

(Get free) Stutter

Stutter

Marc Shell

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Marc Shell : Stutter before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Stutter:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A good book, yet a little bit lackingBy Kevin HuangThroughout Stutter, Professor Shell discusses how stuttering has appeared in the speeches of historic Moses, the sing-song acting of Marilyn Monroe, and melanoid monologues of Hamlet. And for this review, I will begin a short paragraph on my opinion of his book, followed by a synopsis of it, and followed by my personal "nit-pickings" and things I find

interesting and concluded with a detailed paragraph of my opinion of his book. I feel this book has a great beginning, it starts off strong, but concludes somewhat weakly. I would definitely recommend this book for anyone interested in the cultural influences of stuttering, and particularly to those suffering from stuttering. However, for the simply curious or neuroscience students, you're better off finding a book that delves more into the physiology and neurology behind this disorder. The book begins with a short prologue, introducing the fears of the stutterer. Shell states that "even the most "politically correct" person...would have to admit at times he has laughed at the stutterer". And it's true. We often laugh at the words of Warner Brother's Porky Pig (also discussed in a later chapter in his book), and never consider how the stutterer might feel gagged, sometimes choked. The prologue concludes with some neuro terms, such as agraphia, paralytic, and palilalia, which aren't explored more deeply, much to my disappointment. He then dives into his personal experience with stuttering. He talks about how polio had left him ham-legged (a foreshadowing of his discussion on Porky Pig and Hamlet) and stuttering, and the many, many attempts throughout history to cure it, from cutting out the tongue to thousands of speech therapy books. He does discuss how switching languages can aid in stutter prevention, where "If, while [I was] lecturing in France, I feel a stutter coming on for argent, I can switch - unnoticed- to monnaie". He then brings up some famous speakers, who also suffered from stuttering, like the orator Demosthenes, Alexius of Rome, and Emily Dickenson. He talks about how stutterers have become some of the greatest artists, to avoid their embarrassing disorder, and how some words often used to describe something bad, embarrassing, or in general negative, have roots that lead back to st-st-st-stuttering. The second chapter is a slow introduction into how stuttering and speech in general has influenced culture. He begins with examples how people have been prosecuted or killed over their pronunciation, from My Fair Lady's Eliza Doolittle, who's Cockney accent makes her the subject of a social experiment. He talks about the term of the shibboleth, a test word that some people can't pronounce the same way, like potato and potahto, or how Alaric, king of the Visigoths, says "teteroromamanunudadatetelalatete" (I'll crush you, Rome, with my bare hands! Hand over your spears. Hide!). The rest of the book brings up large cultural icons that dealt with stuttering in one form or another, like how Mel Blanc's Porky Pig (Th-th-that's all, Folks!) made him famous for making fun of stutterers, or how Moses suffered from stuttering and was afraid to tell the Pharaoh his famous words, "Let my people go!". He then goes on to discuss how Marilyn Monroe's stuttering was included into her songs and lines to make it seem sexual, like her song "My Heart Belongs to Daddy" (the line "Yes, my heart belongs to Daddy, Da, Da, Da, Da, Da, Da, Da, DAAAAD). His last example is from one of Shakespeare's finest plays, Hamlet, where he compares Hamlet's love of repetition (his line, "list, list, o list!" and "o horrible! O, horrible! Most horrible in 3.1, and even his ghostly father's "swear!"). It concludes with a short chapter, discussing the many (failed) attempts to cure stutterers, the difficulty and ridicule they encounter in life, and how "for the time being, stuttering is the mystery where language and culture meet - that chasseur where [culture] take on and put off a common humanity. My Opinions on the Beginning: Prologue, Chapters 1 and 2 I feel the opening of the book was a success; it grasped the reader into the book. His prologue piques the interest of the reader; bring up question like "Why does the zebra finch stammer? How do poets sing like birds?" and seemingly shrouding stuttering in mystery. The next two chapters really grab you, if the prologue was the "hook", the next two are the "line and sinker". I felt quite sympathetic towards him (and therefore his views), when he talks about his experience with stuttering as a result of polio. Lots of hypothetical questions are introduced, like "who, really, is speaking? Is it me -a sort of professional ventriloquist...or is it me -a carved, wooden persona like...Charlie McCarthy?". The second chapter disengages you from the first-person view he explored in the first chapter, it talks about the history of speech, and how it's accuracy has influenced culture for millennia, which is extremely fascinating. The Meat: Chapters 3,4,5 and 6 Here I felt the book was getting weaker and weaker. The third chapter, on Porky Pig and other stuttering animals, was a light-hearted chapter and more of a starter for his examples. It was almost as if he was testing the waters with his arguments. It wasn't anything remarkable, but it definitely was a good read. In his next chapter, he started off really strong, from the historical importance of speech accuracy into Moses, probably one of the most important figures in monotheistic religions that believe in God. He includes many examples of how Moses was insecure in his speech disorder (Exodus 6:10-13, ...But Moshe appealed to the Lord, saying: "The Israelites would not listen to me; how then should Pharaoh heed me - a man of impeded speech!"). I felt empowered by this chapter (even though I wasn't a stutterer), and feel that all people suffering from stuttering really should take Moses as one of their idols, a stutterer who achieved greatness. The next chapter (chapter 5) on Marilyn Monroe was a bit of a stretch for me. While I agree that Marilyn, or Norma Jeane Mortenson, did stutter and definitely influenced her dialogue, I don't agree with how it may have influenced her singing. Songs were probably not written around the fact that she stuttered (like the da da da da da DAAAAD line in "My Heart Belongs to Daddy"), but more for theatrical effect. His last chapter on Hamlet I felt was a complete reach. There were a few instances where it did coincide (Like how Hamlet's uncle is named Claudius, a famous emperor of Rome who suffered from polio and stuttering), but that Hamlet himself was a stutterer was too much. He uses Porky Pig as his support, which I find somewhat doubtful as Porky Pig was written much later than Hamlet, and probably influenced by Hamlet and not vice versa. The Ending The ending was a disappointment to me. I had expected a giant conclusion that really convinced me he was right, but it wasn't. There was no mention of his previous chapters, instead I was treated to a long, long list (about 3 pages) of

