

# What The Eyes Don't See Summary

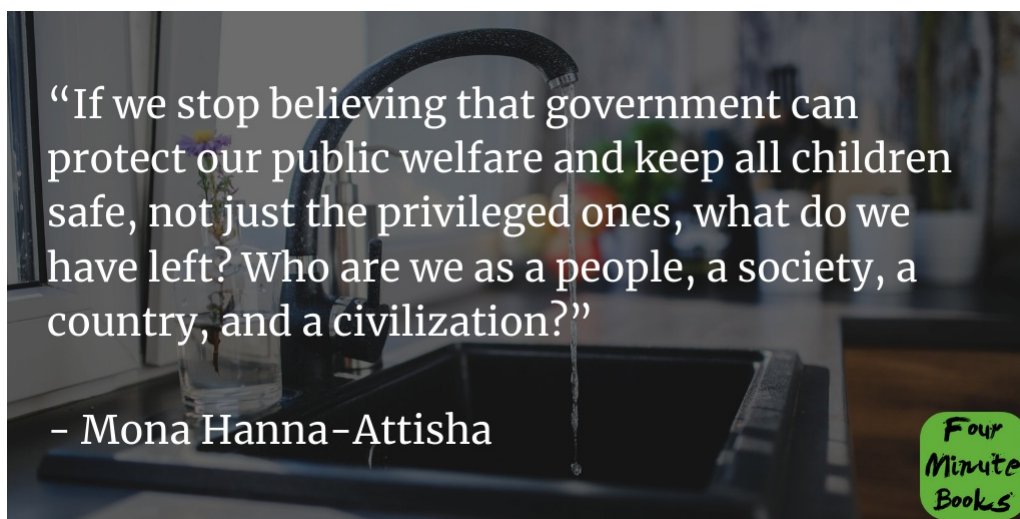
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**1-Sentence-Summary:** *What The Eyes Don't See* tells the shocking and unfortunate story of the public drinking water crisis in Flint, Michigan and how one woman stood up against government corruption and racism to make a positive difference for the city.

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



How would you feel to learn that your drinking water had lead in it? This metal isn't uncommon, but consuming high amounts of it can have disastrous effects on human development.

It can cause many issues, including muscle paralysis, swelling in the brain, kidney failure, and even death. The effects are especially dangerous to children, causing an interruption of development that can make for all sorts of issues in adulthood.

If you'd lived in Flint, Michigan in 2014, these might be some of the issues you'd be worried about. But today, after colossal government failures and coverups, and with the help of Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, the city finally has safe drinking water again.

In her book *What the Eyes Don't See: A Story of Crisis, Resistance, and Hope in an American City* Dr. Mona tells all the dirty details and how she stood up to the corrosion in the government to win for her patients and the city of Flint.

Here are the 3 greatest lessons I've learned from this book:

1. The issue started in 2014 but went unnoticed for too long because the government tried to hide it.
2. As the director of the pediatric residency program at a medical center in Flint, Dr. Mona did all she could to protect the children of the city.
3. After a mess of excuses and coverups, the state finally admitted the problem was real and things began to improve.

Are you ready for a wild story that will probably mildly infuriate you? Let's dig right in!

## **Lesson 1: Flint's drinking water crisis began in 2014, but government lies kept it hidden.**

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In 2011, Flint was in financial trouble. A provision of US law declares that a state's governor can send an emergency manager (EM) to help in situations like this. Receiving their own EM would spark the beginning of the issues in Flint.

The mayor basically loses their power anytime an EM is installed in a city. That means that while the EM is looking for ways to cut costs, they don't care much about how their actions will hurt citizens.

In an effort to decrease spending, officials changed the source of Flint's drinking water in April of 2014. Before then, the city had to pay to access Lake Huron's water. Now, they would get drinking water from the Flint river.

**But this was a factory town, and waste and runoff had been poisoning the river for decades.** The water had to be tested to make sure it wouldn't corrode the pipes, which could leak lead into it.

For some reason, however, Flint didn't test their water. GM's plant found out about the lead in it only six months after the change because the water was corroding its auto parts. They go a waiver to change back to lake Huron water.

But the rest of Flint wasn't so lucky. They weren't even aware of the issue until Dr. Mona became involved.

## **Lesson 2: Dr. Mona wanted to do everything in her power to help the people of Flint, especially the children within her care.**

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Through another fascinating story all on its own, Mona Hanna-Attisha, born of Iraqi parents in the UK, became the director of the pediatric residency program in a medical center in Flint. Her primary concern has always been for her patients-the children of Flint.

A friend of hers with a job in D.C. was the first to tip Mona off to what was going on with the water in her city. The acquaintance revealed that, although the news said otherwise, a leaked memo revealed the dangerously high lead levels in Flint's water.

As Mona began looking into the amount of lead in blood samples of children, she discovered the worst. **There was a spike in the number of kids with higher levels of lead in their blood right after the change of water source.**

Considering her own two daughters, Mona had a difficult time thinking about anything but Flint's water crisis. Knowing it was getting worse by the day, she began reaching out for help.

After connecting with environmental engineer Marc Edwards, she finally had a fighting chance to make a change. Edwards, with his experience in fighting for clean water as a basic human right, helped Mona compile the right data.

Mona presented her findings in a press conference that didn't seem to make much difference. The backlash was harsh, but her persistence in continuing to speak with reporters about the truth eventually paid off.

### **Lesson 3: Things started getting better after the state finally admitted the problem was real.**

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It was almost 18 months after the initial water-source switch that Michigan state officials finally confirmed there was a problem. Their first press conference about it wasn't very convincing, however.

In it, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality's head, Dan Wyant, simply said they had a ten-point plan for improving Flint citizens' confidence in their drinking water. But he never explained how it would do this other than testing the water at schools.

Wyant also told the public that officials were using corrosion control methods when they weren't. After a public health emergency declaration by the Genesee County Health Department, however, Flint residents finally at least got water filters.

**Knowing this wasn't a long-term solution, Mona continued pressing to change back to Lake Huron water.** Some told her this was impossible, but they'd soon be proven wrong.

Fundraising, demonstrations, and other efforts provided the final push that the city needed. Officials finally switched Flint back to Lake Huron water on October 8, 2015. Now it was time to help the children and others heal.

With help, Mona published another study which helped Flint's water crisis make national news. In early 2016 President Obama declared a federal emergency for Flint, which gave it more money to recover.

After all of Mona's efforts, the kids of Flint were finally getting the health programs and monitoring they would need to ensure a bright, healthy future.

## What The Eyes Don't See Review

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Wow, *What The Eyes Don't See* tells such a crazy story! I'm disappointed in my government for the way they've handled this situation. However, I'm grateful for the heroines like Mona Hanna-Attisha who will stand up to the corruption and lies against selfishness and racism!

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## Who would I recommend the What The Eyes Don't See summary to?

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The 57-year-old politician that wants to be better at serving the people than their own interests, the 33-year-old who wants some motivation to keep going in their fight against racism and other social issues, and anyone that loves and inspiring story of perseverance.