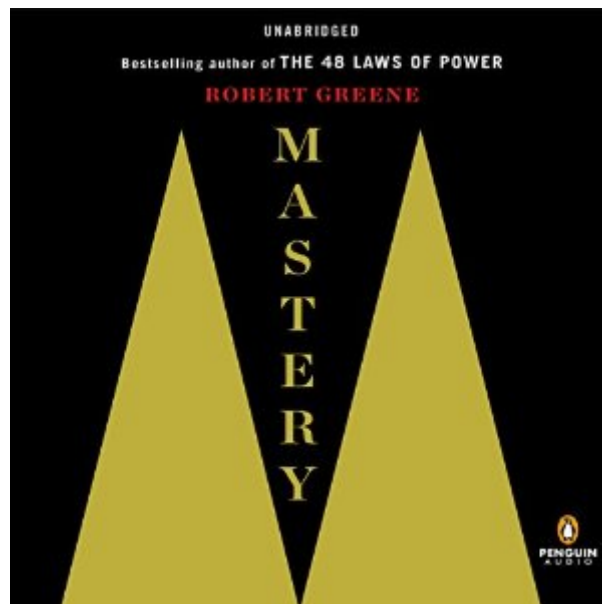


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# Mastery



## Synopsis

The eagerly anticipated new book from the author of the best-selling *The 48 Laws of Power*. What did Charles Darwin, middling schoolboy and underachieving second son, do to become one of the earliest and greatest naturalists the world has known? What were the similar choices made by Mozart and by Caesar Rodriguez, the U.S. Air Force's last ace fighter pilot? In *Mastery*, Robert Greene's fifth book, he mines the biographies of great historical figures for clues about gaining control over our own lives and destinies. Picking up where *The 48 Laws of Power* left off, Greene culls years of research and original interviews to blend historical anecdote and psychological insight, distilling the universal ingredients of the world's masters. Temple Grandin, Martha Graham, Henry Ford, Buckminster Fuller - all have lessons to offer about how the love for doing one thing exceptionally well can lead to mastery. Yet the secret, Greene maintains, is already in our heads. Debunking long-held cultural myths, he demonstrates just how we, as humans, are hardwired for achievement and supremacy. Fans of Greene's earlier work and Malcolm Gladwell's *Outliers* will eagerly devour this canny and erudite explanation of just what it takes to be great.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is an extremely powerful work on how to achieve mastery in one's life. Mastery can be thought of as the unique way each of us can fully actualize our potential for greatness and enjoy a fulfilling life. Achieving Mastery in life is a lot of work but it is the way to a flourishing life (a life of self-fulfillment). Spinoza's quote "All things excellent are as difficult as they are rare" came to mind several times as I read the book. The author provides ideas and strategies that can improve the

process for those willing to expend the effort. I plan to re-read and work with the ideas and strategies covered in this book and apply them to my personal context. I also plan to purchase copies of the book for my wife and 2 teenage sons so they can benefit from this material as well. The work begins by discussing how to discover one's purpose in life. This is unique to each individual and needs to be well thought through. The author gives 5 strategies for finding your life's task and illustrates these strategies with historical and contemporary figures. Two of the strategies he discusses that really gave me a lot to think about are: 1.) Occupy the perfect niche - the Darwinian strategy. In this strategy you need to find the career niche that best fits your interests and talents and then evolve that niche over time. I found the example of V.S. Ramachandran very interesting 2.) Let go of the past - the adaptation strategy. The following quote from this section that really resonated with me: "You must adapt your Life's Task to these circumstances. You do not hold on to past ways of doing things, because it will ensure you will fall behind and suffer for it. You are flexible and looking to adapt." The author then covers the Apprenticeship Phase which he breaks into 3 steps: 1.) Deep Observation - the Passive Mode 2.) Skills Acquisition - the Practice Mode 3.) Experimentation - The Active Mode There are detailed strategies for completing the ideal apprenticeship. These are illustrated by examples. 2 of my favorites in this section were "move toward resistance and pain" as illustrated by the example of Bill Bradley and "apprentice yourself in failure" as illustrated by Henry Ford. All 8 strategies are worth thinking about in detail. The next section covers learning through a Mentor and is one of the best parts of the book. The example of Michael Faraday is used as a great illustration. There are strategies discussed for finding the appropriate mentor(s), knowing when to break away from the mentor and what to do if you cannot find a mentor (the example here is Thomas Edison and there is an interesting tie-back to Faraday). Having a mentor is the most effective way to gain deep knowledge of a field in the least amount of time - it greatly accelerates that path to Mastery. The next section deals with social intelligence and seeing people as they are. Benjamin Franklin is used as an example. There are 7 deadly realities covered in this section (envy, conformism, rigidity, self-obsessiveness, laziness, flightiness and passive aggression) as well as strategies for acquiring social intelligence. The fifth section is on awakening the dimensional mind. This is where you see more and more aspects of reality and develop ways to become more creative (and not get stuck in the past). There are several strategies on creativity discussed in detail. I found the discussion on ways to alter one's perspective especially illuminating. These include avoiding: \* Looking at the "what" instead of the "how" \* Rushing to generalities and ignoring details \* Confirming paradigms and ignoring anomalies - (key quote: "...anomalies themselves contain the richest information. They often reveal to us the flaws in our

