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This Is Water: Some Thoughts, Delivered On A Significant Occasion, About Living A Compassionate Life



Synopsis

Only once did David Foster Wallace give a public talk on his views on life, during a commencement address given in 2005 at Kenyon College. The speech is reprinted for the first time in book form in THIS IS WATER. How does one keep from going through their comfortable, prosperous adult life unconsciously? How do we get ourselves out of the foreground of our thoughts and achieve compassion? The speech captures Wallace's electric intellect as well as his grace in attention to others. After his death, it became a treasured piece of writing reprinted in The Wall Street Journal and the London Times, commented on endlessly in blogs, and emailed from friend to friend. Writing with his one-of-a-kind blend of causal humor, exacting intellect, and practical philosophy, David Foster Wallace probes the challenges of daily living and offers advice that renews us with every reading.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Let me preface my own review by offering some insight into the others: most of the poor reviews this book has received have nothing to do with the book's contents; rather, they harp on the formatting and shaping of the text. Focusing on the format of the book and the fact that yes, it is available for free online, shouldn't factor much in a book review, I think, but to this point, it has. I can see why the publishers formatted it the way they did: to generate recurring sales in that May and June period when most graduations take place, and to make it a pocket-sized, easily consumable text. From a marketing/publishing standpoint this makes perfect sense, and the reviewers hung up on these

details seem to be missing the point of the book. This is why I believe this book deserves 5 stars: any David Foster Wallace follower would be eager, no matter where else the text exists (for free or otherwise), to add to their DFW collection a volume that is so unlike any other he produced. Where his short stories, nonfiction and novels are forever-winding and humanly complex, "This is Water" is a simple masterwork, no less human (and possibly even more so, with its parable-rhetoric) but much less intricate, at least on the most obvious levels. This alone makes the book a welcome addition to any personal library, DFW-focused or not. The speech itself is warm without being sentimental; it's grounded in reality the way few commencement speeches are, yet it achieves a feeling of inspiration that seems to be, at first thought, highly unlikely, considering the general topic of the speech: surviving the banality of everyday life as a functioning adult. For those not familiar with Wallace, "This is Water" provides a thoughtful analysis of the realities of adulthood.

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