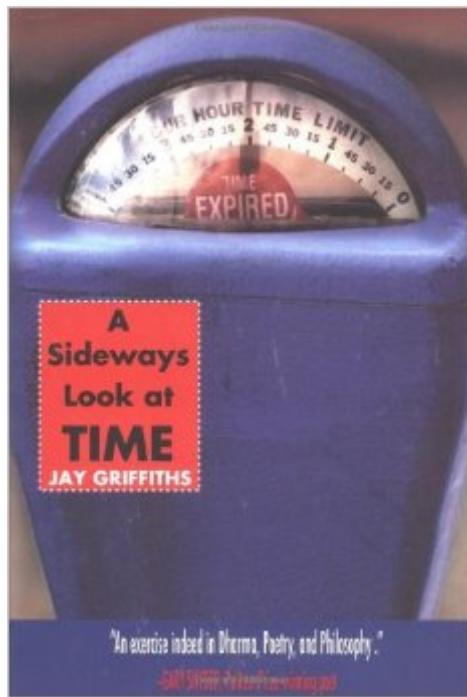


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A Sideways Look At Time



Synopsis

A brilliant and poetic exploration of the way that we experience time in our everyday lives. Why does time seem so short? How does women's time differ from men's? Why does time seem to move slowly in the countryside and quickly in cities? How do different cultures around the world see time? In *A Sideways Look at Time*, Jay Griffiths takes readers on an extraordinary tour of time as we have never seen it before. With this dazzling and defiant work, Griffiths introduces us to dimensions of time that are largely forgotten in our modern lives. She presents an infectious argument for other, more magical times, the diverse cycles of nature, of folktale or carnival, when time is unlimited and on our side. This is a book for those who suspect that there's more to time than clocks. Irresistible and provocative, *A Sideways Look at Time* could change the way we view time-forever.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This was not the book I had hoped it would be. It is a good one, but given its title, its chosen subject, it could have reasonably been a terrific one. Griffiths, perhaps, is too young and extroverted to have selected the more exotic and decisive aspects her subject and spent some, er...time with them. Perhaps it is a matter of temperament. Rather than merely outline the manifold ways with which time is conceived in various cultures, she could have inhabited some of the more interesting constructs and helped the reader try them out, experience them. They are here, in this book--the accounts of peoples for whom past and future are identical, others for whom time is exclusively cyclical, or for whom change itself (as in "progress") is a negative, rather than a positive value--but the author doesn't tarry long enough to immerse us in these non-Western mind sets, help us to see

the cosmos through their eyes. Griffiths is basically a journalist of the chatty, wide-ranging sort that the British are good at (as with the author of "Nathaniel's Nutmeg" or the old BBC series "Connections"). Her methods suggest she had located some gigantic encyclopedia, looked up "time," then followed up all the leads and connections, however tenuous, however founded on mere figures of speech. The resulting verbal carnival hops through all periods and continents, back and forth, sometimes repetitively, flogging her biases (Western, male, linear time is Bad; non- or pre-industrial, female, i.e., cyclic, time is Good) ad infinitum and ad nauseum. Hard to imagine a reader of any stripe not wanting to rise to the defense of our own clock-dominated culture, if only to be contrary. If you dislike puns, stop reading this immediately and look for another book.

I picked up this book while browsing at a large bookstore, which shall remain nameless. I wish I had come to first to read the reviews, because after reading it, I feel I wasted my \$14. The thesis is great: that time is not the neutral, uniform, and universal background feature of our lives that we assume it to be. It is not just the steady flow of life ticking away in the background of all that we do; it is a highly socio-historically and politically-defined phenomenon that need not be what it currently is. There are many ways of measuring and experiencing time. The one we use, agreed upon right around the 1st World War (maybe even a part of that war), is only one such conception of time, and an inadequate one at that. It is tied to the linear, mechanistic thinking of classical continental philosophies, and of the early, mechanistic, reductionistic versions of science that gave birth to capitalism, technology, and medicine as we know them. Other ways of measuring time are more feeling-based and less rationalistic. Native peoples all over the world feel time in a less linear, more cyclic, more seasonal, and more situated way. This book shows these ways of experiencing time have been systematically undermined, and even purposefully destroyed by those with religious, political, and power-mongering motives threatened by these native views of the passage of time. That is the book in a nutshell. That is to say, there is literally no reason to read this book if you understand that thesis and the ideas that follow from that. The presentation of the information is like a shotgun blast of barely connected factoids. The chapters seem to have no flow or organization.

At the first instance let me issue a warning : You are bound to get caught in the tornado : 'A Sideways Look at Time'. Any page will get you hooked. The new literary genre invented by Jay Griffiths is splendid, wide-ranging and illuminating. Shapeless concerns are articulated spontaneously and you will get fascinated with your new outlook in life. Sift through this compendious book for strands of gold. The author may be self-indulgent but her arguments are

irresistible and provocative. Analyze and enjoy the following nuggets of wisdom from her book :1) It is not that time passes, but ourselves. Time is always there... as long as there is life to use it.2) Time has immediacy and radiance. It is a sensual perception and not a notation.3) Time is not inert. We live with the past and present altogether. The past lives in the present spiritual values.4) We live forwards but we understand backwards.5) Have just a few hours everyday that are inviolate.6) Children live in the heart of the ocean of time itself, in an everlasting Now. A child's eternal present is present-absorbed, present-spontaneous and present-elastic. Children have a dogged, delicious disrespect for punctuality.7) Speed is deceptive and alluring, cruel, adrenaline-pounding and fascistic. Language too is driven faster and faster. Markets become super/hyper markets. Words are pressed from text to hypertext, not to supersede but to hypersede themselves.8) In prostitution alone, the phrase 'Time is money' is almost true.9) The earth is sacred. It is not for violation, exploitation or negotiation. It is to be cared for, to be conserved.

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