



Let's Explore Diabetes with Owls

David Sedaris

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David Sedaris

Let's Explore Diabetes with Owls David Sedaris

A guy walks into a bar car and...

From here the story could take many turns. When this guy is David Sedaris, the possibilities are endless, but the result is always the same: he will both delight you with twists of humor and intelligence and leave you deeply moved.

Sedaris remembers his father's dinnertime attire (shirtsleeves and underpants), his first colonoscopy (remarkably pleasant), and the time he considered buying the skeleton of a murdered Pygmy.

With *Let's Explore Diabetes with Owls*, David Sedaris shows once again why his work has been called "hilarious, elegant, and surprisingly moving" (*Washington Post*).

Let's Explore Diabetes with Owls Details

Date : Published April 23rd 2013 by Little, Brown and Company

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Author : David Sedaris

Format : Hardcover 275 pages

Genre : Humor, Nonfiction, Writing, Essays, Autobiography, Memoir, Short Stories, Audiobook

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From Reader Review Let's Explore Diabetes with Owls for online ebook

Erin says

I feel like I'm now on some sort of NPR blacklist for not liking David Sedaris. Like, I'll call in to the next fund drive and they'll say "I'm sorry but our records show you gave ...Diabetes with Owls two stars. We don't want your money." Two stars, because he's a competent writer, especially when he's not writing as himself, and he made me chuckle a few times but, wow, I haven't felt this alienated by a book in a while. Maybe it was because I listened to the audiobook and hearing the howls of laughter at some of the essays while not finding them funny is reminiscent of my least favorite kind of social interactions. I mean, are upper middle class people so stuffy that they've never heard of "crop dusting" or is this the whole "live studio audience" anticipatory laugh phenomenon that creates exponentially larger laughs that jokes deserve? Either way, "people don't dress well at airports" or "Chinese people eat weird food" are not really compelling things to read about, and neither are his multiple stories involving dead, dying, and injured animals, or stories where he uses "Black" or "Latino" accents, or when he talks about his time in voluntary poverty. It just reeked of "this is not for you" and boo to that.

Jeanette "Astute Crabbist" says

When I told my mom what I was reading, she thought I said "Let's Explore Dead Babies with Owls."

Bravo, Mr. Sedaris.

4.5 stars

Sam Quixote says

The hi-larious humorist David Sedaris returns for another collection of rib-tickling, side-splitting... ok, enough of that! But Let's Explore Diabetes with Owls isn't a bad read and a few of the essays had me LOL-ing hard though it's definitely not as consistently good as his other books.

His Homer Simpson-ish dad steals the show whenever he crops up, thundering about David's childhood home in his underpants with a drink in his hand. In Attaboy, he chokes out a neighbourhood boy he wrongly mistakes for having called his wife a bitch, but, hey, it was the late '60s/early '70s and that's just how parenting was! And the kid got some shit ice-cream so fair's fair!

Standing Still was my favourite story. David's sister Gretchen is almost raped walking home late at night and, during the police interview, they ask if her attacker was wearing short or long pants. She says long. Sedaris writes "My father slapped his palm on the tabletop. 'There you go,' he said. 'NOW we're getting somewhere!'" before buying a baseball bat and prowling the neighbourhood in his car seeing if he can catch his daughter's would-be rapist himself (a situation made all the more loaded by the fact that it was a black man and this was in North Carolina!).

Easy, Tiger also made me laugh as Sedaris reviews the differences between learning Japanese and German

languages on tape. This scenario appears on both: a wife announces to her husband that she wants to buy something - in the Japanese one, the husband asks her how much she has, she tells him, he offers to increase it; on the German one the husband replies coldly "I'm not giving you any more. You have enough." Oh, Germany!

That said, most of the essays are fairly ordinary and unmemorable without anything funny or impressive happening. It's very noticeable that the best stuff is largely from Sedaris' childhood/wayward youth while his recent stuff isn't nearly as interesting. It's like a successful band who spent years crafting their first record and made it big then their second album is all uninspired guff about the road and hotels; most of Sedaris' recent essays are about going on book tours and travel, while the ones that aren't - going to the dentist, getting a colonoscopy, buying a stuffed owl, getting into picking up litter - are equally humdrum and mundane with just the occasional sparkling sentence to tide you by (from the essay, Rubbish: "My arms are scratched from reaching into blackberry bushes for empty potato chip bags, of which there are a never-ending supply, potato chips in the UK being like meals in space. 'Argentinean Flame Grilled Steak' a bag will read, or the new 'Cajun Squirrel.'" - as a Brit I can confirm this is a very wry, very true observation of the insane variety of crisp flavours!)

