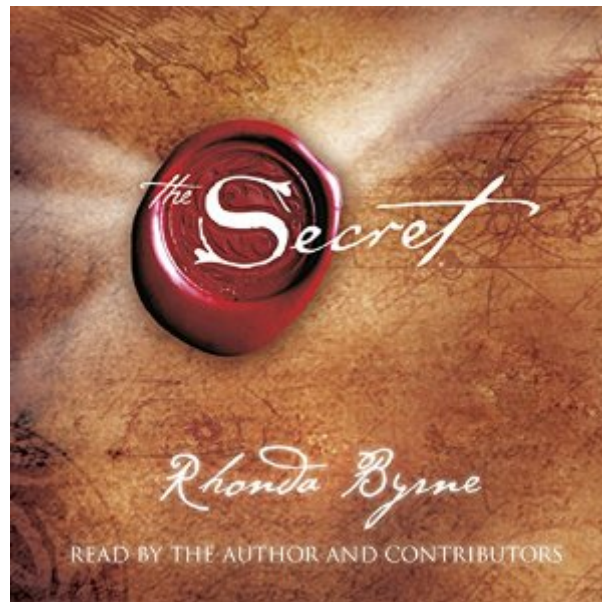


The book was found

The Secret



Synopsis

Fragments of a Great Secret have been found in the oral traditions, in literature, in religions and philosophies throughout the centuries. For the first time, all the pieces of The Secret come together in an incredible revelation that will be life-transforming for all who experience it. In this book, you'll learn how to use The Secret in every aspect of your life -- money, health, relationships, happiness, and in every interaction you have in the world. You'll begin to understand the hidden, untapped power that's within you, and this revelation can bring joy to every aspect of your life. The Secret contains wisdom from modern-day teachers -- men and women who have used it to achieve health, wealth, and happiness. By applying the knowledge of The Secret, they bring to light compelling stories of eradicating disease, acquiring massive wealth, overcoming obstacles, and achieving what many would regard as impossible. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Catchy review title? Thought so. Robert Cialdini, renowned psychology researcher and author of Influence: The Power of Persuasion (perhaps the best book ever written on the subject) identifies six basic rules employed by politicians, advertisers and scam artists alike to persuade others. Each of them are employed quite adeptly by Rhonda Byrne in this book. Cialdini's first principle is SCARCITY; people want what's expensive, exclusive, or otherwise attainable. Byrne's mastery of this principle is clearly shown by the very name of the book: The Secret. We all learned this the first week of kindergarten as we felt the jealousy of watching two classmates, hands cupped over ears,

sharing a secret out of earshot. This message is reinforced throughout the book and its advertising campaign which pitches "The Secret" (whatever it actually is) as jealousy-guarded information hoarded by the happy, wealthy and successful. Whenever someone tries convincing you of something, whether it's a way to make enormous sums of money, to lose weight, etc - be wary of when it's pitched as "the knowledge THEY don't want you to have." Think about it - everything from the "secrets that Wall Street doesn't want you to know" to "uncovered - celebrities' secrets to staying young" are phrased not simply to pique your interest but to make you jealous. Appeals to our emotion are far more powerful than appeals to reason, and Byrne demonstrates mastery of this principle throughout "The Secret."

Cialdini's second principle is LIKING. We like those who like us, and in turn, we do business with them. Positive thinking and emotional intelligence has been linked to strong interpersonal relationships, academic and professional success, and good health, but there is a fine line when positive thinking crosses over to unjustified exuberance. Instead of simply noting the substantial benefits of positive thinking (a well-accepted principle which wouldn't sell books), Byrne crosses the line so blatantly that anyone with a modicum of modesty would find it blasphemous.

AUTHORITY is another Cialdini principle, also in play in "The Secret" in quite subtle ways. Another technique which differentiates this book from just another book of positive thinking is the heavy use of quasiscientific language, which gives the impression that the "law of attraction" is (or will become) an accepted scientific principle, just like the law of gravity or the law of attraction of oppositely-charged particles in chemistry. Many people are both intimidated and confused by the authority of science, a fact exploited by manipulators ranging from Byrne to peddlers of magic weight-loss pills. Since no respected physicist would ever publish a paper on the universality of the "law of attraction," Byrne indirectly seeks experts in other ways. She attributes the success of people ranging from Einstein to Beethoven to adherence of "The Secret," thereby manufacturing experts. After all, if Einstein and Shakespeare mastered "The Secret," who are YOU to question it?

The last two Cialdini principles are CONSISTENCY and SOCIAL PROOF. The success of this book should leave little doubt it will be followed by more (and more expensive) forms of media peddling "The Secret." The audio recordings, weekend seminars, advertising tie-ins, and other follow-up products certain to follow will exploit these two principles. Once people commit themselves to believing happiness will come from "The Secret," they will attribute future successes, whether a promotion or a great new relationship, to adherence to it. Conversely, setbacks will be even more powerfully in committing people to "The Secret," as people will attribute their failures to not living up to "The Secret" (and buying more of Byrne's books). Consistency dictates it will be less painful to buy more books and immerse one's self further into "The Secret" than to accept the whole premise

is a quite ridiculous; while not as pernicious as a domineering cult, "The Secret" promises to charge you handsomely for a positive outlook on life. Byrne's book is problematic on many levels. On its face, it's a manipulative marketing tool meant to flatter, confuse and deceive. It's also pseudoscience at its best, the last thing we need to encourage in an increasingly technological world which requires healthy skepticism and critical thought. Most damaging, though, is how the book perverts reality by encouraging people to equate a positive outlook on life with a childish, idiotic narcissism. Ayn Rand must be rolling in her grave hearing about the modern manifestation of her objectivist movement reduced to the intellectual equivalent of canned pork. If you're interested in "The Secret," I highly encourage you to read the book - yeah, READ the book - if for any other reason so not to be manipulated by its brilliant marketing. Read it with a critical eye, with a copy of Cialdini's book in the other hand. You may not learn the secret of happiness, but you WILL learn a lot about manipulation and influence from a master of the subject in Rhonda Byrne.

