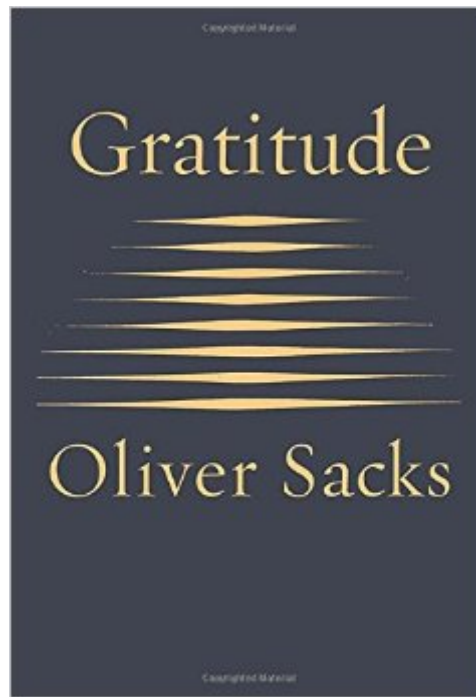


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# Gratitude



## Synopsis

My predominant feeling is one of gratitude. I have loved and been loved. I have been given much and I have given something in return. Above all, I have been a sentient being, a thinking animal, on this beautiful planet, and that in itself has been an enormous privilege and adventure. "Oliver Sacks No writer has succeeded in capturing the medical and human drama of illness as honestly and as eloquently as Oliver Sacks. During the last few months of his life, he wrote a set of essays in which he movingly explored his feelings about completing a life and coming to terms with his own death. It is the fate of every human being, Sacks writes, to be a unique individual, to find his own path, to live his own life, to die his own death. Together, these four essays form an ode to the uniqueness of each human being and to gratitude for the gift of life. Oliver Sacks was like no other clinician, or writer. He was drawn to the homes of the sick, the institutions of the most frail and disabled, the company of the unusual and the abnormal. He wanted to see humanity in its many variants and to do so in his own, almost anachronistic way "face to face, over time, away from our burgeoning apparatus of computers and algorithms. And, through his writing, he showed us what he saw. "Atul Gawande, author of Being Mortal

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## Customer Reviews

I became aware of Oliver Sacks only in the last year or two of his life, through interviews, articles about his essays and autobiography, and his contributions to WNYC's Radiolab. Every time I heard him speak or read his words, I was struck by what a beautiful, gentle man he seemed to be. And when I heard he had been diagnosed with metastatic cancer and was about to die, I was deeply

saddened. His story, which I had just come to know, was coming to an end. This book is a very short read... A collection of some of his final essays. Though I had read some of them before - or heard him tell some of these stories in interviews, reading them again reminds me about what I love about Oliver Sacks' perspective and reminds me about what I'm grateful about in my own life.

A neurologist who gained his greatest renown for his ability to write about his profession in a thoroughly human way, Oliver Sacks passed away in August of 2015. His literary legacy consists of these four short, personal, profound essays written in the last two years of his life as he contemplated the facts of age and dying. The essays are presented in chronological order, beginning with "Mercury," in which Sacks recounts his love of elements and atomic numbers, allowing him to state "at seventy-nine, I am gold." He enumerates some of the negative aspects of aging, such as slowing reactions, flagging energies, the tendency to forget names, and the looming fears of dementia and stroke. But he can still declare that he's looking forward to being 80. "My Own Life" was composed after his diagnosis of a recurrence of fatal cancer. Here he cites philosopher David Hume, who wrote, at a similar juncture, "I now reckon upon a speedy dissolution." He harks back to his attraction to the elements in "My Periodic Table." He notes that on his desk is a little lead casket for his 82nd birthday, wonders if he will live to see bismuth (83), and feels almost sure he will miss the murderously radioactive 84th: polonium. In "Sabbath," the last of the four writings, Sacks recalls growing up in a close-knit orthodox Jewish home, and particularly the rituals of Shabbos: Kiddush accompanied by sweet red wine and honey cakes. But this idyllic cultural picture was fractured when Sacks admitted to his father that he had sexual feelings for other boys. His mother shrieked at him, making him hate religion. Leaving home, he struggled with addiction to amphetamines, but later found stability and solace in the work that inspired his book AWAKENINGS. Thus began a lonely but deeply satisfying, almost monkish existence. Sacks devoted himself to the case histories of his and other patients, those whose unique maladies, always presented with respect, even reverence, provided material for popular books like THE MAN WHO MISTOOK HIS WIFE FOR A HAT and SEEING VOICES. Much later, Sacks was inspired by a cousin to visit Israel and then celebrate Sabbath with his orthodox relatives --- a stopped world, a time outside time. In the certainty of approaching death, "Sabbath" concludes with the author's hope that the seventh day of one's life will bring longed-for peace and rest. Reviewed by Barbara Bamberger Scott

I read Gratitude as soon as I received it, and will read it again, over and over. It is especially comforting to someone moving through their later years. Oliver Sacks always had a special place in my heart.....a beautiful, brilliant, tender soul. He'll be missed.

I appreciate the perspective of gratitude and the brevity is refreshing. Well done. Worth reading daily, May I have such a calm about me

I was completely surprised with this morning's appearance of GRATITUDE on my Kindle; it was the best way to start my day. Sacks has the gift of touching one's spirit with utmost ease and simplicity. He reveals emotions and exposes a naivety shared with all humanity. My own life and gratitude unfolded with every page. Thank you Oliver Sacks.

All of these short essays have appeared elsewhere, but it is wonderful to read Oliver Sacks' thoughts written under the certain sentence of death from cancer. I hope that reading these short essays encourages others to go back to explore the rich delights found in his earlier books.

A wonderful, short meditation on facing death with grace, while cherishing life.

The book, encompassing four essays, that Dr. Sacks wrote within the last year of his life where he reflected on his unusual existential adventure and his courageous partnership with death. Gratitude is an awfully bittersweet, but incredibly courageous journey that Dr. Sacks shares; and, in all, this book is an absolutely beautiful read.

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