Also included are six fictional monologues dotted throughout, all of which are mega-crappy and added nothing. Most are predictably liberal caricatures of conservative stereotypes - easy, unimaginative targets to make fun of. These were definitely the worst parts of the book. It's no surprise Sedaris made his name with nonfiction if this is the quality of his fiction.

There's enough decent material here to make reading it worthwhile for most David Sedaris fans, and the book as a whole is well-written and easy to read, so *Let's Explore Diabetes with Owls* is a decent-enough read. But I definitely think that unfortunately at this point we've seen his best stuff in his earlier, far funnier, books and the occasional gems amidst the growing amount of dross is the most we can expect from him going forward.

Lyn says

David Sedaris makes me laugh.

I love to read, want to encourage reading every chance I get, but here, in this one instance, let me invite potential readers to listen instead. Sedaris' books are hilarious, but to truly enjoy and to really understand the David Sedaris experience, you need to listen to him read his essays and sketches. The audiobook is the key. His delivery, nasal and borderline effeminate, is perfect. Sedaris has the timing of a veteran comedian and he is just too funny.

Let's Explore Diabetes with Owls, his 2013 collection of essays, short stories and observations might be my favorite work from him that I have read so far. David walks us through his childhood in North Carolina and we visit again his family and partner. Sedaris is also a world traveller and his wit and sharp eye for detail abroad make for some memorable and hilarious scenes.

A funny, enjoyable visit with a talented man.

B.J. says

Let's get one thing out of the way right now - David Sedaris is the preeminent satirist/essayist working and writing today. Maybe it's because of his radio readings or listening to his audio books, but his is a distinctive voice that fills your head as you read his work. For me, I can't help but think as I read a Sedaris essay that he's standing right there next to me, speaking word for word what is written on the page, which makes for interesting mental company.

When I delved into "Let's Explore Diabetes With Owls" (a great title if ever there was one), I expected the same rat-a-tat yet subdued sarcasm that made his other works so completely hilarious. Perhaps it was those expectations that contributed to my disappointment in this latest effort. There is still the trademark wit of Sedaris's prose and observations, but it also comes with a sizable dose of regret, disappointment, and an undercurrent of mid-life crisis. It almost seems in this book that Sedaris is coming to terms with being at the 'half-way' marker in life and can't quite believe how little has changed since his youth. It's a familiar theme that has been described many times before, but I was hoping that Sedaris would bring a fresh perspective to it. Instead, the theme seems to creep into his humor and sour it. Sedaris explores death, the regret of missed opportunities(or misunderstood, as in the essay "A Guy Walks Into A Boxcar") fear and the idea of helplessness (in particular during an essay that recounts an attack on his sister Gretchen). Not that there is nothing to laugh about in this work - the essay in which he describes a colonoscopy is classic Sedaris... that is to say, hilarious - but there seem to be too few moments of levity in what turns out to be a heavy tome.

The last half of the book offers up some fictional social commentary as Sedaris takes on the guise of various characters steeped in conservative ideology. The first story, in which a man murders his wife, adult daughter, and mother-in-law as a reaction to legalization of gay marriage, rings a bit hollow and seems more harsh than funny. Then again, I can understand Sedaris's anger at living in a society that still denies him the rights afforded to others - I just hoped that he would approach it with a more measured and biting style than the rather unimaginative product put out in this book. However, the piece about the woman who plans to join a Tea Party march in Washington by enlisting the help of her son is quite funny. While I don't find Sedaris's fictional efforts to be his strong point, the latter is the sort I would hope to see more of from him in the future.

It's disappointing when an writer steps out of his or her expected realm to try new things and doesn't quite deliver; but in the case of "Let's Explore Diabetes With Owls", it also allows for a reflection on one's own life, missed chances, regrets - and the hope that at the end of this day, another one will present new chances and new opportunities tomorrow. And if not, you'll at least have enough snark on hand to mock it appropriately.

Gary Anderson says

I usually like the work of David Sedaris. He's at his best when talking about his family or childhood memories, or wryly observing society's foibles. *Let's Explore Diabetes with Owls* has moments of that trademark understated irony, but it's more self-absorbed than his earlier collections. This book's primary theme seems to be the travails of a successful author as he fulfills his tiresome obligations to accept invitations to read his work out loud in exotic locations like China, Rotterdam, and Costco. But travel

wearies Sedaris, as do most other people. It's no surprise that he doesn't allow those who stand in line to purchase an autographed book to take pictures with him. Then he retires to one of his homes in England or France or Japan or New York and writes about how awful it is to be anywhere.

