



When a fire fighter in Cleveland instinctively knew that his men were in danger, he commanded them to leave a burning building only seconds before the entire first floor collapsed beneath his men. He could not describe the reason for his intuition. Instead, he was only able to recount his inner subconscious thoughts after the fire, recalling that the fire was not as hot as usual and was not responding to the dousing of water in a normal way. Moreover, he felt that the fire was not as loud as usual. The cause for all of his observations lay in the fact that the fire was not taking place on the first floor, but had started in the basement. His instincts told him in the “blink” of an eye that trouble was afloat.

The Getty Museum purchased a 2500 year old statue after an exhaustive eighteen month process during which the statue and its pedigree were researched. After the purchase had transacted, three art historians each instinctively, literally within seconds, asserted that the statue was a fraud. Upon further research, their instincts were validated. Documents had been forged and an elaborate scheme using forged documents falsely dated the age of the artwork to defraud the museum of \$10 million.

Malcolm Gladwell’s follow up to “The Tipping Point” is a wonderful treatise on the development of instincts. He illustrates that things cannot be taught as much as they can be learned and recounts several stories that demonstrate “the power of thinking without thinking”. “Blink” is a quick and simple read and teaches us to rethink how we think and instinctively process information.

Gladwell’s thesis is as important for demonstrating the power of expertise as it is for the error of feigning it. All too often, people rush to judgments based on prejudices and poorly preconceived notions. He details experiments of psychology students which validate findings of prejudicial decision making. It explains why some presidents are elected based upon charm instead of substance, why African Americans are (unfairly) associated with negativity, and why an inordinate number of CEOs are significantly taller on average than the general population.

Particularly appealing is the combination of methodology between Gladwell’s qualitative research and the link to qualitative studies. But if you want to have some real fun (or nauseate yourself), read this book if only to learn how the Pentagon cheated on war games in order to falsely validate a position regarding technology and military intelligence. You will laugh and cry over this story of our federal government, but at least you will have new insights into the way people think, and more importantly, how you can develop your ability to process information in the blink of an eye.