

GREAT BIG STORIES

IN A SMALL FORMAT

They are the three words every kid dreads in late summer. You can try to avoid them, but your attempts will be in vain. Eventually — whether it be online, on television, the radio, in the newspaper or while innocently walking through the local shopping center — you'll be ambushed by a back-to-school ad.

The impact is immediate and visceral. It's too soon, you're not ready yet, there's still so much you want to do, you can't believe this is happening. Believe it.

You can't stop the Earth from racing around the sun, so you can't stop summer from coming to an end. But there is something you can do to ease the transition back to an academic mindset. If you start learning



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InSites

again in small doses now, the first day of school won't be such a shock to your system.

GreatBigStory.com is a website and app that will teach you a little bit about a lot of subjects, a few minutes at a time. The site features well over 1,000 minidocumentaries on a wide range of topics.

The videos are only a few minutes long, although there is a section called Great Big Films with longer stories. They are well done, and many of them are delivered with a dose of humor.

The stories are organized into six broad categories:

- Human Condition
- Frontiers
- Planet Earth
- Flavors
- Origins
- Playlists

The home page features stories from all the categories grouped into overlapping areas, such as staff picks, music or animation. The page is topped with Today's Stories. Scrolling down the page reveals the other groupings. A large photo with a headline and the category it belongs to serves as the link to the video.

A search icon at the top of the page lets you look for specific topics. There's a Surprise Me link on the search page that generates random selections. There's also a

little globe icon that lets you explore stories based on where in the world they are.

Many of the stories are educational, covering topics such as history, art or science. Others are merely interesting or entertaining, but you still might learn something from them.

The short length of the documentaries makes them easy to digest. You can watch a whole bunch of them in a single session before you know it.

The videos I watched often left me wanting to learn more about the subject. I guess my brain is already more interested in getting back to school than I am.

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