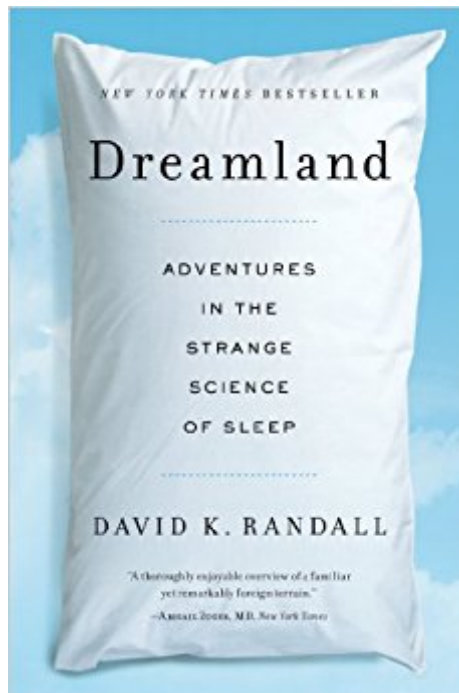


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Dreamland: Adventures In The Strange Science Of Sleep



Synopsis

An engrossing examination of the science behind the little-known world of sleep. Like many of us, journalist David K. Randall never gave sleep much thought. That is, until he began sleepwalking. One midnight crash into a hallway wall sent him on an investigation into the strange science of sleep. In *Dreamland*, Randall explores the research that is investigating those dark hours that make up nearly a third of our lives. Taking readers from military battlefields to children's bedrooms, *Dreamland* shows that sleep isn't as simple as it seems. Why did the results of one sleep study change the bookmakers' odds for certain Monday Night Football games? Do women sleep differently than men? And if you happen to kill someone while you are sleepwalking, does that count as murder? This book is a tour of the often odd, sometimes disturbing, and always fascinating things that go on in the peculiar world of sleep. You'll never look at your pillow the same way again.

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Customer Reviews

The author awoke one night having painfully sleepwalked into a wall. After incurring what must have been a substantial medical bill for a series of tests to determine the cause, he is assured that he is fine. The author knew very well that sleepwalking into walls isn't fine at all. He then set out to become an expert on the various aspects of sleep. The result is this rather quirky book consisting of thirteen chapters, each devoted to a different aspect of the issue, ranging from apnea machines to whether your baby should sleep with you. The book can generally be divided into two parts: the ludicrousness of ignoring sleep's importance, and sleep taken so seriously it has become big business. While the reader is provided information that may be of help in understanding any sleep related problem he or she suffers from, this is not the purpose of the book. Instead, the book is a very enthusiastic ramble (pilgrimage?) through the various facets of sleep, a subject rarely studied until recently. "This is not your typical advice book filled with ten easy steps to perfect sleep. But you will come away with a new understanding of all that goes on in your body while you are sleeping and what happens when you neglect sleep for too long." Each chapter follows a similar arc.

Following a catchy chapter heading like *Between the Sheets* is a stock photo somewhat related to the chapter, in this case a picture of two sets of feet...between the sheets. Definite points off for these inexcusably lame photos that add absolutely nothing to the book. After the photo we are given a vignette, usually of a person, with a dilemma or quest. For example, how a professional baseball trainer decides that sleep deprivation is a problem for his pitchers and what he can do about it (naps!). This personal interest component then leads to the subject matter of the chapter. *Between the Sheets*, for example, primarily examines whether people sleep better alone or with a partner. We are then given interesting factoids on the subject and too many tangents that feel like the publisher told him the book wasn't long enough and he needed to puff it out another 100 pages. Despite these drawbacks, I recommend this book to anyone interested in, but clueless about, the science and business of sleep. If you are interested in the psychoanalytic aspects of sleep, and particularly dreams, this is definitely not the book for you. Stringing together research and comments by various scientists he thoroughly debunks Freudian ideas on the subject. A typical quote: "None of Freud's claims are true by any of our standards today." I have no idea whether this is entirely justified, just passing on what I read. I certainly wouldn't want my review to keep you from reading the book, but for those with only a minor interest in the subject, here are my favorite sleep factoids from the book (and all are direct quotes):- Depression rates were forty times higher for patients with insomnia than those without sleep problems.- If sleep doesn't serve an absolutely vital function, it is the greatest mistake evolution ever made. That function is still a mystery.- Sleep is made up of five distinct stages that the body cycles through over roughly ninety-minute periods.-

