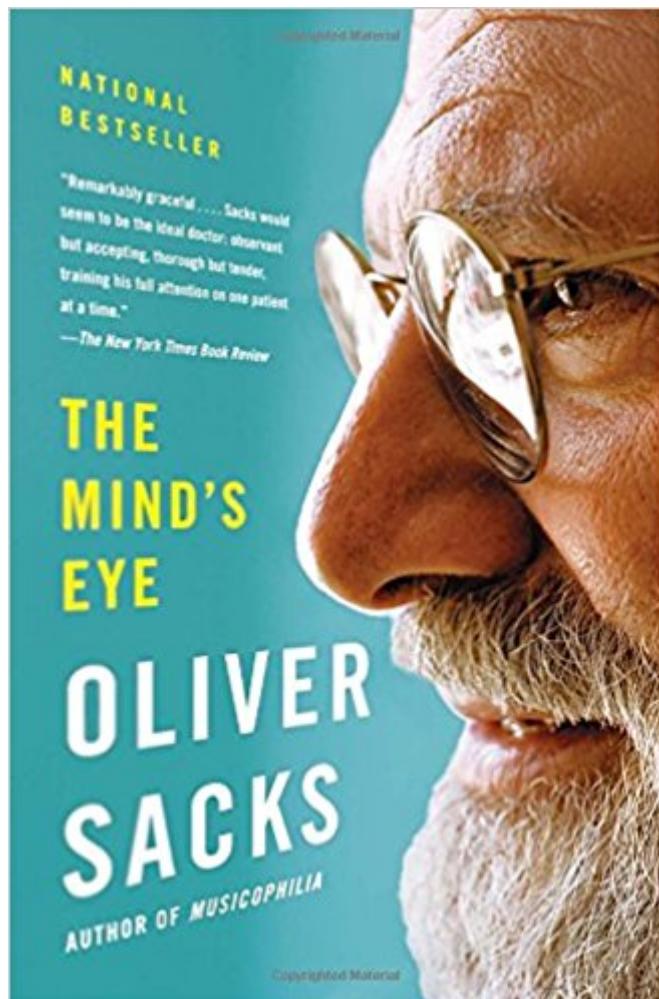


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# The Mind's Eye



## Synopsis

With compassion and insight, Dr. Oliver Sacks again illuminates the mysteries of the brain by introducing us to some remarkable characters, including Pat, who remains a vivacious communicator despite the stroke that deprives her of speech, and Howard, a novelist who loses the ability to read. Sacks investigates those who can see perfectly well but are unable to recognize faces, even those of their own children. He describes totally blind people who navigate by touch and smell; and others who, ironically, become hyper-visual. Finally, he recounts his own battle with an eye tumor and the strange visual symptoms it caused. As he has done in classics like *The Man Who Mistook his Wife for a Hat* and *Awakenings*, Dr. Sacks shows us that medicine is both an art and a science, and that our ability to imagine what it is to see with another person's mind is what makes us truly human.

## Book Information

Paperback: 288 pages

Publisher: Vintage; Reprint edition (October 4, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0307473023

ISBN-13: 978-0307473028

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.8 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 134 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #67,806 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #9 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Diseases & Physical Ailments > Eye Problems #182 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Professionals & Academics > Medical #232 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Psychology & Counseling > Neuropsychology

## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Sacks, a neurologist and practicing physician at Columbia University Medical Center, and author of ten popular books on the quirks of the human mind (*The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*) focuses here on creative people who have learned to compensate for potentially devastating disabilities. From the concert pianist who progressively lost the ability to recognize objects (including musical scores) yet managed to keep performing from memory, to the writer whose stroke disturbed his ability to read but not his ability to write (he used his experience to write a novel about a detective suffering from amnesia), to Sacks himself, who suffers from "face