books written to cure stuttering. It ended with the typical conclusion, a reinstatement of his overall thesis that stuttering was a major part of culture, but it never tied things together. How was Marilyn influenced by Moses? What of Hamlet and Porky Pig? It felt a little lackluster, and didn't finish with the bang I wanted it to. Overall Thoughts, Conclusion, and Interesting Tidbits Overall the book was well written, but still a bit disappointing. The style in which it was written was nice (clever chapter titles like Moses' Tongue, Marilyn's Duh), and the short quotes before each section of each chapter had a clever title and/or quote related to what he was going to discuss (Like The Stuttering God in discussing why God needed others to speak for him. According to Shell, God stuttered!) I felt I learned quite a bit about culture by reading his book, and the fun quotes, dredged from the depths of history, really added a nice touch to the book.

One person can't help stuttering. The other can't help laughing. And in the way one bodily betrayal of better intentions mirrors the other, we find ourselves in the gray area where mind and body connect--and, at the damndest moments, disconnect. In a book that explores the phenomenon of stuttering from its practical and physical aspects to its historical profile to its existential implications, Marc Shell plumbs the depths of this murky region between will and flesh, intention and expression, idea and word. Looking into the difficulties encountered by people who stutter--as do fifty million worldwide--Shell shows that, however solitary stutterers may be in their quest for normalcy, they share a kinship with many other speakers, both impeded and fluent. Stutter takes us back to a time when stuttering was believed to be "diagnosis-induced," then on to the complex mix of physical and psychological causes that were later discovered. Ranging from cartoon characters like Porky Pig to cultural icons like Marilyn Monroe, from Moses to Hamlet, Shell reveals how stuttering in literature plays a role in the formation of tone, narrative progression, and character. He considers such questions as: Why does stuttering disappear when the speaker chants? How does singing ease the verbal tics of Tourette's Syndrome? How do stutterers cope with the inexpressible, the unspeakable? Written by someone who has himself struggled with stuttering all his life, this provocative and wide-ranging book shows that stuttering has implications for myriad types of expression and helps to define what it means to be human.

From Publishers Weekly Shell offers an impressive if challenging memoir-cum-treatise on the contributions of stuttering to the arts and beyond. Shell, who teaches comparative literature at Harvard, is fluent in cultures high, middle and low. He lunges between Moses and Marilyn Monroe, quoting rap music and Winston Churchill in nearly the same breath. Although it's often difficult to keep up with Shell's academic critiques, there are touching passages about his experiences growing up in Quebec with a stutter (and with polio, the subject of his previous book). Surrounded by languages French, English, Hebrew and Yiddish Shell learned to find the "right" word, that is, the pronounceable one, in another tongue. Similarly, he suggests that many great writers, such as Margaret Drabble, Lewis Carroll and W. Somerset Maugham, took up the pen as a way to "cure" their stuttering, and that their difficulty with spoken words improved their facility with those written. Shell's virtuosic ability to summon references from neuroscience, religion and philosophy is both exhilarating and exhausting. Indeed, at times it seems as if the structure of his peripatetic book is a metaphor for what happens in the mind of a stutterer in the pause before articulation: a frantic search through the mind that finally alights in the right place. 18 bw illus. (Jan.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From The New Yorker Shell, a comparative-literature professor and a stutterer, examines stuttering from the perspectives of history, literature, popular culture, science, and personal experience. His discussion raises fascinating questions Why do stutterers find relief when singing? Was Hamlet a stutterer? Why is Porky Pig's stutter funny? and he provides an engaging discussion of the historical importance of speaking "properly." Regrettably, Shell, presumably striving for some textual equivalent of a stutter, encumbers his work with labored puns ("how gags gag"), odd catchphrases ("talk the walk or walk the talk"), and the modish deconstruction of words ("dis-ease," "dis-ability"). However, there are many interesting tidbits about famous stutterers (James Earl Jones, Moses, Marilyn Monroe, the Emperor Claudius, Henry James) and their techniques for overcoming the impediment. Copyright 2006 The New Yorker Most stutterers don't want to talk about their stuttering, since it brings on more self-consciousness and more stuttering. A person may be so ashamed of his stuttering that he carries a card saying he is mute. This book is liberating for those who suffer from stuttering. It is also full of information about the origins of stuttering and the history of how people sought to define, control, or cure stuttering. -- Evelyn Nien-Ming Ch'ien, assistant professor of English, University of Minnesota, and author of *Weird English* Stutter is a sterling presentation of difficulties encountered by people who stutter. It demonstrates that stutterers are alone in their quest for normalcy, yet share a kinship with many other people, some who stutter and some who do not. Furthermore, the enigma of stuttering--questions as to why stuttering has existed throughout time, why persons who stutter don't stutter when they sing, the ridiculous therapeutic permutations they run through--all of this is well discussed. The book is not only easy to read, but fun. --David B. Rosenfield, M.D., Director, Speech and Language Center, Baylor College of Medicine Shell offers an impressive if challenging memoir-cum-treatise on the contributions of stuttering to the arts and beyond. Shell, who teaches comparative literature at Harvard, is fluent in cultures high, middle and low. He lunges between Moses and Marilyn Monroe, quoting rap music and Winston Churchill in nearly

