our most pressing problems by combining these two modes of thought? Choose a specific problem we are facing today—the economy, environmental degradation, poverty, Iraq— and think about how the interplay between art and science could help to solve it.
5. Think about your own life. Are you an athlete? Musician? Mathematician? How might some of your pursuits be influenced by both art and science? How could you further the influence of either mode of thought to improve your craft?



### ***Proust was a Neuroscientist Scavenger Hunt***

Read each chapter in greater detail and find the answers to the following questions. You will get the answers to these questions in your discussion groups in September.

1. Herbert Spencer broke the heart of the first person that you need to identify.
2. Mark Twain, Edgar Allen Poe, the person identified in question one, and this devoted student of the science of his day all underwent phonological exams.
3. This lapsed Unitarian preacher and transcendentalist strongly influenced the work of the individual identified by question two.
4. You know you have the right answer to question 1 if the person you identified and researcher Elizabeth Gould shared similar ideas about the plasticity of the mind. Gould's work involving this phenomenon served to further support the idea of brain plasticity.
5. Continuing the theme of plasticity, this individual's faith in our mind's plasticity elicited a large scale that made him famous.
6. The person identified in question 5 was of the belief that art could change the brain. This belief was later proved by the discover of reinforcing positive feedback loops in the brain which utilize this specific brain chemical or neurotransmitter.
7. Human nature was the main focus of this person, whose own experience with mental illness led to a startling realization of the true meaning of the "self." What did this literary giant discover about the nature of the "self?"
8. The person who is spoken about in question 7 alluded to the works of this man in an essay she wrote about the post impressionist movement.



### **More on Jonah Lehrer**

If you liked *Proust was a Neuroscientist*, check out Lehrer's website and blog at:

<http://www.jonahlehrer.com>

Read more on the relationship between creativity and science in Lehrer's 2008 *Boston Globe* article on daydreaming:

[http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/ideas/articles/2008/08/31/daydream\\_achiever](http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/ideas/articles/2008/08/31/daydream_achiever)

Watch Lehrer talk about his other book, *How We Decide*, in an interview on *The Colbert Report*: <http://www.colbertnation.com/the-colbert-report-videos/217984/february-05-2009/jonah-lehrer>

Read Lehrer's recent *New Yorker* article on self control and delaying instant gratification:

[http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2009/05/18/090518fa\\_fact\\_lehrer](http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2009/05/18/090518fa_fact_lehrer)

Read *Seed Magazine*, edited by Jonah Lehrer: <http://seedmagazine.com>