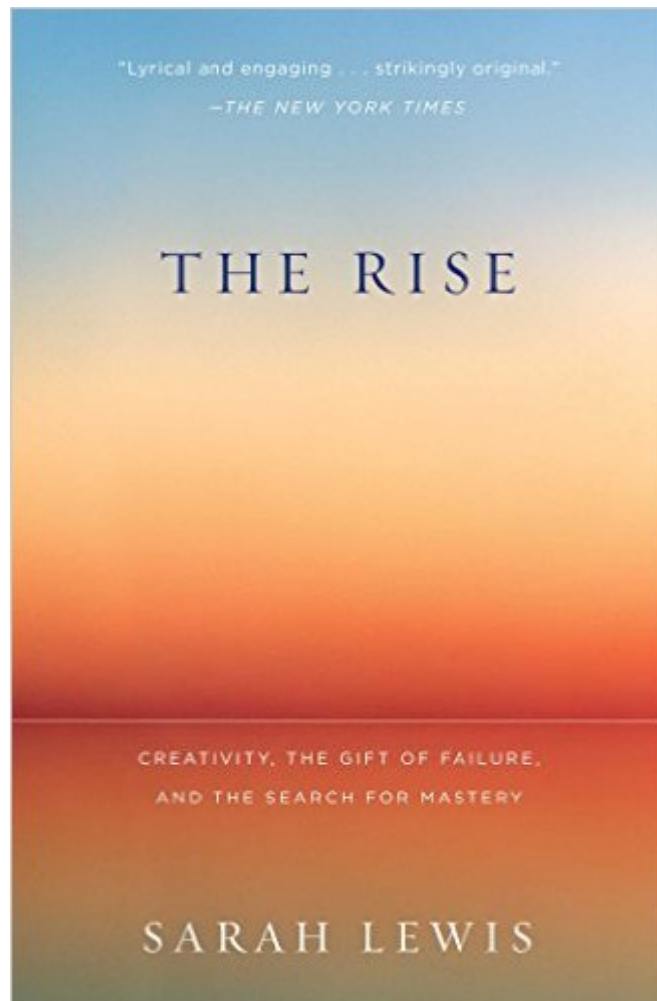


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The Rise: Creativity, The Gift Of Failure, And The Search For Mastery



Synopsis

From celebrated art historian, curator, and teacher Sarah Lewis, a fascinating examination of how our most iconic creative endeavorsâ ”from innovation to the artsâ ”are not achievements but conversions, corrections after failed attempts. The gift of failure is a riddle: it will always be both the void and the start of infinite possibility. The Riseâ ”part investigation into a psychological mystery, part an argument about creativity and art, and part a soulful celebration of the determination and courage of the human spiritâ ”makes the case that many of the worldâ ’s greatest achievements have come from understanding the central importance of failure. Written over the course of four years, this exquisite biography of an idea is about the improbable foundations of a creative human endeavor. Each chapter focuses on the inestimable value of often ignored ideasâ ”the power of surrender, how play is essential for innovation, the â œnear winâ • can help propel you on the road to mastery, the importance of grit and creative practice. The Rise shares narratives about figures past and present that range from choreographers, writers, painters, inventors, and entrepreneurs; Frederick Douglass, Samuel F.B. Morse, Diane Arbus, and J.K. Rowling, for example, feature alongside choreographer Paul Taylor, Nobel Prizeâ “winning physicists Andre Geim and Konstantin Novoselov, and Arctic explorer Ben Saunders. With valuable lessons for pedagogy and parenting, for innovation and discovery, and for self-direction and creativity, The Rise â œgives the old chestnut â “If at first you donâ ’t succeedâ “ a jolt of adrenalineâ • (Elle).

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Customer Reviews

I read many great reviews of this book and having read hundreds of self-help and inspirational

books as well as a number on mastery, innovation and creativity, I was expecting something really good. I was disappointed. She tells some good stories but tends to ramble on and not stay on point. The literary style of her writing might work well in a novel but I found it distracting in this type of book where one generally wants to get to the point and move on to the next in a more or less robust manner. I found myself reading and re-reading long tangled sentences that didn't seem to quite nail down what she wanted to say but danced around it. Literary and artistic -- yes. Direct and succinct -- no. Nothing in the content is new or original, nor does she bring any of her own experience into the book which might have saved it from the blandness -- maybe because she doesn't have any. She's gone to school a lot is the only thing I can tell from her biography. She clearly did a lot of research and all that data might have overwhelmed the clear line of thought one has to hold to write a really good book, as well as the heart required to connect with the reader. She writes like a very bright school girl and not like someone who has had any real experience with the subject she chose. Not bad, but a book on overcoming failure, gaining mastery, and living a truly creative life needs an author who has lived it, at least to some extent, and not just gathered pretty stories to thread together.