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(Publishers Weekly 2005-12-05)Literary scholar Marc Shell's *Stutter* doesn't attempt to solve the mystery. Instead, he enriches it, embroiders it and anchors stuttering and the people who d-d-do it--and laugh at it--firmly to literature and culture: Our fixation on words and language is couched within society as a whole. With wit, he extracts example after example from pop culture and high culture...Hams like Porky Pig are still part of the story, but so is Hamlet. Shell's close reading of Shakespeare reveals the Dane to be a stutterer. And you have to love any book that teaches you Serbo-Croatian tongue-twisters. Playing with words, riffing on their sounds, meanings and interconnections, Shell blurs the line between stuttering as metaphor and stuttering as, well, just plain stuttering...[A] tour de force. --Ward Harkavy (Los Angeles Times Book 2006-01-22)In *Stutter*, his impressive survey of cultural figures with 'cloven tongues' (including God), Shell describes the trauma of being unable to speak right. If you can't pronounce your name, he says, people will assume you don't know it. One partial remedy for stammering is to take on a new persona: sing, act, learn a new language. Henry James dealt with his impediment by speaking French. Carly Simon 'felt so strangulated talking' that she 'did the natural thing'--perform music. For the more than 50 million people in the world with a 'handicap in the mouth,' picking the right words becomes an emotional process. (When Somerset Maugham, also tongue-tied, read his novels out loud, he'd replace 'difficult' terms with their synonyms.) Anxious and isolated, stutterers often find more creative modes of expression. It's one way out of what Roger Rabbit calls 'p-p-pp-p-p-p...jail!' The other option is silence. --Rachel Aviv (Village Voice 2006-02-10)What links Moses, Hamlet and Porky Pig? They're stutterers, like Marc Shell--a Harvard comparative literature prof and author of *Stutter*, a subtle exploration of his affliction's contribution to the arts. (Maclean's 2006-01-30)[An] erudite book...Shell does convince the reader that stuttering is an intriguing and enigmatic phenomenon...Shell is as versed in the neurophysiological discussions of stuttering as he is in the literary and popular cultural ones...Though humiliating and socially isolating for the sufferer, stuttering also seems to be a curious source of creative energy. Because it forces speech into new patterns, stuttering may enrich writing. At least, a surprisingly large number of writers are stutterers...Stuttering can be seen as a creative, rhetorical, neurological anomaly, both curse and blessing, which puts in question any simple-minded distinction between normal and abnormal. The explicit message of this book...is that some of the disorders that cause us to stumble and suffer are not simply pathologies to be knocked on the head with drugs: they also offer rich ground for the exploration of what it means to be human. --Harry Eyres (Financial Times 2006-03-18)Shell, a comparative-literature professor and a stutterer, examines stuttering from the perspectives of history, literature, popular culture, science, and personal experience. His discussion raises fascinating questions--Why do stutterers find relief when singing? Was Hamlet a stutterer? Why is Porky Pig's stutter funny?--and he provides an engaging discussion of the historical importance of speaking "properly." (New Yorker 2006-03-27)Shell's study mixes descriptions of his own experiences as a lifelong stutterer with a number of teasing, erudite, intriguing meditations on the cultural phenomenology of the stutter, in history, rhetoric, and writing...Fascinating, vagabond reflections on the phenomenon of stuttering. --Steven Connor (Bookforum 2006-04-01)Provocative and imaginative. --Iain Finlayson (The Times 2006-04-01)The author does a great job of depicting the real life obstacles faced by stutterers, but he also provides well-illustrated information concerning some mysteries about stuttering: e.g., that it worsens when the stutterer is more self-aware and lessens in some performance contexts (singing, recitation)...This is an interesting and insightful book. --M. L. Ng (Choice 2006-06-01)[A] comprehensive, learned, even playful book. --Jonathan Mirsky (The Spectator 2006-07-01)