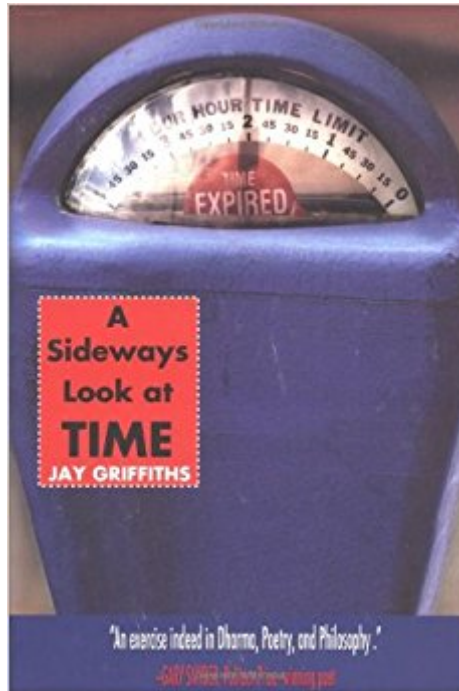




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# A Sideways Look At Time



## Synopsis

A brilliant and poetic exploration of the way that we experience time in our everyday lives. Why does time seem so short? How does women's time differ from men's? Why does time seem to move slowly in the countryside and quickly in cities? How do different cultures around the world see time? In *A Sideways Look at Time*, Jay Griffiths takes readers on an extraordinary tour of time as we have never seen it before. With this dazzling and defiant work, Griffiths introduces us to dimensions of time that are largely forgotten in our modern lives. She presents an infectious argument for other, more magical times, the diverse cycles of nature, of folktale or carnival, when time is unlimited and on our side. This is a book for those who suspect that there's more to time than clocks. Irresistible and provocative, *A Sideways Look at Time* could change the way we view time-forever.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"An exercise indeed in Dharma, Poetry, and Philosophy."&#151;Gary Snyder, Pulitzer Prize-winning poet

Jay Griffiths' writing has appeared in *The London Review of Books*, *The Guardian*, *The Observer*, *The Ecologist* magazine, and *Resurgence* magazine, of which she is an associate editor.

The book describes a historical and cultural account about the perception of time in different cultures. There are some interesting facts, but for the most part they were chosen and interpreted

carefully and solely to support the author's view of the world. The main underlying message is that ancient peoples and primitive tribes are much more "organically" connected with time, that they are much more in touch with nature, and (by implication) more "wise" and "spiritual" than the "Western man" is today. Author uses (far too many) examples of the "ancient wisdom" of different obscure and remote tribes to demonstrate that the modern man is unable to connect to things that are truly meaningful, and thus lives life of empty consumerism. Also, there is a whole chapter about women being more in tune with "moon time" because of their monthly cycle; some of the women in my book group found this idea to be especially silly. Author does not consider that many people live in big cities today because this is where the jobs are. Today, we need to use a watch, and show up for meetings on time. Not everybody has the luxury to live a life of quiet contemplation, surrounded by nature, without a need to show up on time for meetings or work. This book reflects a self-absorbed, self-indulgent view of the world. There are some interesting facts and observations, but the book would greatly benefit from a more balanced approach. The editor clearly failed here: the book should have been better organized, and the redundancy eliminated. Often, one or two examples are enough: what type of a reader will need ten examples supporting a single concept or idea?

Jay Griffiths is a great writer, but is so detailed in her every word that, for me, she takes extreme concentration to totally understand each and every sentence. Not an easy book to read fast, but full of facts and laughs. I read this after reading her book "Wild". Both are written in the same intense way. Both are books that you could read a second or third time and discover things you missed before. Read her if you love interesting facts and details. Do not read her if you like page turners, as a few pages a day are all I could digest.

This was not the book I had hoped it would be. It is a good one, but given its title, its chosen subject, it could have reasonably been a terrific one. Griffiths, perhaps, is too young and extroverted to have selected the more exotic and decisive aspects her subject and spent some, er...time with them. Perhaps it is a matter of temperament. Rather than merely outline the manifold ways with which time is conceived in various cultures, she could have inhabited some of the more interesting constructs and helped the reader try them out, experience them. They are here, in this book--the accounts of peoples for whom past and future are identical, others for whom time is exclusively cyclical, or for whom change itself (as in "progress") is a negative, rather than a positive value--but the author doesn't tarry long enough to immerse us in these non-Western mind sets, help us to see the cosmos through their eyes. Griffiths is basically a journalist of the chatty, wide-ranging sort hat

the British are good at (as with the author of "Nathaniel's Nutmeg" or the old BBC series "Connections"). Her methods suggest she had located some gigantic encyclopedia, looked up "time," then followed up all the leads and connections, however tenuous, however founded on mere figures of speech. The resulting verbal carnival hops through all periods and continents, back and forth, sometimes repetitively, flogging her biases (Western, male, linear time is Bad; non- or pre-industrial, female, i.e., cyclic, time is Good) ad infinitum and ad nauseum. Hard to imagine a reader of any stripe not wanting to rise to the defense of our own clock-dominated culture, if only to be contrary. If you dislike puns, stop reading this immediately and look for another book. Griffiths is positively smitten with them, and moreover with wordplay of all kinds. The trouble with this penchant is that it too often competes with her very interesting subject, her considerable research into non-Western peoples and their customs. The book is self-indulgent in the extreme. With all the multiple re-phrasings and digressions, I suspected more than once that the author is used to being paid by the word. With all these caveats, though, this is a rich survey of a fascinating subject by an erudite author. She tosses off scores of razor-sharp insights without seeming to value them, often crowding them with silliness and pointless asides that dilute her purposes. Those willing to sift through this compendious book for the strands of gold, however, will find it quite worthwhile.

This book represents the WORST kind of "mental masturbation"! The author forces readers to endure ENDLESS, unbroken, unnavigable prose, which is occasionally interspersed with some (obviously) well researched factoids about how different cultures and different historical periods view the measurement of time and their relationship to it. Unfortunately, there is NOTHING to break up this relentless diatribe, save for an occasional quote: No subheads, no photos, no imagery at all -- just 360 pages of regurgitated research into time, separated only by 13 chapter titles! Reading this book is worse than slogging through a text book. I suppose that readers should be grateful that the author saw fit to use appropriate paragraph breaks and a few quotes, or this book would be one LLLLOOONNNNGGGG paragraph -- which is how it reads!!

Jay Griffiths has definitely got a "sideways" take on time- for comparison, it touches lightly on Western culture's since of time- basically, time is money and on to native cultures who don't have much need for exact chronological time. In the Introduction that can be seen in the "Look Inside" feature here at , Griffiths warns the prospective reader that this is a cultural trip through the concept of time and if one is more interested in the physics, chronological or Western concept of time, they might not be interested in this book. Either way, I think everybody would enjoy Griffiths' variations on

time- how about "woman's time" for instance? No time to waste?- why not? It could be productive. Over-all, "Sideways" is a totally different take on the conventional concept of time and is heavily influenced by native culture's sense of time and space. A very eye-opening and engaging read.

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