

Summary



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Summary of Paul Martin's "A Third of Life" In his article, "A Third of Life," Paul Martin informs that sleep is a neglected topic, and we are largely ignorant about it. He begins by noting "Sleep: state so familiar yet so strange." Even though we spend a third of our lives to sleep, and many lacking-sleep people are suffering to its negative effects, we still do not know much and pay too little attention to it, according to Martin. He points out that many people in the modern society often lack of sleep, which has serious consequences on all aspects of our lives. Sleepiness is a main reason of accidents, but medical profession pays no attention to it. Then he states that sleep is not only a human characteristic, but it is also a universal characteristic of all animals. Sleep has many features, including safe sleeping place and posture, immobility, a variable reduction of responsiveness to the outside world and 24-hour cycle. Sleep is so essential that animals need to find their ways to assure it. To prove it, he gives examples of unihemispheric sleep animals. For example, dolphins are capable of unihemispheric sleep, which one half of the brain is awake, so it can control the dolphin's breathing while the other half of the brain is asleep. Some birds are also capable of unihemispheric sleep to maintain vigilance, but humans are not capable of this kind of sleep.