Although this book gave me a few chuckles, some topics are inherently unfunny, although Sedaris uses them as punch lines: teen suicide, cancer, ingestion of human feces, eye socket sex. Yuck. *Let's Explore Diabetes with Owls* is a disappointment because it is so much meaner and cruder--not to mention less funny--than earlier Sedaris books.

Wendell says

It is no happy work to break the hearts of tens, but I can do nothing less than my duty. So here it is: David Sedaris is not funny. He is not clever, observant, witty, pithy, or trenchant. He is not deadpan or droll.

What he is, is not funny.

I do not argue that he has never been funny or that he may never be funny in some theoretical future. I argue that he is specifically, painfully not funny in *Let's Explore Diabetes With Owls*, his latest book of "essays, etc." (and it's that "etc." that should warn you off like a double-red pennant at the yacht basin).

Let's Explore Diabetes With Owls has all the penetrating insight of your slightly tipsy Uncle Irv doing his Jerry Seinfeld impression ("So what is the deal with corn on the cob, anyway? I mean, c'mon!").

Come to think of it, even Jerry Seinfeld would be bored by Sedaris's hollow riffs on the absurdities of modern life, and that's a man who would claim to find gently ironic humor at a suicide bombing.

A few of the treats in *Let's Explore Diabetes With Owls*:

- China. The food isn't anything at all like what you're used to from the food court at the mall, plus the Chinese have an entirely different take on personal hygiene, if you know what I mean. Also: did you know they eat cats?
- Parodies of the illogical beliefs of conservative Christians. A quickie to bulk up the manuscript. Actually two quickies, if we're counting. I could have done these as fill-in-the-blanks, but it's my barrel and my fish and I'm shooting them. Get your own book contract.
- Colonoscopies. Isn't it weird that they knock you out and stick things in your ass? Some people go to jail for that. There's an irony for you! Ha ha! Plus a lot of stuff about flatulence—a guaranteed crowd-pleaser if ever my agent saw one.
- British bureaucracy. Six months to get a stamp on your passport. Is that crazy or what?
- Online language courses. How come they teach you things like "The hat of my aunt is on the table" and never anything useful? I'll bet no one's ever mentioned that to you before, have they? Have they? Huh? Huh? Well, have they?

When I checked this book out from the library, the librarian tapped the cover with her fingernail and said, "This book is so funny. You're going to love it."

It isn't, and I didn't. This book is David Sedaris getting a hernia in the desperate attempt to be funny, failing

pathetically, and still expecting people to send him on book tours and pay his publisher \$27 American per hardcover copy.

No wonder our public libraries are going to hell.

mohsen pourramezani says

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<http://choobalef.blog.ir/1394/10/30/%...>

Heidi The Hippie Reader says

David Sedaris is a unique American humorist. Sometimes I love his essays and other times I hate them, so ranking a collection of his work fairly is difficult. I listened to the audiobook of *Let's Explore Diabetes with Owls* on my daily commute and he's a wonderful narrator. Actually, having read a handful of his other books, I'd recommend listening to him read his essays. His timing and inflections are perfection. He's one of the few humorists who has literally made me laugh out loud.

The high points of this collection are Understanding Understanding Owls, Laugh Kookaburra, and A Guy Walks into a Bar Car. They're unbelievably funny and have a lot of heart. The low points were: Health-Care Freedoms and Why I want my Country Back, If I Ruled the World, and Dog Days. It's as if he ran out of material and tacked the worst of it on the end. Dog Days was awful and reminded me of Squirrel Seeks Chipmunk: A Modest Bestiary which I couldn't stand. Vulgar prose just isn't my thing, I guess.

Recommended for adult readers who are looking for a laugh and don't mind some profanity and general silliness. More humorous books that I've enjoyed: Are You There, Vodka? It's Me, Chelsea, Dad Is Fat, and It's All Relative: Two Families, Three Dogs, 34 Holidays, and 50 Boxes of Wine.

Johanna says

The most embarrassing part about writing a review of a David Sedaris book is the moment when you realize that what you are really trying to do is to write a David Sedaris-style essay. Something cute about how you were reading his book on the subway and you started laughing so hard that even the drunk homeless people moved away from you, but slowly because they hoped you wouldn't notice. You'd segue into a bit about how this made you realize that even when everyone around you makes you feel like a singular freak, you can still feel a profound connection to this man you've never met, because when he writes about his crystal meth addiction and being paddled by his father, he does it SO WELL that you actually think to yourself (contrary to all the evidence), "That's just like MY life!". Then of course you realize that your enterprise is doomed,

because David Sedaris is David Sedaris and you are just you, and no, he probably wouldn't want to hang out with you in real life because, well, obviously.