blindness," a condition that renders him unable to recognize people, even relatives and, sometimes, himself (he once confused a stranger's face in a window with his own reflection), Sacks finds fascination in the strange workings of the human mind. Written with his trademark insight, compassion, and humor, these seven new tales once again make the obscure and arcane absolutely absorbing. (Oct.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Sacks, famous for combining his knowledge as a physician and his compassion for human stories of coping with neurological disorders, offers case histories of six individuals adjusting to major changes in their vision. A renowned pianist has lost the ability to read music scores and must cope with the fear of an ever-shrinking life as her vision worsens. A prolific writer develops "word blindness" and is unable to read even what he himself writes, forcing him to develop memory books in his mind, adaptations that he later incorporates into his fiction writing. Sacks recalls his own struggle to cope with a tumor in his eye that left him unable to perceive depth. He includes diary entries and drawings of his harrowing experience. Sacks, author of the acclaimed *Musicophilia* (2007), among other titles, combines neurobiology, psychology, and psychiatry in this riveting exploration of how we use our vision to perceive and understand the world and our place in it and how our brains teach us to "see" those things we need to lead a complete, fulfilled life. --Vanessa Bush --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book, "The Mind's Eye", by Oliver Sacks, is fascinating, absorbing, and vastly entertaining. Like most of his other books, it is the true story of his personal experiences; this time, with his sight, along with his neurological analysis of what was happening in his eye and in his brain. The optical "delusions" are fascinating, and perhaps difficult to truly appreciate if you haven't experienced them. I have experienced the loss of three-dimensional vision several times, upon awaking - it only lasted a few seconds, thank goodness - and my daughter has had vision problems in one eye due to detachment and folding of the retina - she sees a normal view in the bottom half of that eye's sight, but on top she sees only a quarter of the scene, and it is turned sideways. And the most amazing thing is not what the (physical) eye sees, but what Sack's brain does with that information. Probably everyone has experienced - whether or not they realized it - the completing of a scene over the natural blind spot of the optic nerve connection at the back of the eye ball, or the continuation of a motion that you didn't actually see. Although he mentions some of his other books - "The Man Who Mistook His Wife For A Hat", and "Awakenings" (made into a wonderful movie starring Robin

Williams), you do not have to have read those to appreciate and be highly entertained by "The Mind's Eye." I strongly recommend this book.

Oh terror of terrors, to start losing your ability to see letters and connecting them together into words. Visual anomalies, the stuff of nightmares with names such as alexia, agraphia, agnosia, anomia, prosopagnosia (face blindness) etc. May the odds be with you! A reminder of the things we take for granted and we could lose with no warning and so, like they say: count your blessings! Oliver Sacks delivers another annotated and poignant account of real cases, including his own with a melanoma tumor on his retina, of people faced with these conditions. Another fascinating look at how the brain works and more specifically of how vision is interpreted by the brain. For me, a special new appreciation for life in a three-dimensional world. This is a remarkable testimony not only of the power of adaptability and creativity of the brain, but the different ways people find to cope and thrive despite their circumstances. Oliver Sacks writes his scientific research and explorations of the mind with compassion in his well known flowing prose and captivating style.

In the most tragic of illnesses and most dire of circumstances, Oliver Sacks finds and describes stories of human resiliency, adaptation and fortitude. In his 2010 collection of essays *The Mind's Eye*, the aging, yet prolific, neurologist Oliver Sacks chronicles the lives of five patients, each with different neurological illnesses affecting their abilities to properly see and/or perceive the world in which they live. Although each case is unique, Sacks is able to unite the cases by highlighting a common denominator between all five patients: the ability of each patient, without their full cognitive capacities, to find new and creative ways to navigate their ever-confusing environments. Through his beautifully articulate storytelling, Sacks shows us the power of the human mind to overcome its own deficiencies, thereby working to crush the stigma of the neurologically impaired as "handicapped," or even impaired at all. From the onset of *The Mind's Eye*, Oliver Sacks invites you inside the world of five of his patients, allowing you to experience their daily lives, routines and personalities. In that respect, Oliver Sacks' eleventh book is very much like a work of fiction, with only one difference; Sacks' writing is, at its core, a medical and neurological set of case studies. The collection of essays, if it weren't for Sacks' unique writing style, would be much like a textbook; describing patients as having a certain type of disease and discussing such a disease's side effects. However, Sacks does not let the neurological deficits of the various patients take away any of their personality or character. In other