I am commenting on The Secret as a clinical psychologist who specializes in how cultural and spiritual beliefs affect health as well as the author of a book about converging science and mysticism to navigate our personal journey. First, The Secret is a compilation of opinions from a group of professionals in several fields, rather than a book by the author. It would be more accurate for Ms. Byrne to present herself as the editor, rather than the author of the book. Having said that, it is important to distinguish between wishful thinking and mind-body science. Although the concepts expounded in the book are beautiful examples of what we could achieve if we explored our potential, it leaves the reader with "feel-good" platitudes, by failing to convey that simply wishing something does not attract anything other than expectations that lead to disappointment. As a scientist, I have seen the mind bypass biology in miraculous ways, but this does not happen by just wishing and waiting for "the laws of attraction" to work. Instead, change requires honoring commitments, not blaming others for our failures, assessing the self-sabotaging that surface when self-esteem is compromised, and realistically defining goals. The success of this book shows how hungry we are for someone to tell us that change happens magically without having to confront our demons and without taking responsibility for the life we created with our actions. While I wish Ms. Byrne the greatest success, I want to caution the reader that if "wishful thinking" does not attract what you want, do not blame yourself, because it was only thoughts without action.

I think a book like this, which makes some really big claims, should, roughly, do the following: 1) Present its premise clearly 2) Since it's a self-help book explain clearly what you need to do 3)

Provide compelling evidence that it's ideas work4) Be credible. The book does a decent job of explaining its premise, which is that everything in your life is the result of the law of attraction. I quote, "the law of attraction says like attracts like, so when you think a thought, you are also attracting like thoughts to you." In other words, think good thoughts and good things will come to you and if you think bad thoughts then bad things come to you. I've simplified this a bit but not a whole lot as the concept isn't rocket science. Now, does this book explain clearly what you need to do? Actually, for a self-help book it does a very poor job of this. How do you control your thoughts? What kinds of practices and thinking produce the best results? The author and contributors basically tell you a bunch of stories about how "so and so did something and you can too by changing your thinking". And that's it for the "how to" part of the book. There isn't any. Now, if I wanted to prove something worked from a scientific perspective it would seem to be easy to test this stuff out. You take two groups of people, teach one the secret, let the other go on with their lives and see what happens. In theory those that know the Secret would be happier and more successful than the control group. It might not be perfect but it'd be a whole lot better than what we get in this book. But, of course, you'd have to have an actual methodology to test. Instead the authors cite numerous anecdotes of how the Secret worked. One person's cancer went away. Another individual walks after a brutal accident. Still another finds romance. That's all fine and perhaps it's evidence but it's not proof. Cancer can be misdiagnosed. How many people who were injured like the "Miracle Man" never walked again despite the best attitude and trying the approach perfectly? The problem with anecdotes is that it's easy to start with a result, work backward and assume the conclusion. It's also very easy with anecdotes to only present the ones that make your case and ignore those that don't (when someone dies of cancer while practicing the secret for instance). It's just not good enough to use anecdotes for large claims like those made in this book. The following quote struck a nerve. "People hold that for awhile, and they're really a champion at it. They say, 'I'm fired up, I saw this program and I'm going to change my life.' And yet the results aren't showing. Beneath the surface it's just about ready to break through but the person will look just at the surface results and say, 'This stuff doesn't work.' And you know what? The universe says, "your wish is my command," I thought it was interesting that the universe instantly manifest failure but isn't quite so fast with success. In fact, a cynical individual might conclude that what they are really saying is, "when this program works it's because the secret always works, but, on the off chance it doesn't work, well, that's your fault." An even more cynical person might think, "gosh, I wonder what would help a person who failed? Maybe, a seminar with Bob Proctor would be just the thing to get them over the top?" Lastly, is the Secret credible? On the one hand, I think a lot can be said for the idea that if you

change your thinking you'd change your life. In many ways that seems obvious to me. On the other hand, if the secret actually was true, especially at the scope claimed by the book it would mean that everything that's happened is the result of your thinking. So, when a child dies of pneumonia, well, it's because they brought pneumonia into their lives. Michael J. Fox, not only did you bring Parkinson's into your life but change your thinking and it will go away. Obviously these things aren't true and they obliterate, in my opinion, any credibility in the book. Not only does the book go too far but most (I'd argue nearly all) of the contributors aren't credible. On a topic of this scope: the ability to 100% change your life and the world in an incredible fashion, does anyone really think you couldn't find psychologists, top flight scientists, therapists and thousands of mainstream individuals to support it, if it worked? Wouldn't there be tons of research instead of anecdotes? Instead we get a Feng Shui Master, a chiropractor, motivational speakers (err trainers), a metaphysicist, etc. combined with a half dozen anecdotal stories. So the most powerful like changing idea ever and you get it from the crew in this book presented in this fashion? I don't think so! If this idea really worked, at anything other than giving material to self-help speakers and generating repeat students, it just wouldn't be found here. The book wouldn't even have to be written because we'd all already know it and be practicing it. Remember, this is not a new idea, it's been around for a very long time, and it's been the topic of literally thousands of seminars and hundreds of books. In conclusion, I'm not opposed to the idea on a small scale but this book just goes way too far and I'm left with the feeling that all that's really going on is a bunch of people trying to get their name out and get you to pay for their seminars.

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