

= David Suzuki : The Autobiography =

David Suzuki : The Autobiography is the 2006 autobiography of Canadian science writer and broadcaster David Suzuki . The book focuses mostly on his life since the 1987 publication of his first autobiography , Metamorphosis : Stages in a Life . It begins with a chronological account of his childhood , academic years , and broadcasting career . In later chapters , Suzuki adopts a memoir style , writing about themes such as his relationship with Australia , his experiences in Brazil and Papua New Guinea , the founding of the David Suzuki Foundation , and his thoughts on climate change , celebrity status , technology , and death . Throughout , Suzuki highlights the continuing impact of events from his childhood .

This is Suzuki 's forty @-@ third book and , he says , his last . Critics have called the book candid , sincere , and charming , with insightful commentary if occasionally flat stories . Suzuki 's scientific background is reflected in the writing 's rational and analytic style .

Suzuki 's autobiography spent four weeks at No. 1 on the Maclean 's list of non @-@ fiction best @-@ sellers and six weeks at No. 6 on the Globe and Mail 's list . The book won two awards in 2007 : the Canadian Booksellers ' Association 's Libris Award for Non @-@ Fiction Book of the Year and the British Columbia Booksellers ' Choice Award . The publishers , Greystone Books and Douglas & McIntyre , won the CBA Libris Award for Marketing Achievement of the Year .

= = Background = =

Vancouver @-@ based David Suzuki , 70 years old at the time of this book 's publication , is best known as an environmental activist and host of the television show The Nature of Things . He has also worked as a geneticist , nature writer , and university professor . His previous book , written in 2002 , was Good News for a Change . His 1987 book , Metamorphosis : Stages in a Life , unintentionally became his first autobiography . Metamorphosis was originally drafted as a collection of essays , but following the prompting of his publisher , Suzuki rewrote it in a more autobiographical style .

Suzuki 's working title for this second autobiography was The Outsider , a title intended to express the author 's view of his own role in society . The origin of this outsider feeling comes from isolation suffered at a Japanese Canadian internment camp during World War II . He was imprisoned there for being Japanese but shunned by other Japanese for being a third generation Canadian , speaking only English . His feeling of isolation continued during his early school years when the only other student of Japanese heritage was his twin sister . Suzuki 's daughters acknowledged this perception of himself as an outsider but insist that the public views him very differently , as one of their own , leading to the simple The Autobiography title .

Suzuki 's objective in writing the book was to document his experiences of personal rewards gained from the environmental movement and to illustrate , specifically for young people , opportunities in environmentalism . Suzuki believes that he has been unfairly labelled as " the master of doom and gloom " by conservative media outlets and that this book will help balance that view . He intends this autobiography to be his final book . Following its publication he planned to reduce his work week from seven to four days to spend more time with family and personal pursuits .

= = Contents = =

The book has eighteen chapters with a two @-@ page preface , which explains his experience with Metamorphosis and how this book complements it . The thesis of this book is identified by one reviewer as : " the importance of childhood 's formative years for the development of the person . In Suzuki 's case , it is the effects of racism , notably time spent in BC 's internment camps during the Second World War , that still haunt him . " In an interview , Suzuki said , " my drive to do well has been motivated by the desire to demonstrate to my fellow Canadians that my family and I had not deserved to be treated as we were " . Suzuki identifies a turning point of his life as winning his high school 's student presidential election . He initially refused to run believing he was not popular

enough . His father encouraged him , saying : " There 's no disgrace in losing ... The important thing is trying . " Suzuki ran and unexpectedly won with an " outsider " platform .

Suzuki recounts his youth and academic years as a student , professor , and genetics researcher . On his broadcasting career , Suzuki recalls early interviews that demonstrated an affinity for public speaking and the jobs that allowed him to travel the world . Regarding his personal life , he describes his relationships with his five children and the development of his two marriages . In a review in the New Zealand Listener , David Larsen observes : " Step by step , you see him thinking his way into full @-@ fledged environmentalism : not because he 's a natural zealot , but because he 's an intellectually honest man brought face to face with evidence that our current economic and energy policies are digging our grandchildren 's graves . "

Later chapters tell of events since *Metamorphosis* . In British Columbia , Suzuki spends time on the Queen Charlotte Islands and in Stein Valley advocating against logging . He describes his travels in Brazil while shooting an episode of *The Nature of Things* in 1988 and the relationship he developed with the Kayapo people . One of their leaders returned to Canada with him to advocate the protection of his homeland in the Amazon . His tour of Papua New Guinea and how Australia became his second home are explained . He describes the founding and early years of the David Suzuki Foundation , a non @-@ profit organization based on environmental protection and developing sustainability . In the final four chapters Suzuki elaborates on his thoughts about climate change , celebrity status , technology , and death . He laments the lack of global action on climate change , scientific illiteracy on the part of politicians , and the lack of media attention to science . In the final chapter he accepts death as an inevitability and expects his works to be forgotten quickly , leaving his grandchildren as his only true legacy .

