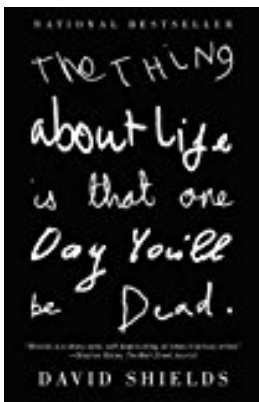


[PDF] The Thing About Life Is That One Day You'll Be Dead

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Description:

: "After you turn 7, your risk of dying doubles every eight years." By your 80s, you "no longer even have a distinctive odor ... You're vanishing." "The brain of a 90-year-old is the same size as that of a 3-year-old." And it goes on and on. David Shields's litany of decay and decrepitude might have overwhelmed the age-sensitive reader (like this one), but *The Thing About Life Is That One Day You'll Be Dead* manages to transcend the maudlin by melding personal history with frank biological

data about every stage of life, creating an "autobiography about my body" that seeks meaning in death, but moreover, life. Shields filters his frank--and usually foreboding--data through his own experience as a 51-year-old father with burgeoning back pain, contrasting his own gloomy tendencies with the defiant perspective of his own 97-year-old father, a man who has waged a lifelong, urgent battle against the infirmities of time. (If believed, his love life at age 70 was truly marvelous.) Interwoven with observations of philosophers from Cicero and Sophocles to Lauren Bacall and Woody Allen ("I don't want to achieve immortality through my work. I want to achieve immortality through not dying."), Shields's book is a surprisingly moving and life-affirming embrace of the human condition, where inevitable failures and frailties become "thrilling" and "liberating," rather than dour portents of The End. --*Jon Foro Amazon.com Guest Review: Danielle Trussoni*

David Shields's *The Thing About Life is that One Day You'll Be Dead* is an addictively punchy, startlingly brilliant exploration of our most essential relationship--the one between parent and child. Shields juxtaposes a storm of astonishing facts about the development of the human body ("By the time you're 5, your head has attained 90 percent of its mature size; by 7, your brain reaches 90 percent of its maximum weight; by 9, 95 percent; during adolescence, 100 percent") with an intimate portrait of himself as a son and father. The result is a naked, honest, and often funny book that forces one to look clearly at the realities of the body--especially the burden that biology imposes upon our inner life--in a fresh and disturbing way. The writing is fast, postmodern, and filled with quotations from such diverse sources as Shields's back doctor and Tolstoy. The style might be dizzying in the hands of a less perceptive narrator, but Shields has the eye of an archeologist cataloging the bizarre traits of an ancient civilization. How Shields managed to compress the whole mess of love, family, genetics, and desire into this elegant, elemental book is a wonder. --Danielle Trussoni, author of

From Publishers Weekly Inspired by the immense vitality of his 90-something father, author Shields (*Body Politic: The Great American Sports Machine*) looks at the arc of a human life in order to come to terms with mortality. Organized into four stages of life--infancy and childhood, adolescence, adulthood and middle age, old age and death--Shields's short, snappy chapters are crafted from personal anecdotes (many featuring his wife and teenage daughter), literary-philosophical musing and enlightening scientific data, examining a wide range of human concerns relating to "the beauty and pathos in my body and his body and everybody else's body as well." Shields also visits historical and contemporary figures, from Sigmund Freud to John Ruskin and Woody Allen, for their thoughts on mortality; says Picasso, "One starts to get young at the age of sixty, and then it's too late." Shield's eclectic approach and personal voice makes this extended meditation on living and dying a pleasing and occasionally profound read.

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