Elyse says

I enjoyed some parts of the book more than others.

I kept thinking ---It would have (always would be) much more fun to 'hear' David Sedaris reading these stories -rather than read them to myself.

It wasn't my 'favorite' book --yet I laughed. (and was touched)

Plus, how can anyone 'not' smile just saying 'David Sedaris's name! :)

Raeleen Lemay says

(I listened to this on audiobook.)

I went into this book with little knowledge on David Sedaris's work/life, so I learned a lot about him while listening to this! Overall it was enjoyable, but it definitely didn't blow me away. I do plan to give Me Talk Pretty One Day a read, but probably not any time soon.

Madeline says

As part of the promotional tour for this book, David Sedaris made a stop in a Barnes and Noble in my city, and I ended up going sort of by accident (I bought a copy of the book on a whim the day before the event and learned that, by purchasing the book, I had also unknowingly purchased a ticket to the reading the next day). It was a fun event - Sedaris is charming and adorable in person, and was very polite to the requisite crazy people who tend to show up at every author reading I've ever attended (I remember one particularly memorable woman at a Margaret Atwood reading who started out asking Atwood's opinion about Britney Spears and her costumes throughout the years, and ended by shrieking that "What they did to Britney was A SIN! It was A SIN!" and it was the most amazing thing I've ever seen). A word of advice for anyone attending a Sedaris event in the future, though: the man is *chatty*. There were only a few dozen people in line to get their books signed, but he stopped and talked with every single person, sometimes for almost five minutes each. It took a long fucking time, which I wasn't expecting, so be prepared for that. By the time it was my turn, I was just tired and didn't have anything fascinating to say, but he was very nice and asked me some polite questions as he drew an owl on my book, and then he offered me one of the chocolates that another fan had apparently made for him. I suggested jokingly that they had been poisoned, because I don't know how to talk like a normal human being, and he just kind of blinked at me, so I thanked him, grabbed my signed book, and ran. Anyway, add that to the list of Madeline's Awkward Author Encounters and let's

get to the real review bit.

Like Sedaris's previous collections, the essays here can be divided into three categories: stories about Sedaris's childhood and early twenties, stories about his travels (usually featuring his boyfriend Hugh, who I'm sort of in love with), and essays written from the perspective of a fictional character. The last category is the hardest to spot, because often they'll have the exact same tone and voice as his other essays, so you assume that they're nonfiction until he reveals that the speaker is not, in fact, him. My favorite kind of Sedaris essay has always been the travel kind, and this book has plenty of those. I always love reading about his experiences learning new languages, and there's a good passage about the differences between Japanese and German lessons:

"There's no discord in Pimsleur's Japan, but its Germany is a moody and often savage place. In one of the exercises, you're encouraged to argue with a bellhop who tries to cheat you out of your change and who ends up sneering, 'You don't understand German.'

'Oh, but I do,' you learn to say. 'I *do* understand German.'

It's a program full of odd sentence combinations. 'We don't live here. We want mineral water' implies that if the couple *did* live in this particular town they'd be getting drunk like everyone else. Another standout is '*Der Wein ist zu teuer und Sie sprechen zu schnell.*' ('The wine is too expensive and you talk too fast.') The response to this would be 'Anything else, Herr Asshole?' But of course they don't teach you that."

The essays dealing with Sedaris's childhood are distinctly bittersweet, because although they're still funny, there's an underlying sadness to them that's brought into the open much more than it was in his previous collections. This was the first time I had read anything about the abuse of the Sedaris children, and the saddest thing about these details was the way David Sedaris seems to calmly accept it as a normal part of everyone's childhood, which I don't think is true. Someone at the reading actually asked him about how his parents would beat him when he was a kid, and his response was essentially the same as it is in the book: he shrugged, and said that that was normal at the time and that he still didn't find anything unusual about it.

Xandra says

I needed a laugh and Sedaris didn't disappoint. A few times I was laughing so hard, I expected angry neighbors to kick in my door and duct tape my mouth shut while shaking their heads disapprovingly or sighing theatrically at the evidence that I have finally gone insane. It's not just the jokes and the context they're in, it's also the parallels I can draw with my own life, with my own cynical personality and my facetious nature. And a bit of empathy is essential when it comes to memoirs.