words, Oliver Sacks’ five patients are people first and neurology patients second. For instance, one of the five patients, named Patricia H., is an extremely vibrant and effervescent middle-aged woman who suffered a stroke that rendered her unable to speak or understand words – a disease known as aphasia. Before describing or even alluding to any form of illness, Sacks uses the first handful of pages to describe Patricia’s life, character and family history. He writes about how she loves to cook – she loves to cook and was married to a man of many parts- a radio broadcaster and a fine pianist who sometimes played at nightclubs. Sacks puts an image in the readers head of a perfectly normal woman - a strategy that alludes to Sacks’ overall goal of the text; to show how neurological diseases may take away one’s ability to talk, see or listen; but, for the most part, they do not take away a person’s personality or charm. Only after he chronicles Patricia’s personal history and unique attributes does Sacks describe how she lost her ability to speak after suffering a blood clot that left her in a coma for weeks. Sacks goes on to write about how Patricia, even without an ability to speak, remained active and engaged in the world. Rather than concentrating only on the disease itself (which he still does, even providing very interesting stories about the etymology and history of aphasia), Sacks focuses on how his patients overcome the disease. He highlights how Patricia, and the other four patients (including Sacks himself), adjusts to the fact that they are disabled, not in body but in mind. Sacks turns everyday patients into modern-day heroes by showing their toughness and courage to stay the course, endure strenuous therapy, and assimilate quite seamlessly back into society. Sacks does this (and more) for four other patients; a woman without stereoscopic vision set on working to be able to see again; another woman suffering from Posterior Cortical Atrophy yet maintaining her love of music and cooking by relying heavily on personal memory; a mystery novel writer who losses the ability to read; and finally himself, an eye-cancer survivor whose life was forever changed because of his near-complete loss of vision. The Minds Eye is, however, still a work of science, deeply relying on neurological diseases, physiology and anatomy. But, to Sacks’ credit, the book has the paradoxical ability to both be extremely scientific yet not at the same time. For example, one of Sacks’ patients (Lillian K.) suffers from Posterior Cortical Atrophy, a progressive, albeit gradual, degradation of the brain’s outer cortex in the posterior (back side) of the brain. In order to provide the reader with needed context, Sacks spends pages describing what exactly a highly complex disease such as Posterior Cortical Atrophy is (you have a sense of how

complex the various diseases are from their names alone). However, wanting his essays to have a mainstream audience, Sacks describes such extremely technical medical conditions in layman's terms; simplifying incredibly complex conditions by using the power of his conversational writing. Rather than being overwhelmed with scientific terms, concepts and labels, the reader is given the proper medical and scientific context in a reasonable and sensible manner. More than anything, *The Mind's Eye* is a bedside book. The collection of essays feels as if it were meant to be read comfortably next to a crackling fire with a hot cup of something delicious in hand. It is much more of a fun read than a set of neurological case studies, and that's the power that Sacks has; he invites you in the world of the neurologically impaired, not from a medical perspective, but from the perspective of a omnipresent third-eye looking in; quietly overseeing the lives of Lillian, Pat, and others. Being a cancer-patient himself, Oliver Sacks wants you to see what he sees in his patients and also what he hopes to find in himself; a super-human ability to overcome, to endure, and ultimately, to prevail. However, *The Mind's Eye*, like most anything in life, does have a few shortcomings. Being a collection of essays, the respective chapters of the book seem to lack coherence. Each of the cases is starkly different than the rest, with each chapter dedicated to each patient (including Sacks' own review of his vision loss). In that sense, each chapter seems like a book unto itself. Also, throughout the various essays, Sacks continually referenced his older literary texts (*The Man that Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, *Awakenings*, etc.) without much explanation or context; references that I assume must have been very confusing for readers unfamiliar with Sacks' quite expansive body of work. Given the book's few flaws, Oliver Sacks' *The Mind's Eye* is still a fantastic read for any type of booklover. Science-oriented readers will thoroughly enjoy Sacks' explorations of various neurological diseases, while the non-science bookworm can find appreciation in Sacks' beautiful prose and the book's unique narrative structure. Because of Oliver Sacks' fantastic ability as a storyteller and writer, I highly recommend *The Mind's Eye* to anyone who wants to navigate the world of the mind and find splendor in the human quality of perseverance.

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