There are many famous achievements noted in THE RISE, but the most salient point about failure and what it provides the person who has failed in a particular endeavor comes from a member of Scott's failed Arctic bid, Navy Explorer George Nares: "It is true that we failed to bring home the North Pole as a national present to the world, but those who regret that circumstance may be consoled with the knowledge that failure implants more deeply in all breasts the desire to excel." THE RISE attempts to make the case that the lessons learned from spectacular failures can only enhance and support the masterpieces that come when anyone is forced to confront the bad and reconstruct an idea into its inevitable success. Sarah Lewis doesn't have a huge history with failure herself. She has a BA from Harvard, a Masters of Philosophy from Oxford, and is getting a Ph.D. from Yale this year. She has been a curator at the Tate Modern and MOMA in New York. She was on Obama's Arts Policy Committee, on Oprah's "Power List" and a Critic at the Yale University School of Art in the MFA program. Is it possible for someone this accomplished (and under 40) to really understand what failure is for most people? Well, Lewis doesn't bother with any stories about ordinary people. Instead, she fills the book with tales from those who, despite searching for success at some point in their lives, found huge fame and accolades later on after a period of reconstruction and reinvention. Mythmaker J.K. Rowling, choreographer Paul Taylor and activist Frederick Douglass are

all examples of famous personages who suffered the slings and arrows of fate, who survived periods of lowdown depression and endless negative reinforcement only to take those anger-inducing, frustrating circumstances and turn them into lauded achievements later on. Lewis believes that this type of resilience is possible for anyone and that these examples serve to prove that it is truly possible to recreate oneself or one's work into something that will find purpose in the greater world. One of the things that brings Lewis's sources to this point after a situation that would cause most people to run for cover and never try again is what she refers to as "Grit." The resilience to take failure and continue moving towards a goal, by rethinking the original plan or just going forward with a new project in the face of past failure, requires a certain mindset. Lewis says, "Grit is a portable skill that moves across seemingly varied interests. Grit can be expressed in your chosen pursuit and appears in multiple domains over time. It can be expressed through the pursuit of painting, and then through the invention of the telegraph." Switching course and finding new ways to attempt your particular adventure is a necessary but learnable skill that helps people meet their potential. She spends a good part of the book discussing how other theorists agree that training kids to excel in "Grit" would be a progressive step in truly preparing the young for inheriting our flawed world. Lewis writes like an academic; this is no cozy Dr. Dyer book with everything boiled down to simplistic platitudes that would find refuge on cat posters. It is a very thoughtful look at turning lemons into lemonade. Turning failure on its back and dissecting the particulars can take us into the next realm of our growth and expression. Lewis thinks it's possible, and after reading *THE RISE*, I have to say I believe her. Reviewed by Jana Siciliano

In a world where many are happy to share their opinions regarding matters about which they have given little thought, Sarah Lewis has taken the time to gift us a deeply thoughtful and meticulously crafted book that chronicles with great aplomb how failure has led to some of the world's most well-regarded successes. The impeccable research in "The Rise" and Sarah's ability to make connections between the complex and simple make the book infinitely quotable: "We all have a blind spot around our privileges shaped exactly like us," as Junot Díaz said, and it can create a blindness to failures all around. It results in the Einstellung effect: the cost of success is that it can block our ability to see when what has worked well in the past might not any longer. In the face of entrenched failure, there are limits to reason's ability to offer us a way out. Play helps to see things anew, as do safe havens. Yet the imagination inspired from an aesthetic encounter can get us to the point of surrender, giving over to a new version of ourselves. "Play, safe havens, imagination,

surrender. This book is filled with no shortage stunning illuminations. Perhaps one of the greatest gifts Sarah offers us is the distinction between "success" and "mastery": "Mastery requires endurance. Mastery, a word we don't use often, is not the equivalent of what we might consider its cognate -- perfectionism -- an inhuman aim motivated by a concern with how others view us. Mastery is also not the same as success -- an event-based victory based on a peak point, a punctuated moment in time. Mastery is not merely a commitment to a goal, but to a curved-line, constant pursuit." In my mind, that quote alone makes "The Rise" an instant classic that will remain one of the top three books I gift to loved ones, friends, and associates who have vision, respect the need to attend to and correct failures, and seek mastery over success.

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