For full disclosure, I should mention that this is the first David Sedaris book I've read and it was great. On the surface, all the trivial experiences presented here are not that interesting. Just boring little life stories most of us don't pay attention to let alone write down in a diary to ponder on them days or, god forbid, years later. What makes them interesting is David Sedaris' voice, his wit, his irony and, occasionally, his depth.

Here we have the blistering drama of the middle class dysfunctional family in 1960s U.S., the nostalgic recounting of missed chances, the joyous preparations for an author tour, the morbid fascination with the skeleton of a Pigmy girl in a taxidermy shop on Valentine's Day, the cultural peculiarities of foreign countries, the harassment women have to deal with, Obama drama, a poem about dogs and six fiction stories in which Sedaris impersonates different types of people in order to mock their ugly traits. I could have done without the fiction stories which I consider to be the low points of the book.

If I were to choose, *A Guy Walks into a Bar Car* would be my favorite story because it blends humor with nostalgia with some touching moments that hit home for me, but they're all very strong pieces.

Now, if only I could get the damn Kookaburra song out of my head...

Gretchen says

I love David Sedaris but I HATED his last book, 'Squirrel Seeks Chipmunk'. I'm hoping he redeems himself here.

UPDATE: I read this book and I was happy to find short stories and essays. I laughed out loud many times. The story about the taxidermist is my favorite out of this collection.

Jason Koivu says

David's mah dawg, yo! I love this little guy!

I always listen to him read his own stuff in audiobook form, as opposed to reading it myself. I can't do his little elfin voice justice.

Let's Explore Diabetes with Owls is more of the same Sedaris: observations skewed by his quirky worldview, which produces within me squirmy giggles with the occasional guffaw explosion. This collection of essays gets an extra star on the rating from sheer worn-shoe comfort joy. It's no better than his previous books. Certainly not as introspective and tell-all as *Dress Your Family Up...* It's just good, solid humor carpeted by light thought-bombs.

The topics this time around are mostly dominated by lots of travel stuff, obviously due to all the book tours he's done since becoming wildly famous. So, in a way he's turning into an irreverent, gay Rick Steves. Sedaris also spends a good deal of time writing about writing. In general, his material has become quite self-referential (no, I won't use the buzzword meta), and I fear that with his continued fame this is a trend on the rise. Luckily for me, he's one of those people that can make anything funny. It may get to the point when all he has left to talk about is the experience of writing the last thing he wrote, and I will read it, chortle or squeal, and tinkle in my trousers.

FeReSHte says

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Lets Explore Diabetes with Owls, David Sedaris

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Mitch says

You know I'm shocked by all the high ratings for this book. Maybe it's because I'm younger than the average

David Sedaris reader, but my eyes were literally bleeding towards the end of Let's Explore Diabetes with Owls. I don't even rate nonfiction, but I'm making an exception for this... *thing* that reads like the inane, self-absorbed ramblings of a Grampa Simpson type - 'when I was young...' I killed endangered animals, never got the approval of my dad, wrote a racist rant, got my passport stolen... is this supposed to be funny? Insightful? Flippant? No? Not even a little bit? Well, whatever it is, it's not funny, it's humorless, bitter, and offensive.

Melki says

Yay! David Sedaris is even older than I am. (Every year it gets harder and harder to find someone who is...) BUT, he IS close enough in age that we are basically contemporaries, therefore, his gripes are my gripes, and this makes me happy.

Like Sedaris, I can clearly remember mundane incidents that occurred in third grade - the day THAT BASTARD, Marty W., pushed me down in the playground and tore my favorite pants (true, they were plaid, so maybe he did it as a favor), but, no, I cannot remember the birth of my first child. He CAME OUT OF ME, and I don't remember it happening!

And I, too, get annoyed that no one dresses up for air travel anymore:

It's as if the person next to you had been washing shoe polish off a pig, then suddenly threw down his sponge saying, "Fuck this. I'm going to Los Angeles!"

Maybe it was just the right book at the right time, or maybe it's due to the jittery stage of life I'm currently experiencing, but from the joys of colonoscopies to finding the perfect taxidermied owl, I loved every essay in this book.

I guess the only question still remaining is how am I going to get my mother-in-law, a woman who *still* sends me regular e-mails about the distinct possibility of President Obama's being born in *another country*, to wear a conical-shaped hat emblazoned with the words:

Another

Savvy

Senior

Hopes

Obama

Loses

Everything
