

Great Thinkers Summary

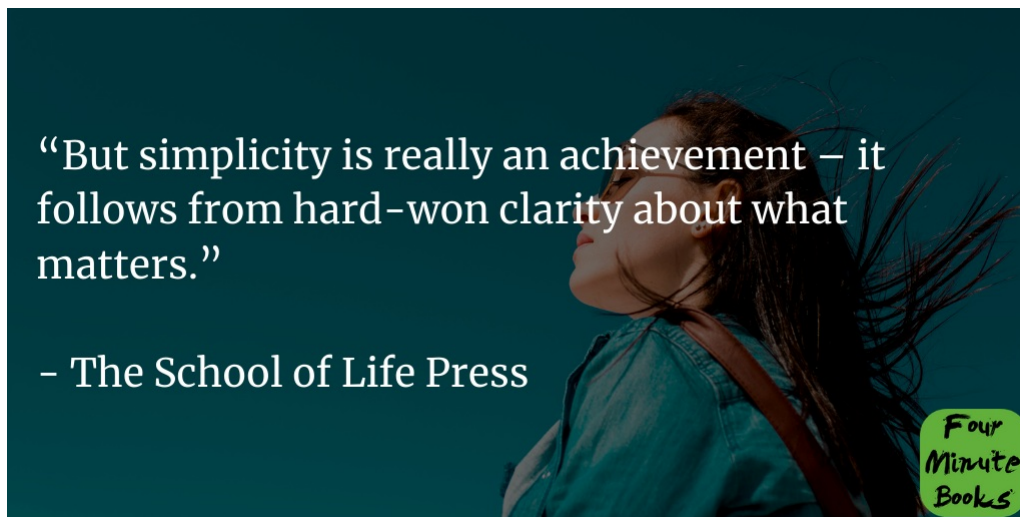


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1-Sentence-Summary: *Great Thinkers* shows how much of what's truly important in life can be solved by the wisdom left behind by brilliant minds from long past.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



When I was a kid, we had a big colorful book around the house. It was Aesop's Fables. My dad would often refer to those stories to better illustrate some valuable life lessons for me and my brothers.

Those fables really did help communicate good moral standards for living. And it's easy for kids to relate to these stories as many are told through animals and nature.

I still remember many of the popular ones – you might recognize some of them yourself. Everyone knows *The Tortoise and the Hare*! I also recall, *The Fox and the Grapes*, *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*, *The Ant and the Grasshopper*.

Aesop was a Greek storyteller who died in 564 BCE. This book, *Great Thinkers; Simple Tools from 60 Great Thinkers to Improve Your Life Today* showcases many examples of other greats and why their life lessons have endured for centuries and are still relevant for us today.

Here are 3 lessons I've learned from brilliant thinkers from the past:

1. Stoicism can help people to be courageous and steadfast in the face of life's trials.
2. Lao Tzu taught that life can be sweet if you follow its natural flow and take regular contemplation time.

3. Jane Jacobs showed that if big cities are to be more comfortable and enjoyable they needed to be dense ecosystems.

Whaddaya say we start learning from some of the smartest people in history?

Lesson 1: Famous stoic philosophers aim to help people overcome anxiety and paranoia in life's sufferings.

Great stoic philosophers dating back to ancient Greece and Rome at around the third century BC., believed that it was senseless getting emotionally caught up in life's many ups and downs. Men like Seneca the Younger and Emperor Marcus Aurelius believed that one true source of pleasure in life is virtue.

Curbing anxiety is only one of the many benefits where the stoic practice has proved beneficial. They believe that anxiety can develop as a result of two possible outlooks – harboring great fears about what might occur, or having very high hopes for things that might not come to pass.

Stressing about an upcoming presentation or public speech or maybe the fear of blowing it, losing your job and ending up homeless could be causes for great anxiety.

The stoics might recommend that you embrace your fears head-on. Maybe get a taste of the homeless experience by spending a few days eating very little and sleeping outdoors on a bench. Once you are familiar with the worst-case scenario, the prospect of homelessness might not be as scary.

Stoics also believe in not blaming yourself when something doesn't work out. And by the same token, it will keep you from getting a big head when things align in a good way for you.

Lesson 2: Chinese philosopher, Lao Tzu taught that much like an ocean, life can be sweet and harmonic under the turbulent surface.

The Chinese philosopher, Lao Tzu is believed to have lived during the sixth century BC.

There's a popular story surrounding Lao Tzu putting him alongside such greats as Confucius and Buddha at a vinegar sampling ceremony. Confucius' thinking that people are corrupt, found the vinegar sour. Buddha focused on the world's suffering, he found it bitter. Lao Tzu found that the vinegar was sweet!

This reflects Lao Tzu's core teachings, that life can indeed be sweet if you follow the natural flow. He compares life to a body of water. It's often chaotic on the surface, yet underneath there exists a beautiful world of peace and harmony.

Lao Tzu teaches that nature has its own pace that we should follow, rather than resist. **He believes in the Taoist philosophy that everything will come at its own time – there's no point in forcing things.**

Unless you want a life full of stress and strain, it's better to surrender to the rhythm of life and let things happen in their own natural course. And let things take as long as they need to without forcing them.

Lesson 3: To Jane Jacobs, the social aspect of a city needed to function like a thriving ecosystem to be healthy.

Journalist, author and activist, Jane Jacobs lived in New York City during the 1950s and 60s. She was a huge influence on urban studies and one of the sharper minds to consider how cities could be more comfortable and enjoyable.

She was opposed to such things as building skyscrapers and strangling the city with a network of highways. Her vision for a healthy city was for creating vibrant and visible ecosystems. She argued for streets that were cultural and residential in feel, not just for commercial purposes.

Her concept of a healthy city would include a place for people to work during the day, restaurants where they could lunch in the afternoon, and a theater district for nighttime entertainment.

This would be a working ecosystem with a healthy mixture of people exchanging ideas. This cross-pollination would keep people from feeling isolated and support her argument for increased urban density.

Some critics would argue that more density means more dangerous, but Jacobs pointed out that people tend to know each other better.

Instead of advocating for modern hubs where people bump into each other online, Jacobs encourages people to get out into the streets where they could talk and keep an eye out for their neighbors.

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Great Thinkers Review

Great Thinkers is nice because each great thinker is given their own story in separate chapters. This allows you to pick and choose, or jump around to what most interests you. I only scratched the surface in selecting three thinkers to focus on!

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Who would I recommend the Great Thinkers summary to?

The 32-year-old college librarian, The 41-year-old life and habit coach, and anyone who's ever wanted to travel back in time.