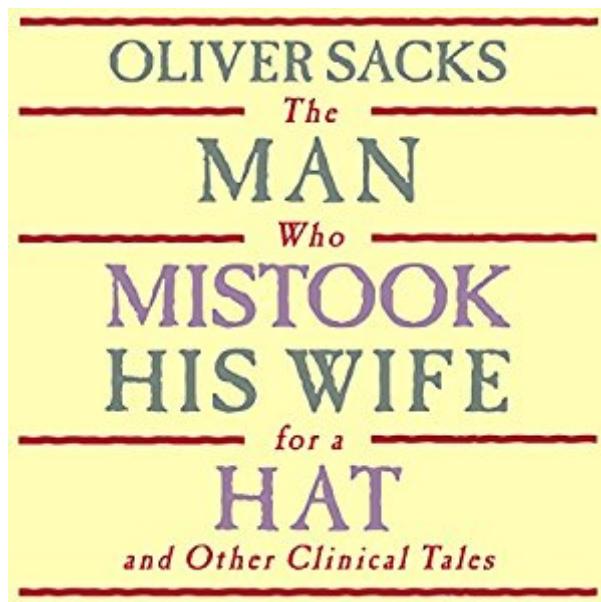


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# The Man Who Mistook His Wife For A Hat: And Other Clinical Tales



## Synopsis

In his most extraordinary book, "one of the great clinical writers of the 20th century" (The New York Times) recounts the case histories of patients lost in the bizarre, apparently inescapable world of neurological disorders. Oliver Sacks' *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* tells the stories of individuals afflicted with fantastic perceptual and intellectual aberrations: patients who have lost their memories and with them the greater part of their pasts; who are no longer able to recognize people and common objects; who are stricken with violent tics and grimaces or who shout involuntary obscenities; whose limbs have become alien; who have been dismissed as retarded yet are gifted with uncanny artistic or mathematical talents. If inconceivably strange, these brilliant tales remain, in Dr. Sacks' splendid and sympathetic telling, deeply human. They are studies of life struggling against incredible adversity, and they enable us to enter the world of the neurologically impaired, to imagine with our hearts what it must be to live and feel as they do. A great healer, Sacks never loses sight of medicine's ultimate responsibility: "the suffering, afflicted, fighting human subject".

PLEASE NOTE: Some changes have been made to the original manuscript with the permission of Oliver Sacks.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book hits on a very important and sensitive topic of demyelinating diseases. The stories are very well written. My grandmother had dementia and I gave this book to my father when I finished, and he loved it. I would definitely recommend it to everyone interested in demyelinating diseases.

Oliver Sacks was an established neurologist who earned his neuroscience degree from the Queen's College, which is a part of the larger Oxford College in Oxford, England. This degree in neuroscience is essentially what caused him to become a famous author in addition to being a neurologist, as the majority of his literary works revolve around the subjects of neuroscience and the brain. Personally, I was excited to read his book *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, as I find neuroscience to be quite fascinating. However, upon finishing the book, I fear that Dr. Sacks has let his popularity as an author from his previous works, *Awakenings* and *Musicophilia*, distract him from educating the general populous about neuroscience and has instead gravitated towards more sensational writings which are themed around neuroscience, as evidenced by *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*. Admittedly, my general viewpoint on *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* is harsh, but that is due to my disappointment in how lackluster the neuroscience content is. However, my hindsight tells me that I too was drawn to the book for its curious title and therefore should not be complaining as much as I am because I may not have been his target audience. The book, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, chronicles the experiences and patients that Dr. Sacks encountered throughout his career as a neurologist. It seems that the purpose of this book was to highlight and explore the more puzzling and bizarre neurological anomalies in a way that is both engaging and educative to both the casual reader and to the person who is more well-versed in neuroscience. The book achieves this through separating itself into four sections: losses, excesses, transports, and the world of the simple. Each of the four sections relates to a specific type of functioning in the brain, an example of this would be how the section titled losses pertains to a client's loss or dampening of normal cognitive or physical functioning as noted by Dr. Sacks. With the book being divided into four sections, it allows the reader to either read the book linearly, as a normal book is intended, or the simply pick a section that interests them and start there. Personally, I felt that the book was too simplistic, which is also probably why it was so popular. I say this because, if you were to flip to a random page in the book, you would most likely be able to comprehend everything on the page. I would even go as far to say that the average person probably would not feel challenged intellectually while they were reading it. However, from a business perspective, this is readability is undoubtedly a strength because if more people are able to comprehend the book and feel comfortable reading it, the more potential sales. However, upon finishing the book, it seemed all too clear that the book's main purpose was only to sell multiple copies, much like a book you might find at an airport and not to broaden one's understanding of neurological concepts. As I had mentioned earlier,

