

Junk: Digging Through America's Love Affair with Stuff

Alison Stewart



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When journalist and author Alison Stewart was confronted with emptying her late parents' overloaded basement, a job that dragged on for months, it got her thinking: How did it come to this? Why do smart, successful people hold on to old Christmas bows, chipped knick-knacks, and books they will likely never reread? Junk details Stewart's three-year investigation into America's stuff. Stewart rides along with junk removal teams like Trash Daddy, Annie Haul, and Junk Vets. She goes backstage at Antiques Roadshow, and learns what makes for compelling junk-based television with the executive producer of Pawn Stars. And she even investigates the growing problem of space junk—23,000 pieces of manmade debris orbiting the planet at 17,500 mph, threatening both satellites and human space exploration. But it's not all dire. Readers will also learn that there are creative solutions to America's crushing consumer culture. The author visits with Deron Beal, founder of FreeCyle, an online community of people who would rather give away than throw away their no-longer-needed possessions. She spends a day at a Repair Café, where volunteer tinkerers bring new life to broken appliances, toys, and just about anything. Junk is a delightful journey through 250mile-long yard sales, resale shops, and packrat dens, both human and rodent, that for most readers will look surprisingly familiar.

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