paradigms and open up new ways of looking at the world")\* fixating on what is present, ignoring what is absent (Sherlock Holmes example)The section continues with strategies and examples for this "creative-active" phase. My favorite was a section on Mechanical Intelligence with the Wright Brothers as an example.The Final Section is on Mastery as the fusing of the Intuitive with the Rational. The strategies in this section are very powerful and I will be returning to them again and again. Here are the 7 strategies:1.) Connect to your environment2.) Play to your strengths (this is very important - see further thoughts on this below)3.) Transform yourself through practice4.) Internalize the details - the life force (Leonardo Da Vinci example)5.) Widen your vision6.) Submit to the other - the Inside Out perspective7.) Synthesize all forms of knowledgeThis is a very powerful book filled with a lot of good ideas and strategies. There are ideas I plan to continue to "chew" on and think more deeply about while I work to integrate these ideas and strategies into my personal context.A lot of the book stresses the importance of self-discipline, persevering through difficult challenges, the importance of an adaptive and active mind, independent thinking and integrating all of one's knowledge. Here are a few recommendations I would make to augment the material covered in this book:1.) For Self-Disipline and Willpower (and perseverance): Willpower by Tierney and Baumeister The Power of Habit by Duhigg Grit (see TED Talk by Angela Duckworth and the GRIT assessment as well - Grit Assessment can be found at: available at [...])2.) For an adaptive/active mindset (and recovering from failure) Mindset by Carol Dweck Aapt by Tim Harford3.) For a great fictional example of many of the ideas covered in the book, I would recommend Ayn Rand's The Fountainhead (Roark as a positive example; Keating as a negative example of what the author calls "the false self")4.) Other Real world examples Richard Feynman (see his books "Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynman" and "The Pleasure of Finding Things Out")5.) Finding your strengths Strengthsfinder 2.0 by Tom Rath VIA Survey of Character Strengths (available at [...])

I read Gladwell's "Outliers" and when I saw Mastery, I thought, didn't Gladwell already DO this book?Kind of, but not really.This book is totally different.Gladwell's book is filled with examples.Greene's book is an instructional inspiration, so to speak. Outliers didn't present a roadmap, which is what really differentiates the books.It starts with examining your past and how to discover what you are meant to do -then steers you on a path towards following those who are where you want to be, how to work with them and make the most of the relationship - and one of my favorite parts is seeing people as they are (social intelligence).It then delves into creativity and how to blend it with reality - how to become a master of your chosen destiny.If you love quotes, this book

is packed with them. It's also packed with examples of true stories. *Outliers* leaves readers with the answer of how successful people got to the top - *Mastery* leaves readers with a road map of how to become one of those successful people (accompanied by stories of achievement). Compelling and commanding - this is a book that should come with a highlighter and will have a permanent place on your inspirational bookshelf.

"*Mastery*" continues in the tradition of Greene's other work, especially *The 48 Laws of Power*, *The Art of Seduction*, and *The 33 Strategies of War* (Joost Elffers Books). Consider this book, if you will, as a synthesis and application of the principles in those three books: in the "48 Laws," Greene introduced a set of concepts loosely based on Gracian's "The Art of Worldly Wisdom" that assisted readers in determining how to gain and maintain control. In "Seduction," Greene taught readers the principles of gaining and maintaining status as a desire of others; and in the "33 Strategies," Greene shifted the ground beneath our feet from the boardroom and living room to the battlefield, describing how militaristic techniques and approaches could be used to achieve our goals and outcomes. "*Mastery*" synthesizes much of this previous work into a larger framework, a longer-term project--a "bigger picture," so to speak. Greene defines "mastery" as the ultimate power: "[A] form of power and intelligence that represents the high point of human potential. It is the source of the greatest achievements and discoveries in history. It is an intelligence that is not taught in our schools nor analyzed by professors, but almost all of us, at some point, have had glimpses of it in our own experience." As with his previous works, Greene relies heavily on historical anecdotes to explain his six-step plan to the achievement of mastery:

1. Discover your calling: the life's task
2. Submit to reality: the ideal apprenticeship
3. Absorb the master's power: the mentor dynamic
4. See people as they are: social intelligence
5. Awaken the dimensional mind: the creative-active
6. Fuse the intuitive with the rational: mastery

For each of these steps, Greene includes a detailed explanation of what the step's goal is, relevant historical examples of the step in action, and the strategies for achieving the goal and moving to the next step. For example, in the first step (the life's task), Greene somewhat metaphysically argues that "You possess an inner force that seeks to guide you toward your Life's Task--what you are meant to accomplish in the time that you have to live." Determining what this task is is the goal of the first step. Greene then offers up Leonardo Da Vinci as an example of this search, and provides five strategies for "finding your life's task": returning to your origins, occupying the perfect niche, avoiding the false path, letting go of the past, and finding your way back. Each of these strategies is further accompanied by more historical anecdotes. Whereas the "48 Laws," "33 Strategies," and "Seduction" had focused on somewhat

tighter, more confined situations--and were presented in a rather fragmented, isolated manner that did not necessarily relate each rule or precept to the others--"Mastery" is a conscious attempt to bring together all this information and these principles into a single, directed course of action. This book, more than all the others, is Robert Greene's answer to the question of how to "win friends and influence people" (with emphasis on the latter). A worthy addition to any library--especially those with well-thumbed copies of Greene's earlier books.

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