

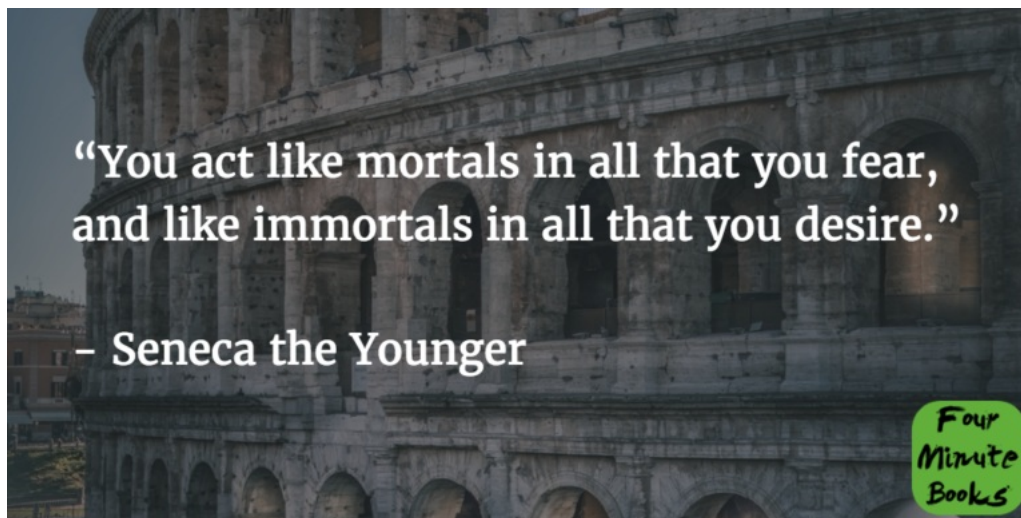
On The Shortness Of Life Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *On The Shortness Of Life* is a 2,000 year old, 20-page masterpiece by Seneca, Roman stoic philosopher and teacher to the emperors, about time and how to best use it, to ensure you lead a long and fulfilling life.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



I had forgotten about this book. I believe I got it as a gift for St. Nicholas' Day in 2014. After hearing Tai Lopez read a few passages from it, I knew I had to read it.

On The Shortness Of Life is the definite call to action to end procrastination, and it's 2,000 years old. *De Brevitate Vitae* in Latin, Seneca the Younger wrote it in 49 AD, as a moral essay in form of a letter, addressed to his father-in-law.

People are frugal in guarding their personal property; but as soon as it comes to squandering time they are most wasteful of the one thing in which it is right to be stingy. ~Seneca

If we had a bank account into which \$86,400 were deposited each day, with the remaining balance being deleted at 12 AM, we'd all be sure to draw out every cent and spend it wisely. Yet, we gleefully give away the 86,400 seconds we're given each day to strangers and senseless pursuits. Seneca will help us change that.

Here are my 3 lessons from this timeless masterpiece:

1. Chasing leisure, luxury and legacy is what makes a long life appear short.
2. You can be busy all your life without ever doing something meaningful, so beware.
3. Your ability to contemplate and appreciate life can never be taken from you, and that's what matters.

I hope you're ready for a few lessons of history that have stood the test of time for ages. Tighten your time pouch, we're about to get stingy where it counts!

Lesson 1: Life only seems short to those, who spend it chasing leisure, luxury and legacy.

A good question to ask yourself, to determine if an activity is worthwhile, is this: *"If I did this for 24 hours straight, what would it amount to?"* If the answer is "nothing" or not much, then you know it's one of the activities Seneca considers the trivialities that make life seem short, when it really isn't.

Three typical kinds of such activities are those supposed to lead to:

1. **Leisure.** He who spends all of his work day fantasizing about the tranquility of retirement, will never truly retire.
2. **Luxury.** He who works only for the next car, house or vacation, will always be worried about either the last one losing its touch or where the next one will come from.
3. **Legacy.** He who hopes for the grandeur of his tombstone, will spend much of his life planning an event he can neither attend nor control.

I'm guilty of the last one sometimes. **Don't spend your life preparing for life.** The life in the future you're working towards may never come, so don't defer what matters to your 50s, 60s and 70s, for they may never come. To close out in Seneca's words:

It is not that we have a short time to live, but that we waste a lot of it. Life is long enough, and a sufficiently generous amount has been given to us for the highest achievements if it were all well invested. But when it is wasted in heedless luxury and spent on no good activity, we are forced at last by death's final constraint to realize that it has passed away before we knew it was passing. ~Seneca

Lesson 2: Don't spend the voyage of your life being tossed about by wind and weather, or worse: other people's vision.

A ship in harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are built for. ~John A. Shedd

To illustrate the difference between merely being busy and living a life of actual value, Seneca draws from naval vocabulary. The above quote relates to giving up your comfort zone, getting out there and living your life. Seneca remarks that *how* a ship fares on its journey matters too.

So you must not think a man has lived long because he has white hair and wrinkles: he has not lived long, just existed long.

For suppose you should think that a man had had a long voyage who had been caught in a raging storm as he left harbor, and carried hither and thither and driven round and round in a circle by the rage of opposing winds? He did not have a long voyage, just a long tossing about. ~Seneca

The ways in which people get tossed about are plentiful:

- Some adjust course far too often.
- Some never adjust course at all.
- Some know they should adjust, but say they will do so later, which they never do.

Worst of all, however, is to let someone else's vision be the wind behind *your* sails. What's the point of spending your life worried about things that are not yours to worry about, working for someone who's set sail to where you never want to go?

Lesson 3: What's truly important in life can never be taken from you.

Once you see past possessions, pastime and power, Seneca says you will find peace in the fact that true self-worth comes from within. You're independent and self-reliant when you ground your thinking in the following two truths:

1. **You will *always* be able to contemplate life and its deepest meanings.**
2. **You will *always* be afforded with the choice to appreciate its beauty.**

No other mortal can ever take these two things from you. In sickness and in health, in poverty and wealth, in good times and in bad, they will always be yours. So exercise these powers and take solace in their presence.

Being offended by other people's actions and words is a choice. But so is being content. Choose the latter and you will live, in any sense of the word, a long life.

On The Shortness Of Life

On The Shortness Of Life is a brilliant book. It's only 20-ish pages long, but one of the most powerful written works I've ever held in my hands. It's available for free online, but I highly recommend you get *the Penguin Great Ideas Edition* to mark, note, keep and remind yourself that...

We are not given a short life but we make it short, and we are not ill-supplied but wasteful of it.

Life is long if you know how to use it.

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What else can you learn from the blinks?

- Who Seneca's most famous pupil was

- What a great funeral really looks like
- Where you can get the best education
- What the best motivator is
- Why it's important to enjoy life by doing nothing from time to time

Who would I recommend the On The Shortness Of Life summary to?

The 17 year old, who's all wrapped up in who's cool and who's not in school, the 56 year old, who has the second half of her life to go, and only now realizes she's wasted a lot of time, and anyone who feels like their life isn't truly in their own hands.