

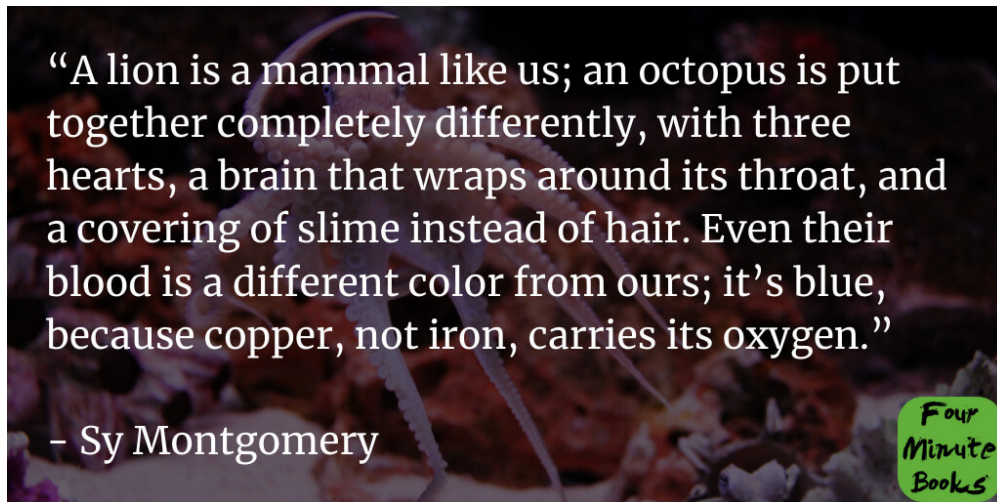
The Soul Of An Octopus Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *The Soul Of An Octopus* will make you smarter about animal life in the ocean by explaining the fascinating abilities, brilliance, and personalities of octopuses.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Recently I heard about an article published in the journal *Progress in Biophysics and Molecular Biology* that octopuses might be from outer space. Yes, you heard that right. 33 respected scientists, in all seriousness, came together and said the octopus may be an alien species that came here from another planet. Needless to say, it was a controversial study. But doesn't it warrant at least some sort of discussion?

In truth, octopuses are a very unusual species. Not just because they have eight legs either; octopuses change color with their mood, have no vertebrae, can taste with their tentacles, and are impressively smart. Need I go on? These funky creatures are pretty other-worldly if you think about it.

Whether you think they are alien or not, they sure are fascinating. In naturalist Sy Montgomery's book *The Soul of An Octopus: A Surprising Look Into the Wonder of Consciousness* we see the world through the eyes of an octopus. In reading his book, you'll learn that octopuses are actually not the dark, scary creatures we make them out to be but rather brilliant animals not that much unlike ourselves.

Here are 3 of the coolest lessons I learned from this book:

1. We've demonized octopuses in our stories, but their actual nature couldn't be further from these narratives.
2. Octopus suckers can taste and they also change color according to their mood.
3. Just like people, octopuses can be introverted or extroverted.

Let's dive deep and discover why Octopuses aren't the scary monsters we might think they are!

Lesson 1: These creatures are more similar to us than we might think.

Despite their sometimes frightening appearance octopuses aren't anything to be afraid of. Part of our fear of them has to do with cultural conditioning. Many films and stories have featured octopuses or tentacled creatures and made them seem like scary deep-sea monsters. But if you can get past the bad rap, you'll find they are incredibly intriguing!

They are the smartest of any invertebrate on earth. Though their brain is only the size of a walnut, they can do some incredible things, like tell humans apart.

Researchers at the Seattle Aquarium performed an experiment where two different people were introduced to an octopus. One would feed it and the other would poke it with a stick. After just a week, the octopus knew to flee from the one who would poke him and approach the one who would feed him.

They also crave intellectual stimulation. **A lot like us, when they get bored they become restless and search for something to do.** An octopus once flooded a neighboring room when it started playing with the valves in its tank.

Octopuses have been known to escape from their tanks to explore. A researcher at the Marine Biological Station in Plymouth once bumped into a wandering octopus on the stairs that escaped from its tank!

Lesson 2: If you were an octopus you could change color to let others know what mood you're in and taste with your suckers.

Remember mood rings? Those silly rings that would supposedly change color to match what mood you were in? Octopuses are basically swimming mood rings. Not only does their skin change to blend in with their environment, it also changes to reflect their mood.

When an octopus is excited, it turns red, but when it's relaxed it turns white. If they perceive a threat, they will change color to appear scarier or not tasty. Other times they change color to camouflage with surrounding rocks or sand.

Researchers found that octopuses taste with their suckers. When an octopus is going to eat a fish, it passes it across its tentacles because it prefers to taste food before eating it.

But octopuses use their sense of taste for more than just eating. When working at the New England Aquarium, the author found that the octopuses wanted to “taste” her skin when she took care of them. **When she came they would reach their tentacles to the water’s surface to taste her skin and greet her.**

Lesson 3: Introversion and extroversion are just some of the many personality traits that these creatures can have.

Just like humans, octopuses can be introverted, extroverted, or anything in between. The author came across many personality types as she worked in the aquarium. **One octopus, named Athena, quickly approached her and clung to her as they met. Another, Octavia, was more nervous and it took a few visits before she warmed up to her.**

Like us, they enjoy playing. They like to play with what is called their funnel, or the tubular part of their body for breathing and moving. One researcher placed empty pill bottles in a tank and watched as the octopuses began to squirt water with their funnels at the bottles and bounce them around, much like bouncing a ball.

The author also says they are like humans in how they age and become less active. They become paler, less responsive, and hunt less often. They also lose mental faculties as they age, much like we have Alzheimer’s and other debilitating diseases. The author recalls one elderly octopus who squeezed out of its tank to rest in a crack in the wall until it died.

The Soul Of An Octopus Review

Although it’s a lot different than our usual books, *The Soul Of An Octopus* is a really interesting book that I thoroughly enjoyed! Who knew that these misunderstood creatures could be so fascinating? It almost makes me want to get an octopus for a pet but I’ve heard they get bored and depressed in captivity and I wouldn’t want to do that to one of these amazing invertebrates!

Who would I recommend The Soul Of An Octopus summary to?

The 28-year-old that’s always loved animals and is curious to learn about one of the most curious ones, the 48-year-old biology teacher who’s looking for some interesting facts to share with their class, and anyone that wants to discover why octopuses are so amazing!