
INTRODUCTION.

THIS book is for the rest of your life (or at least the next 90 years). What you do with it is entirely up to you; here are some suggestions.

The strongest suggestion is the page numbers: most of the pages have a number followed by “a” (short for “anni”, Latin for “years”) at the top, with “Before” on the left hand pages and “After” on the right. The idea is that you use the left-hand pages *before* you get to that age, and the right-hand pages *after*.

On the left you could write what you want to do by that age, or what you’d like to be by then, or where you’d like to go, or what you’d like to see.

On the right, you could write what you’ve done by then, or what you are, or where you’ve been, or what you’ve seen.

Or you could do something totally different.

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Of course, if you're older than 10 when you get this book, you'll have to do something else with the pages "younger" than you. If you're older than 100, you could write your autobiography. And even if you get it for your tenth birthday, what will you do on the first page, "Before 10a"? Perhaps write down what's most important to you, or about you, right now?

Or you could draw.

Or you could just open the book from time to time and think about where you're up to (you could tick off the years as they go past). It could be a secret diary so secret that there's nothing written down! (Or use invisible ink.)

If one of those ideas sounds fun, or interesting, you can stop reading and get on with whatever it was that took your fancy!

But maybe you're wondering why you should bother with any of this. Why not just get on with living your life? There are many answers to this, but most of them have something to do with *stories* or *choice*.

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We humans love stories. Not just in books or films, but all around us, in real life. You probably make up stories with yourself as the hero, but the biggest story of all is your own life. (Maybe you thought of that already?) The longer you live, the more story you have, and if you don't think about it, it's like trying to write a story by picking words out of a hat: unless you're very lucky, you won't make a good story that way.

We humans love to make choices. But you can't make a good choice without thinking, even if it's as simple as remembering your favourite food. If every time someone asks you what you'd like to eat or where you'd like to go, or what you want for your birthday, you just pick a word out of a dictionary, you probably won't like the results. Not unless you're very lucky.

Do you feel really really lucky? (Hint: nobody in the history of the universe has ever been *that* lucky.)

By the way, the writing a couple of pages back, as you probably noticed, is in Greek, from over

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two thousand years ago. In other words, the idea of thinking about your life is a very old one. In case you don't read ancient Greek, the lines mean "People measure everything against themselves", "If you don't think about your life, it's not worth living", and "Know yourself". They are quotes from famous philosophers who thought about this sort of thing all the time, but even if you don't plan to be a philosopher, you should probably think about your life sometimes.

Think of this book as a tool to help you choose your own story.*

*No guarantees though: almost everyone has to put up with choices they don't like, made for them by someone else. Not to mention their own choices that turn out not so well.