Before the discovery of rapid eye movements, our understanding of sleep hadn't undergone any dramatic revisions in more than two thousand years.- By 2011 there were over seventy-five recognized sleep disorders, and the number continues to grow.- Adult bodies are not built to sleep past noon.- Architects and construction companies surveyed by the National Association of Home Builders predict that by 2016 more than half of all new custom-built homes in the United States will have separate master bedrooms.- About one in fifteen parents [in the U.S.] admitted to sharing a bed with their child in a study published in 1993. By 2007, the number had grown to about one in three.- Those who have lost their sight after they were toddlers continue to dream with images, for instance, while those who were blind from birth dream with sounds.- If you can't get in a full night's sleep, you can still improve the ability of your brain to synthesize new information by taking a nap.- In the Gulf War, one of every four American combat deaths was a result of fire from U.S. forces. [sleep deprivation being a major contributing cause]- Almost all cases of sleep crime involve men.- Somewhere inside the cells of most living things is what amounts to a fairly accurate twenty-four-hour clock, known as the circadian rhythm.- Sleep, for instance, is the time when the body sends growth hormones to repair damaged muscles.- Studies of teenagers around the globe have found that adolescent brains do not start releasing melatonin until around eleven o'clock at night and keep pumping out the hormone well past sunrise. Adults, meanwhile, have little-to-no melatonin in their bodies when they wake up.- Sleep apnea was the cause of thirty-eight thousand fatal heart attacks and strokes in the United States each year.- A study in 1994 found that about 10 percent of women, and 25 percent of men, have difficulties breathing in their sleep. These numbers climb as a person gets older, so that as many as one out of three elderly men have at least a mild case of sleep apnea. All told, about twenty million Americans have the disorder.- Two of every five adults in the United States have problems falling and staying asleep that aren't related to a persistent sleep disorder.- By 2010, about one in every four adults in the United States had a prescription sleeping pill in their medicine cabinets. But here's the twist. A number of studies have shown that drugs like Ambien and Lunesta offer no significant improvement in the quality of sleep that a person gets. They give only a tiny bit more in the quantity department, too.- The best predictor of quality sleep was maintaining a room temperature in a narrow band between 60 and 66 degrees Fahrenheit.

I bought this as the review I read talked about "first sleep and second sleep concept". That fascinated me as I think that is how I sleep. Was a little disappointed as that only took up about 2 pages or less of the book. Some parts were interesting but for the most part I found it a little boring

and only made it half way thought the book before setting it aside. Most was anecdotal information that I had read elsewhere. I will try to finish it and will amend my review appropriately.

I admit that I didn't read several chapters of this book. When I skimmed these chapters, I found them dull and not entirely relevant to the subject of sleep. I did learn a few new facts about sleep which were intriguing. I would recommend this book to someone who has little knowledge about the science and subject of sleep.

Hugely Interesting and informative. I have been to wonderful lectures, by Drs. and Scientists on the subject of the brain by invitation as the wife of a prominent medical scientist. I have not found another book written for the general public, which is as informative and clear on the workings of the brain. This does not pretend to be a journal entry, but is nevertheless filled with worthwhile evidence and full notes which back up his explanation of why the brain does what it does while the rest of the body is resting. This is fairly easy to read, and worthwhile to anyone interested in how their brain works and why they have the goofy, spooky, and unexplainable dreams they have. It also lays to rest the old wife's tales of premonition, fortune telling. etc. most of us have heard. (Not to say you won't still wonder what the hell THAT was about when you wake up!)

