

Blink: the power of thinking without thinking analysis

Literature



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In society today, generally people are taught to put a lot of thought into the decisions we make through deliberation, and also taught to consider the future consequences or benefits of a decision. From a young age, parents, teachers, and other adults in society teach children to "never judge a book by its cover," in terms of many aspects of life, which range from judging particular situations to making judgements about other people. Malcolm Gladwell's main idea in his book, *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*, contradicts the saying. Instead, Gladwell theorizes that in many situations, a person's initial 3-second "snap" judgement with minimal information is more accurate than a decision made through long deliberation and gathering a large amount of background information.

To strengthen his argument and enhance his writing, Gladwell uses rhetorical writing strategies. Gladwell supports his argument with ethos, which is presenting a theory through scientific studies, expert analysis, and real-life examples. Gladwell deduces from his main idea to support his argument with anecdotes of examples in real-life and in science. Also, the diction Gladwell uses in his writing enhances his argument by showing formality through writing in standard English. He also uses some psychological jargon in the scientific and the marketing examples to prove to his audience that he is intelligent, and he knows what he is talking about.

Blink tells several stories about first impressions. The first anecdote explains the story of a fake Ancient Greek statue that the Getty museum paid millions of dollars to acquire. The museum carried out a fourteen-month long investigation to prove the statue was not fake. The scientists investigating the statue found the statue was not an imitator, so the museum agreed to

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buy it and put it on display. When art experts saw the statue for the first time on display, something did not look right to many of them, and further investigation found the statue to be a fake. Gladwell also explains an experiment about students watching short, silent videos of lecturers they do not know. The students were asked to assess the teaching abilities of the professors, and the scores closely matched those of students who actually had the same professors in class. Along with several other similar first impression stories in Blink, Gladwell explains an instance where a police officer's initial judgement of an innocent black man, who seemed to be "behaving oddly," led to a chase and the unjustified shooting and killing of the innocent black man from a simple misconception.

Book analyst John T. Reed states in regard of Blink, "Such snap judgements are made by experienced experts" (Reed 2013). Reed's statement is valid particularly in the case of the Ancient Greek statue. Journalist Stephen Bayley from The Observer states, "The reader is left uncertain whether rapid judgements should necessarily assume priority over measured ones" (Bayley 2005). Although Gladwell proves that a person's initial snap judgement can be more accurate than drawn out decision-making process, he also explains that sometimes snap judgements are not always best, such as the unjustified shooting incident. The reader is left with a cliff hanger about when and when not to use an initial snap judgement because Gladwell supports his idea with information, but he fails to tie the loose end of deciphering when one should and should not use an initial snap judgement.