

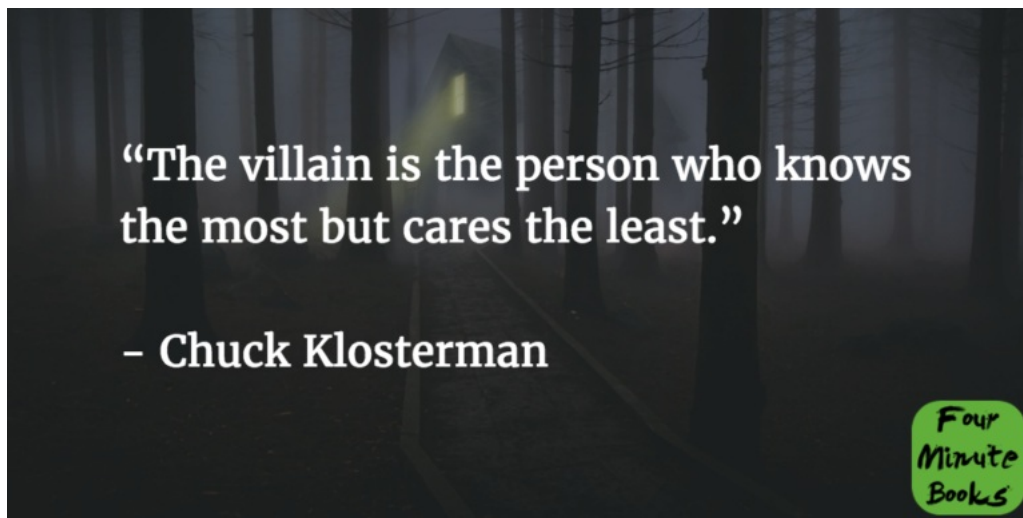
I Wear The Black Hat Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *I Wear The Black Hat* shows you that determining if a person is good or bad isn't as straightforward as you might think, by uncovering some of the biases that make us see people in a different light, regardless of their true intentions.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Funny. Just this week I watched the Batman trilogy again and now, this book explains why most of Gotham's citizens (and us movie and comic book fans) see him the way they do.

When I say villain you probably have a specific image in mind. A go-to bad guy or girl from popular culture (right now it's probably the Joker ;)), history, or maybe even your own network of people.

But why do you think that person is bad? Does the result really match the criteria? In *I Wear The Black Hat*, Chuck Klosterman explains why we think of some people as evil, even though they aren't, and vice versa.

Here are 3 lessons to help you grapple better with both real and imaginary antiheroes:

1. The veil of ignorance exercise can show you that your definitions of good and bad are just made up.
2. Because we don't like change, we tend to despise those who challenge the status quo.
3. The more human evildoers are, the more evil we think they are, regardless of the facts.

Ready for this upgrade to your bad-guy radar? Let's take a look under the black hat!

Lesson 1: Do the “veil of ignorance” exercise to show yourself that what you think is good and bad is entirely made up.

Depending on where you’re born and raised, you’ll have a much different definition of what’s good and what’s bad than people in other parts of the world – or even just your own city.

The son from the privileged family might think it’s evil to cheat on a test, while the kid on the street thinks stealing to feed her brother is a noble cause. Your view of good and bad depends a lot on your environment.

To remind yourself of just how much, philosopher John Rawls came up with a great exercise: **the veil of ignorance**.

Here’s how it works: Imagine someone gives you a chance to play god. You can form and create an entirely new world and society. From scratch. You can make all the rules, social conventions and laws you wish. But there’s a catch: **once you’re done, you’ll be dropped into this society as a brand new person with no influence on your position whatsoever.**

You could end up being a doctor or a homeless person, a celebrity or a cancer patient, a refugee or the mayor.

Given this “veil of ignorance,” what kind of society would you try to create? Probably one that’s as fair as possible for everyone, where most people will want to be “good.”

You’ll quickly see that it’s really hard to pull off, probably even impossible to create such a society. That’s why we all have different definitions of good and bad at different times – so think twice before you label something and put it in a box.

Lesson 2: Humans don’t like change, so they hate those who force it upon the world.

Have you ever heard of Kim Dotcom? This German guy’s an internet pioneer. He launched one of the most popular online file sharing services in 2005, Megaupload. Because many people used the site to illegally share and spread movies, music and software, it was shut down in 2012 by the US government, following a raid at Kim’s New Zealand mansion (he’s known for a crazy lifestyle).

As controversial and questionable as his personality might be, there’s no specific case where Kim used his skills for explicitly evil activities. For example in spite of being able to hack many government systems (allegedly), he never used them to help bad causes, instead actively fighting against terrorism with a group called Young Intelligent Hackers Against Terrorism and placing a reward for evidence against Bin Laden after 2001.

The main reason people see him as a villain is that **he changed the way we consume media**. He forced giant companies to re-think how they sell music, movies and software or go bankrupt – and they didn't like that.

People don't like change, and they like it even less if they're not the ones who came up with it.

Lesson 3: The more human a villain seems, the more evil you think they are, even if others might be worse.

What do you think Stalin was like? Probably as cold as the weather in Russia, a guy with zero empathy, a faceless monster making decisions with terrible consequences for the human race. In fact, I don't know too much about him – do you?

Now Hitler. What do you know about him? Here's what I know: he was choleric, had a recognizable mustache, loved his dog, always greeted people by raising his right arm and oh, maybe you know that he was a vegetarian too, or that he struggled with impotency because of having only one testicle.

That's quite a lot of stuff! Okay, now who was more evil?

As any history book, documentary or person you ask will tell you, it was clearly Hitler that was the worse one of the two. But if you compare that to the facts, you'll see that **while Hitler is responsible for the deaths of around 20 million people, Stalin's actions killed 26 million**.

Don't get me wrong, both of these committed unspeakable crimes against humanity, but you'd think someone like Stalin would be condemned way more in public. The reason we assume Hitler with pure evil is that **we know so many things about him that made him human**. This makes him more relatable (for example if you're a vegetarian, you might say: "Oh god, he was a bit like me!") and therefore the crimes feel a lot worse.

But how we feel doesn't always align with the facts, and in this case, it makes one villain seem less evil than the other. By the way, way worse than both of these two might have been Chinese politician Mao, who's held responsible for over 60 million deaths by his critics.

I Wear The Black Hat Review

Funny, unconventional and very enlightening. *I Wear The Black Hat* is definitely a book that'd usually fly below your radar, but one worth checking out!

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What else can you learn from the blinks?

- Why Machiavellian means evil and why it's often wrongly used to describe George W. Bush
- What makes us think of drug dealers and plane hijackers as heroes (Walter White, anyone?)
- Why a real-world Batman wouldn't fare so well among citizens
- How popular celebrity blogger Perez Hilton got a bad rap

Who would I recommend the I Wear The Black Hat summary to?

The 16 year old, who's just learning about World War II in history class, the 31 year old Batman fan, and anyone who has downloaded something illegally at least once in their lives.