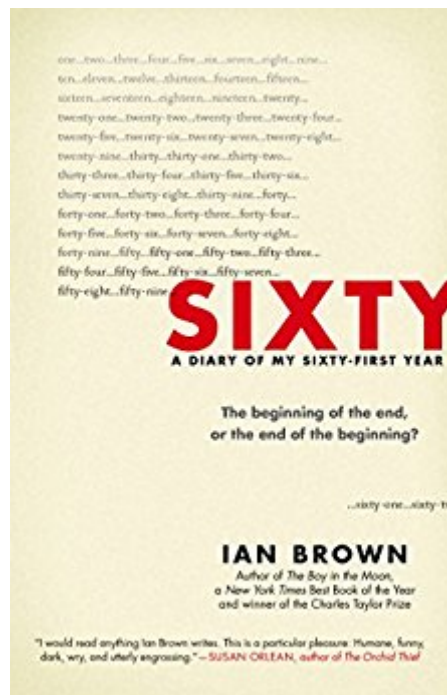




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Sixty: A Diary Of My Sixty-First Year: The Beginning Of The End, Or The End Of The Beginning?



Synopsis

This is the thing, you see: I am on my way to being an old man. But at sixty, I am still the youngest of old men. As Ian Brown's sixtieth birthday loomed, every moment seemed to present a choice: Confront, or deny, the biological fact that the end was now closer than the beginning. True, he was beginning to notice memory lapses, creaking knees, and a certain social invisibility—and yet, it troubled him that many people think of sixty as "old," because he rarely felt older than at forty. An award-winning writer, Brown instead chose to notice every moment, try to understand it, capture it . . . all without panicking. *Sixty* is the result: Brown's uncensored account of his sixty-first year, and, informed by his reportorial gifts, his investigation of the many changes—physical, mental, and emotional—that come to all of us as we age. Brown is a master of the seriocomic, and his day-to-day dramas—as a husband, father, brother, son, friend, and neighbor—are rendered, inseparably, with wistfulness and laugh-out-loud wit. He is also a discerning, prolific reader, and it is a pure pleasure being privy to his thoughts on the dozens of writers—including Virginia Woolf, Philip Larkin, A. J. Liebling, Wisława Szymborska, Clive James, Sharon Olds, and Karl Ove Knausgaard—who speak to him most, at sixty. From an author on whom the telling detail is never lost, *Sixty* is a richly informative, candid report from the line between middle-aged and soon-to-be-elderly. It perfectly captures the obsessions of a generation realizing that they are no longer young.

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Customer Reviews

Interesting range of reader reactions, from one star to five. I ordered this book in my 60th year and turned 61 last week, and I liked it a lot (but not five stars). On the surface my life has been totally different -- no spouse, children, and a working life spent as a staff employee -- but I identified many common issues and thoughts. It's not an epic story or revelation about life and aging, but life experiences and reflections are rarely epic for anyone, at least that's my conclusion after 60 years so far. I would say that the author Ian Brown is hyper-literate, not like most people I know, but again, the relentless march of time consumes all souls equally (and thankfully so!). I found 60 to be my biggest year of transition since 20, incorporating a layoff and early retirement, a surviving parent pushing 90, the beginning of chronic health threats, and increasing alienation from popular culture. All of these things and more are at least touched on in this book without being preachy or proclaiming. I still give it 4 stars ...

Our guide to a healthy, fortunate and self-deprecating sixty-first year in Canadian life is a fine, thoughtful writer. He chides himself and imagines accurately that we see his diary for what it is: A publicly personal reflection on the limits of good fortune placed by the human condition. My father says, like his, "Don't get old." But I write this on a day I learn that a man dear to the woman I love has perished of a sudden health failure, before sixty, and like Brown, I know the fortune of still living. I hope to get old, and if I do, I hope to remain, like Brown, in pursuit of wisdom without the fear of success in that aim. Give me comprehension, but not too soon.

Although the book is rather male-centric, I have found it to be interesting enough to have purchased 2 more copies as gifts. My copy has lots of paragraphs underlined as Brown's thoughts make me think too.

Really resonated with being 60. Hard to believe we get this old but Ian does a great job of putting into words how we think and feel. Great read.

People in their late 50's or heading into the 60's will likely find many familiar parallels of the author's thinking and behavior. Many things are different ways of considering the inevitable path through life we are all destined to follow, one way or another.

Nice ideas. However, 61 is not really as traumatic as the author seems to think it is.

Brown's fine prose style doesn't save this from reading as a memoir of one pretty depressive character. Allusions to having one foot in the grave -- on virtually every page -- litter what could have been a more incisive, engaging, even entertaining, look at getting older. But be serious; by an enormous number of measures in 21st Century white America/Canada, 61 is simply not old (I'm 63 and I'm not in denial). Never mind that the two seniors who just battled for the presidency are nearly a decade older and don't seem to be at death's door (fill in the blanks on the enormous number of vital, influential folks born before Brown who are still walking around and doing things large and small). Creating a shrine to one's own ticking clock, to the calendar itself, is a fool's errand. And the contradictions within Brown's own life -- his fairly athletic lifestyle, his globetrotting, his bonds with friends and, to an extent, family -- are odds with his frequent intimations of impending doom. I get that this is somewhat stream of consciousness, somewhat interior monologue, somewhat a rough draft of his 61st year and what he feels he has or has not achieved -- but as his afterword indicates, the structure was in fact intentional and there's actually nothing rough about this memoir. Anyone can go at any time and any age. But how does crossing an entirely arbitrary threshold merit this sort of narrative -- especially when the author acknowledges, once or twice, that he may yet be breathing for a few more decades (as we all hope he is)?

This diary and reflection on life's last chapter is witty, poignant and at times laugh out loud funny. Told with candor, painful at times, it reveals much of the common, mostly unspoken fears, hopes, aspirations we share on our journeys through life. Bravo!

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