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# This Is Water: Some Thoughts, Delivered On A Significant Occasion, About Living A Compassionate Life

**This Is Water** Some  
Thoughts, Delivered on a Significant  
Occasion, about Living a Compassionate  
Life **David Foster Wallace**



## Synopsis

Only once did David Foster Wallace give a public talk on his views on life, during a commencement address given in 2005 at Kenyon College. The speech is reprinted for the first time in book form in **THIS IS WATER**. How does one keep from going through their comfortable, prosperous adult life unconsciously? How do we get ourselves out of the foreground of our thoughts and achieve compassion? The speech captures Wallace's electric intellect as well as his grace in attention to others. After his death, it became a treasured piece of writing reprinted in The Wall Street Journal and the London Times, commented on endlessly in blogs, and emailed from friend to friend. Writing with his one-of-a-kind blend of causal humor, exacting intellect, and practical philosophy, David Foster Wallace probes the challenges of daily living and offers advice that renews us with every reading.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"David Foster Wallace's unbelievable graduation speech...will inspire you." ¯ Daily Candy "We read Wallace because he forces us to think. He makes us consider what's beneath us and around us--like water." ¯ Alicia J. Rouverol, The Christian Science Monitor

David Foster Wallace was born in Ithaca, New York, in 1962 and raised in Illinois, where he was a regionally ranked junior tennis player. He received bachelor of arts degrees in philosophy and English from Amherst College and wrote what would become his first novel, *The Broom of the*

System, as his senior English thesis. He received a masters of fine arts from University of Arizona in 1987 and briefly pursued graduate work in philosophy at Harvard University. His second novel, *Infinite Jest*, was published in 1996. Wallace taught creative writing at Emerson College, Illinois State University, and Pomona College, and published the story collections *Girl with Curious Hair*, *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men*, *Oblivion*, the essay collections *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again*, and *Consider the Lobster*. He was awarded the MacArthur Fellowship, a Lannan Literary Award, and a Whiting Writers' Award, and was appointed to the Usage Panel for The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language. He died in 2008. His last novel, *The Pale King*, was published in 2011.

David Foster Wallace wrote numerous books, some brilliant, receiving well-deserved praise. "This is Water" is not fiction. It is a speech he gave to a college graduating class. Only one brilliant paragraph per page, sometimes only a phrase, laid out rather like a poem, and reading almost like an incredible waterfall of wisdom. Five stars. One of those rare gems. Can be read in one sitting, and is immensely nourishing, uplifting, and full of insight, humor, and rich emotion.

It is always refreshing to read words about awareness in a world that is, at an accelerating speed, becoming less and less aware and more self-centered. As a healthcare worker, I am often counseled, in ways far more subliminal ways than this beautifully worded lecture by Mr. Wallace, by my patients about how to be more aware and how a situation can be perceived in many ways. These experiences have gifted me with above average emotional maturity and an appreciation of what it means to "choose how and what to think about." These lessons are exceedingly and increasingly more difficult to understand in our ever evolving world and Mr. Wallace just beautifully summed them up in a short, sweet, well-worded and hopeful speech.

The writings of David Foster Wallace has had a profound impact on my life. During feedback sessions with the people I lead, I suggest they read this book or at least watch the video on youtube. I place a lot more emphasis into the way I think about issues and even the day-to-day mundane tasks we all go through and how I react and speak to those around me. As my son gets older, I will look forward to sharing DFW's thoughts. I heavily endorse this book!

It's ironic that I have never heard of David Foster Wallace before today and sort of highlights my own thought process. Mr. Wallace has more than nailed how we humans stumble our way through

life without giving much thought at all about what to think. A meaningful and insightful read.

This is a commencement speech, can be read in less than a hour. It is excellent.

I would recommend this book to anyone learning to define who they are and what they value. Like much of David Foster Wallace's writing, it is nitty gritty real life, honest, inspirational and nuanced prose unique to him. Too soon he left us.

It wasn't what I had expected. I couldn't connect with the author's ideas and found some of the language inappropriate for young readers.

... and highly worth it. This is the companion book to the viral YouTube video of the same name. This Is Water is definitive. Watch and read, then reflect. The next time you are cut off in traffic, you will understand.

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