I was a tad disappointed that there was not much neuroscience content, especially when the author is such an acclaimed neuroscientist, which also seems to support my theory that the main purpose of the book was primarily for the sales as opposed to highlighting some of the fascinating neurological disorders. However, before I start addressing how there was a severe lack of stimulating neurological content, I will address that there are a few neuroscience terms sprinkled throughout the book such as temporal lobe, amygdala, and L-Dopa. Both the temporal lobe and the amygdala are some of the most memorable parts of the brain, whereas L-Dopa is a lesser known amino acid. Initially, I was excited when I saw that L-Dopa was included in the book because I am very interested in how amino acids, neurotransmitters, and hormones effect the brain but unfortunately, L-Dopa is the most advanced subject of the book and is also rarely touched upon in the book. Also, the majority of the neuroscience content is only in the prefaces and the post scripts, both of which make up the smallest portions of the book. In continuation with my criticisms of the book, I felt that Dr. Sacks also seems to be constantly rephrasing what he has stated earlier in each of his journals. Most of this seemed subtle, such as bringing up topics that were previously addressed in the chapter or changing his wording around slightly but other instances made me feel like I was constantly re-reading something that I had just read a few paragraphs earlier. I found this issue of rephrasing to be most prevalent in "The Lost Mariner" where Dr. Sacks keeps rewording the term memory loss. I do understand that from a story telling perspective that it is important to illuminate key themes, but in the case of "The Lost Mariner", it almost seems ironic that Dr. Sacks, much like his patient, keeps repeating things that he has established in the past. While I didn't feel that the book was a great fit for me, if the reader is someone who is beginning to develop a curiosity about neuroscience, then this book is a fantastic tool to help satiate that curiosity. *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* does a great job of framing the world of neuroscience in a fun and engaging way through Dr. Sacks' recollections of previous patient interactions. These interactions are worded in such a way that any reader can understand what the patient is suffering from and how the brain is involved with the strange behavior or disabilities that is occurring in the patient. In addition, if the reader was still hungry for more information about the previous cases, Dr. Sacks also does a great job at illuminating what he thinks may have been occurring in some of the post-scripts and he even goes as far to provide current research done on the topic or updates the reader on the new developments in the client's cases. To conclude, while I found this book to be a bit of a disappointment, I believe this was due to me not being Dr. Sacks' intended audience for *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*.

My reasoning behind this is that I believe it was Dr. Sacks' intention for this book to be targeted towards people who have a budding interest in neuroscience and not someone who has or is beginning to develop a background in neuroscience. If you are a part of that audience, then I firmly believe that this book will help to lead the reader down an exciting and engaging trail of bizarre, and at times heartbreak, client interactions all of which are easy and fun to read. However, if you are like myself and crave something more stimulating, then I feel that the book is not a great fit for you and that you are better suited pursuing something more challenging.

I purchased this book for my father who like me has an interest in these types of things. I was recommended this book by a random stranger who overheard me talking about studying neuroscience. Oliver Sacks has been highly revered for his intelligence and knowledge and his style of writing. This book reads more of a story style but they are actual case studies that he partook in. If I can't borrow it from my dad I will purchase one for myself. Looking forward to it!

Hah, one of the most entertaining non-fiction books I've ever read. The topic is fascinating, the author is 100% human, not acting like some superior power over his patients. Really endearing slash captivating slash horrifying read. I got it all with this book, sometimes in the same chapter. If you are a little bit interested in the fifty shades of the human brain, this book will give you even more.

The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat and Other Clinical Tales by Oliver Sacks  
Rating: \*\*\*\* (4 stars)  
Book Length: 243 pages  
Genre: Psychology, Nonfiction, Neuroscience  
Sacks is a neuropsychologist who through his career has seen a number of interesting cases. Sacks started in his field when there was so much unknown about the brain. While there is still so much for us to learn, case studies, like those found in this book, have increased our understanding. The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat and Other Clinical Tales is a classic of psychology literature. It is a collection of case studies that have inspired research and even featured films. Nearly every introductory psychology textbook will include information on the man who actually did mistake his wife for a hat. Although, I found most of that reading more interesting than the actual story in this book. The case studies themselves are pretty succinct. They do not give you a whole sense of the person behind them. Each patient could have an entire book written about them. Many times I was left wishing that I knew more about the individuals. As reviewed on The Book Recluse Review

This book is a collection of fascinating neurological tales. Tales told in Oliver Sacks' wonderful, poetic, and deeply sympathetic writing. Through them, you will enter the different worlds of the neurologically impaired, you will be able to imagine what it feels like to live and feel, as some of them do. And not only is Sacks' book engrossing, it's enlightening and challenging, too. It demonstrates beautifully how the brain is still deeply mysterious, particularly in how it creates our sense of reality. And it makes you realize, that many of the things we take for granted, are tied to basic brain functions, that could be taken from us, at a moment's notice. My immediate thought after finishing this book was: Only every science field has an Oliver Sacks. Reading scientific books would have been much more accessible and appealing. Rest in peace, you brilliant scientist\artist\human.

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