= = Style and genre = =

Suzuki 's tone is relaxed and understated . Robert Wiersema notes that Suzuki 's style has " an analytic quality ... probably rooted in his scientific training " . Suzuki shows a humble , dry humour and instances of blurting out surprising statements . One reviewer describes the style as a " fusion of by @-@ the @-@ numbers personal narrative and passionate , insightful commentary " .

The book begins as a chronological narrative of Suzuki 's life with photographs of his family and friends . The first five chapters cover the same time period as the first autobiography , from childhood to age fifty . Later chapters use a memoir style with personal thoughts developed around themes . Suzuki recounts his experiences with indigenous groups and his personal relationships with individual members . A travelogue of his journeys in Brazil , Papua New Guinea , Australia , and some places in Canada is presented . Scientific concepts and explanations occur throughout the book .

= = Publication and marketing = =

Two weeks before its release on April 22 , 2006 , an excerpt was printed in the national daily newspaper *The Globe and Mail* . Greystone Books , the Vancouver division of Douglas & McIntyre , published the book . The book tour included more than 35 stops over two months throughout Canada . Promoted by the publishers as his " final book tour " and labelled by Suzuki as his " thank @-@ you book tour " , it began in Victoria , British Columbia , and included stops from coast @-@ to @-@ coast , from Whitehorse , Yukon , to New Glasgow , Nova Scotia . Attended by nearly 500 people at each event , a multimedia slideshow with personal photos and videos was presented by Suzuki . The publishers estimated that Suzuki signed 5000 books and conducted 137 media interviews . For their efforts Douglas & McIntyre and Greystone Books were awarded the 2007 Canadian Booksellers Association 's Libris Award for Marketing Achievement of the Year . In July , the book was published by Allen & Unwin in Australia . Suzuki conducted a promotional tour of both Australia and New Zealand in October and November . The same publishers released paperback editions in April 2007 .

= = Reception = =

The Autobiography was No. 1 on Maclean 's list of nonfiction bestsellers in Canada for four weeks and spent fifteen weeks in the top ten . The book was on The Globe and Mail 's non @-@ fiction bestsellers ' list for five weeks and peaked at No. 6 . The book won the 2007 Canadian Booksellers Association 's Libris Award for Non @-@ Fiction Book of the Year and the 2007 British Columbia Booksellers ' Choice Award .

Critics variously described his writing as " forthright , " " chatty " , and " charming " . In a review in The Globe and Mail Brian Brett admires " Suzuki 's disarming candour " and labels it " a strange , fascinating book " . While Brett 's review is positive , he calls it " clunkily written " and sometimes repetitive . The Edmonton Journal review notes that Suzuki could " charm the socks off the most hardened soul " , but that many of his stories fall flat . The review in the Quill & Quire notes Suzuki " has not written an indulgent autobiography " and that he " is too polite to dish on his enemies " . Writing for The Vancouver Sun , Robert Wiersema states that while " his life is an open book ... [y] ou get the sense of meeting the real Suzuki for the first time . " Wiersema calls him " a natural storyteller " . The New Zealand Listener review states , " as a writer , he has the charm of a high @-@ school geek desperately trying to get a date ... but ultimately it 's what allows his story to convince " . Several critics find Suzuki 's writing on death to be particularly well @-@ done .

A number of reviewers compared this book with the earlier one , Metamorphosis . The Edmonton Journal considers David Suzuki : The Autobiography to be more candid and insightful than the previous book . On the other hand , Peter Desbarats , writing in Literary Review of Canada , suggests that Metamorphosis had more personal charm . Desbarats is disappointed that The Autobiography does not provide a better reflection on the themes of Metamorphosis . He points out that the best parts , Suzuki 's early years , are condensed from one third of Metamorphosis to a single chapter in The Autobiography . Desbarats states that neither book ends with a " satisfying final word " and concludes that Suzuki " is his own worst and most frustrating biographer " .