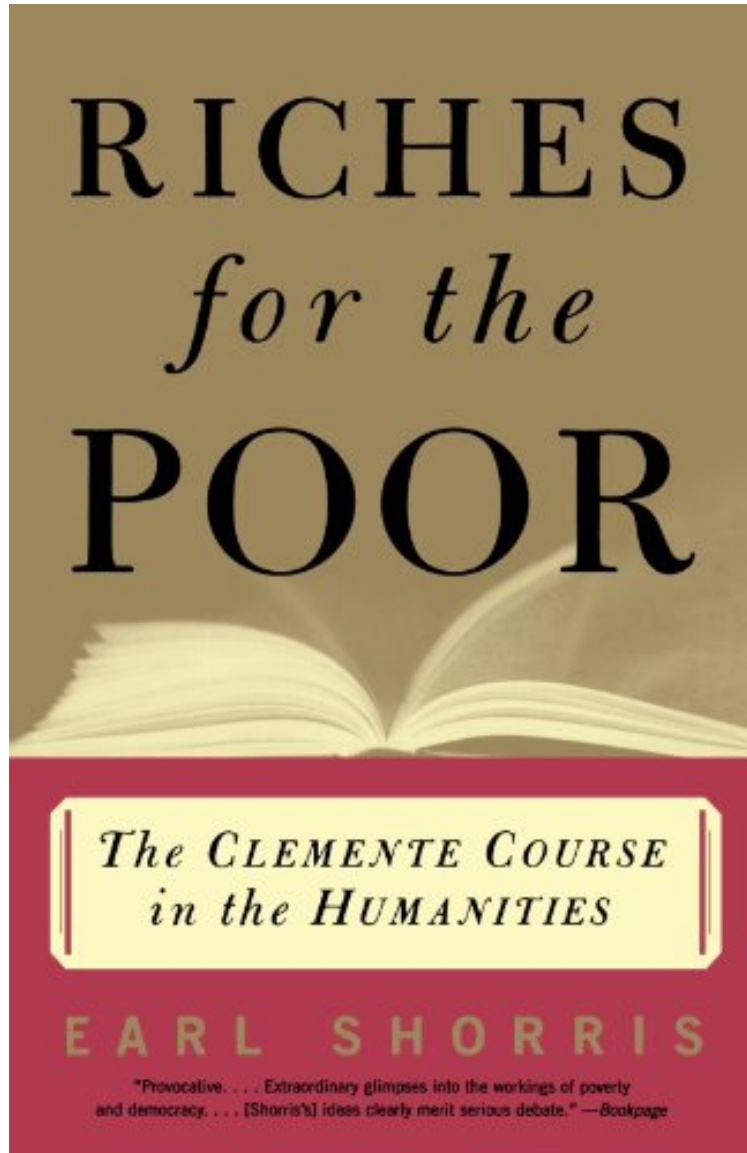


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Riches for the Poor: The Clemente Course in the Humanities

Earl Shorris

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Earl Shorris : Riches for the Poor: The Clemente Course in the Humanities before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Riches for the Poor: The Clemente Course in the Humanities:

16 of 42 people found the following review helpful. Fails to prove this hypothesis
By David G. Young
The author starts the book out by making the case that what distinguishes poor people from rich people is lack of access to "politics." By this, he means politics in the classical Greek sense of civic involvement. He says rich people do and poor people don't because poor people don't study the humanities (philosophy, history, classic literature.) He then hypothesizes that teaching poor people a rigorous introductory college level course on the great works of Western culture will give them politics and bring them up from poverty. He sets up just such a course, and documents the experience. Interesting idea, and fantastic effort toward helping the poor, but the book ends without any significant analysis of whether his hypothesis was correct. He notes that some kids went on to college, and says a controlled study was beyond his scope. He never answers the questions (which he does raise) about the possibility that the successful students may have been self-selecting (by choosing to be in the course, and making it through) or may have been helped through all the attention or a mental exercise unrelated to the humanities. Why on earth did he bother to put the reader through 100 pages of his quasi-religious reverence for the great books, then torture us with 100 more pages of reprinted course syllabuses and personal profiles, if he was never, ever planning to conclude with data (or even organized anecdotes) supporting his case?!
Bottom line: you will only like this book if you are an ivory tower academic with more of an interest in paying homage to the great books than solving problems related to poverty. If this is you, you'll have to be a die-hard leftist not to roll your eyes when he compares Bill Clinton to Jerry Falwell, and claims that social conservatives are unable to learn ethics.
10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Exciting Approach to Education
By epin
"Riches for the Poor" describes the development and application of the Clemente Course of Humanities, a rigorous survey of the humanities that includes political philosophy and diplomatics. Shorris sees the humanities, increasingly removed from public school curricula, as tools for disenfranchised students to become fully engaged citizens participating in democratic society. Now that this book has been out for several years, time has proven Shorris' theories, as new Clemente courses sprouted up in the United States and abroad. They have particularly taken root in indigenous communities where Western perspectives are studied in tandem with indigenous humanities and languages. Students have been inspired by Clemente courses to go back to college or enter college for the very first time. A good read about a promising movement in education.
6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. A Must Read for Everyone!
By Rosie
There are no secrets revealed but before you get a quarter of the way through this book, you will feel enlightened by the absolutely important information Shorris shares in this great book. I really don't want to mention the material in the book because I don't want anything I say to put you off. Be that as it may, within these pages you will find essential eye-popping information that is statistically proven about education in the United States and the role of the Rich elite in creating a "surround" of poverty. Shorris is BRILLIANT and a pretty good writer. He has me riveted, as if I'm reading an engaging spy novel!
HIGHLY recommended!
Riches for the Poor: The Clemente Course in the Humanities
And to think I bought this with the intention of satisfying a college course requirement....

"You've been cheated," Earl Shorris tells a classroom of poor people in New York City. "Rich people learn the humanities; you didn't. . . . It is generally accepted in America that the liberal arts and humanities in particular belong to the elite. I think you're the elite." In this groundbreaking work, Shorris examines the nature of poverty in America today. Why are people poor, and why do they stay poor? Shorris argues that they lack politics, or the ability to participate fully in the public world; knowing only the immediacy and oppression of force, the poor remain trapped and isolated. To test his theory, Shorris creates an experimental school teaching the humanities to poor people, giving them the means to reflect and negotiate rather than react. The results are nothing short of astonishing. Originally published in hardcover under the title *New American Blues*.

Provocative. . . . Provides extraordinary glimpses into the workings of poverty and democracy. . . . The ideas [in this book] clearly merit serious debate. -- BookPage
About the Author
Earl Shorris (1936-2012) was the author of many works of both fiction and non-fiction including *Latinos*, *Under the Fifth Sun*, *In the Language of Kings*, and *Riches for the Poor*. He was awarded a National Humanities Medal by President Clinton for his founding of the Clemente Course in the Humanities, Inc.
From *The Washington Post*
How refreshing it is to see a well-regarded New York intellectual like Shorris teaching poor people--the allegedly uneducable. . . . That Shorris took his passion for teaching to those who probably otherwise wouldn't [make it] is reason enough to honor his life and debate his theories.