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"A surprisingly touching memoir."

—*Entertainment Weekly*

"Eccentric, energetic, and engaging . . . sharply timed, pulling out many swerves and surprises."

—*Publishers Weekly*

"Effortlessly funny and informative... a must for anyone who loves Jeopardy!, or has ever seen it, or is breathing."

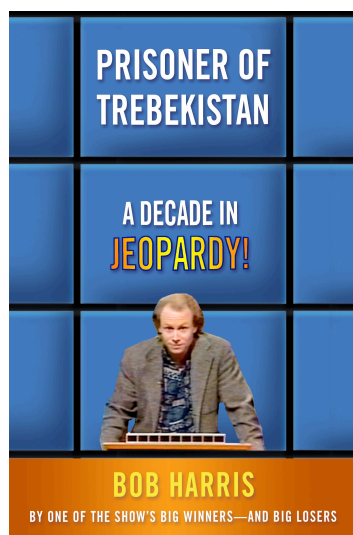
—Joss Whedon, creator of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

# PRISONER OF TREBEKISTAN

A DECADE IN *JEOPARDY!*

by Bob Harris

One of the Show's Big Winners—  
and Big Losers



**Answer:** This working-class guy from Ohio with little real knowledge of Ambidextrous Presidents, Things Made of Rubber, and hundreds of other categories nonetheless plunges so far into cramming for *Jeopardy!* that it changes his relationships, bends his worldview, and literally leads him to the ends of the earth, trying to understand it all.

**Question:** Who is Bob Harris, the *Prisoner of Trebekistan*?

**PRISONER OF TREBEKISTAN** (Crown, September 2006, \$23.95), chronicles Bob Harris's unlikely, even epic, journey through *Jeopardy!*— from not being able to pass the audition test to competing in million-dollar tournaments and even playing on stage at Radio City Music Hall. More than just an inside look at the most popular TV quiz show in history, **PRISONER OF TREBEKISTAN** gleefully explores triumph and failure, the nature of memory, and how new knowledge itself can transform you in unpredictable ways.

As **PRISONER OF TREBEKISTAN** begins, Bob is a struggling stand-up comic with a long-obsolete engineering degree (“Pong Studies” is how he describes his college education) and little real knowledge in most of the liberal arts. After failing the *Jeopardy!* audition exam repeatedly (somewhere between four and six times; he honestly can’t remember), Bob begins to wonder why he’s even bothering, finally deciding to give up completely.

Naturally, that’s the day he passes the test.

Soon, desperate for the extra cash a few *Jeopardy!* wins might bring, Bob embarks on a series of intense study sessions, using his sense of humor to transform conventional memory skills into a refreshingly playful approach to learning that’s as amusing as it is powerful. What follows is not only a suspenseful series of high-stakes wins and losses, but also a growing appreciation of a borderless world that Bob calls *Trebekistan*, where a love of learning reigns, and the smarter you get, the more you realize how much you don’t yet know.

As we share Bob’s journey, we discover:

- ✓ Hidden tactics the *Jeopardy!* audience may never see (such as timing the rhythm of Alex’s voice, playing ahead during commercials, prioritizing the game board, and learning the fine art of letting better-educated players beat themselves)
- ✓ Memory techniques that really work—and that might make you laugh out loud while you’re using them
- ✓ A few good clues about what Alex Trebek is really like
- ✓ How sudden large infusions of cash may *not* be the prize you might expect
- ✓ How winning new sports cars can amusingly effect a middle-aged man’s love life
- ✓ Growing friendships among *Jeopardy!* players—in fact, Bob travels the world with former rivals, and eventually even presides over one opponent’s marriage
- ✓ How subjects like Shakespeare, archaeology, and art history might be kind of cool after all, even to a working-class kid from Ohio
- ✓ How you might go halfway around the world, to places you never imagined visiting and know little about, and yet everywhere you look, still realize that you’ve never really left home

Filled with secrets that only a veteran contestant (13 games and counting) could share—from surprising game strategies to Jedi-like tactics with the buzzer—**PRISONER OF TREBEKISTAN** gives

you the chance to play along with the actual clues that led to victory or defeat, plus candid, moving reflections on how the games affected Bob's offstage life—and vice versa.

An irresistible treat for *Jeopardy!* fans, **PRISONER OF TREBEKISTAN** is also a delight for anyone who loves an exuberant tale that celebrates the unpredictability of life and the sneaky way it has of teaching us the things that really matter.

### **About the Author**

**Bob Harris** is a former nationally syndicated radio humorist who has also written for *National Lampoon*, *Mother Jones* online, and the TV show *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*. In addition to being an undefeated five-time *Jeopardy!* champion, he reached the finals of the annual \$100,000 Tournament of Champions before losing so absurdly that the final episode was actually shown on airlines as in-flight entertainment. In 2002, Bob was one of only 15 players invited to compete in a Million-Dollar Masters Tournament held at Radio City Music Hall. More recently, Bob was a memorable part of the 2005 *Jeopardy!* Ultimate Tournament of Champions. He lives in Los Angeles.

For more about Bob, visit [BobHarris.com](http://BobHarris.com). For videos, photos, and more information about the book, see [Trebekistan.com](http://Trebekistan.com).

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