In *Dreamland: Adventures in the Strange Science of Sleep*, author David K. Randall brings his sense of humor to a collection of research on the elusive activity that takes up about a third of the average human lifespan. This fast, entertaining read is great material for anyone who is just beginning their journey into understanding sleep, as it provides a wide overview of sleep research while avoiding scientific jargon. In lieu of detailed explanations for how biological processes work, the author merely acknowledges that they exist by sharing the names of brain regions as they relate to certain behaviors. I found myself with plenty of interesting conversation starters to share with friends as a result of reading this book. Randall delivers topics to the public that for a long time have only been widely known in the sleep science community; sharing stories that will surprise readers as well as providing reinforcement for phenomena they may have already experienced themselves. Randall begins by sharing his personal experiences as the client of a sleep laboratory, after an injury acquired in his sleep led him to seek answers. Through the delivery of his test results, he finds that there are still many missing pieces to the puzzle of understanding sleep. Randall resolves to do some research himself, to see what science has uncovered so far in hopes of improving his predicament. After reviewing the importance of sleep to our survival and functioning, the author

shares a history lesson on a topic few people have recently considered: what sleep was like before the industrial revolution. We're so used to our current lifestyle, with cities that quite literally "never sleep," that we've forgotten how new it is. As it turns out, human sleep patterns were quite different before the introduction of the night life. Prior to the invention of the light bulb, people never went out after dark. The natural sleep cycle of humans without the interruption of artificial light actually involved two separate, equal-length periods of sleep. In areas of the world where the luxury of electricity is not available, people still sleep this way — spending an hour or so in the middle of the night in a relaxed, meditative state before beginning their second session of sleep. While the invention of artificial light has given us more time in the day to accomplish things, it has brought with it a whole slew of health problems. Being nocturnal doesn't appear to be very good for our bodies, yet with the way our modern economy works it is unlikely we will ever return to our natural sleep patterns. In the first few chapters, Randall discusses the matter of sharing beds with partners and children. It may be surprising, but it makes sense — scientists have discovered that we actually get better quality sleep when we are alone in our beds. Still, even couples who are fully aware of this continue to share a bed, and have rated their sleep quality as higher when it is with a partner. It's more complicated than just sleeping — it's a part of their relationship, a bond and a comfort. Studies have shown that people like each other so much they don't mind losing sleep to be next to one another; being kicked, cold-toed and snored at are just some of the things we do for love. The next focus is on dreaming and how the field of dream research has evolved dramatically over the years. At first dreams were thought to have no purpose, but then Sigmund Freud examined possible deeper, hidden meanings. Today, scientists don't look at them metaphorically as Freud did, but instead focus on the simpler messages we can make use of. The author also discusses the science behind instances where people make discoveries, write songs or even think up bestselling books in their dreams. Though he doesn't discuss exactly how it works, Randall suggests that REM sleep is a time when our brains dump all of the extra clutter from the day and organize the important memories. When the extra information is removed, it is easier for us to make new connections between things that have been there all along. Creativity doesn't have to be magic or genius; it's actually a normal process of the brain. In the final chapters, Randall covers a lot of ground, explaining how sleep affects multiple areas of our lives in ways people rarely consider. For example, sleep has been a deciding factor in whether entire battles are won or lost, and whether athletes are able to reach peak

performance. When soldiers don't get sleep, they are more prone to mistakes and violence. When sports teams travel to time zones later than their own, they are more likely to lose. The author also discusses a few controversial court cases concerning sleep walking murders, suicides, and other acts of the unconscious mind. While I thoroughly enjoyed the author's style and the ease of acquiring a lot of new information on sleep in just one book, I wouldn't recommend it to students who have already studied sleep. For those who are new to it, however, this book provides an excellent springboard into areas of research that would be fun to explore further. The book is based almost entirely on the psychology and history of sleep and sleep disorders, with some light references to the biology behind them. A few things Randall does well explaining are the roles of the pineal gland and the suprachiasmatic nucleus and how the hormone melatonin is used in regulating sleep. In general, however, I believe the book could use more references to how areas of the brain communicate with one another during sleep. For example, the author shares that during sleep the body sends growth hormones to repair damaged muscles, which is important for professional athletes yet he neglects to mention where in the body the growth hormones come from or how it knows where and when to send them out. While he makes many good points that are backed with research, a few claims are left too vague for my liking. Overall, this book was enjoyable and thought provoking. I especially appreciated the way the author began with historical data and opinions and followed the evolution of the field of sleep from past to present. I also like that he makes it a point to let readers know how far the field still has to go, and how little scientists understand in the scheme of sleep. Perhaps the fun, interesting way that sleep science is presented in this book will inspire people to pursue the research of sleep further, and for that I give it 4 out of 5 stars.

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