



A Left Hand Turn Around the World: Chasing the Mystery and Meaning of All Things Southpaw

By David Wolman

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Traveling from the halls of history to the halls of science, Wolman explores a Scottish castle designed for left-handed swordfights, visits a Paris museum to inspect nineteenth-century brains that hold clues to this biological puzzle, and observes chimps with a primatologist in Atlanta who may help unravel the evolutionary mystery of left-handedness. Along the way, Wolman meets fellow left-handers who share his sense of kinship and reveal the essence of Southpaw. There is sinister Diabolos Rex, follower of the Left Hand Path; and John Evans, an amputee whose left hand was reattached to his right arm. In Japan, Wolman tees off with the National Association of Left-Handed Golfers and seeks wisdom from a left-handed baseball legend. A seamless blend of science, travel, culture, and humor, this inquisitive exploration of all things Southpaw is sure to be the perfect book for lefties and for all the righties who love them.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Far more detailed than a typical collection of left-handed trivia, David Wolman's *Left-Hand Turn Around The World* examines 200 years of anatomy in a search for the roots of hand preference. The results are surprising, and perhaps a bit disappointing to anyone who prefers believing "left-handed people are the only ones in their right minds".

Wolman travels the world for answers, from a mildly gruesome visit to Broca's bottled brains in a Paris museum to the latest Berkeley research labs. Throughout the journey, the science is as accessible as any animal documentary and as well-documented as any rigorous reader will demand. Included in the mix are a trip to a graphologist's convention and a visit with a gentleman whose handedness is the result of surgically combining his left hand with his right arm. Wolman's Fulbright fellowship-winning reporting is always clear and entertaining—he has a fine knack for presenting complex theories in direct, dryly amusing language. He frequently inserts himself into the research, in one case borrowing his nephew for a visit with a pediatric neuropsychologist.

With the most recent research offering the theory that strength of hand preference is more important than the actual hand preferred, the final conclusion could be an eye opener to those who prefer the old ideas that lefties are more creative, athletic, artistic and generally more wonderful. As Wolman says in conclusion, you can still say lefties are special, because they are. *Jill Lightner*

From Publishers Weekly

Why are so many humans right-handed when most animal species show random preferences for one side or another? Is a preference for the left hand an indicator of brain difference? How do developing embryos figure out which side is left, anyway, and why is that information so critical to their development? Wolman's breezy, informative account of "what makes left-handers special" tackles these and other fascinating questions on its journey to finding out what exactly handedness means and why it happens. The author, a proud member of "the fraternity of Southpaw" and a journalist whose work has appeared in *New Scientist*, *Discover* and *Wired*, travels all over the world to find his answers, and his lively tales of visits to the field's top researchers double as solid introductions to the science of handedness. Though his visits to a palmist in Quebec and a graphologist in Virginia are less than entertaining—he finds them illogical, they find him irritating—his attempts at left-handed golf in Japan and lefthanded sword fighting in Scotland are funny and instructive. Amusing and thorough, this little tome makes a good gift for the left-handers on the Christmas list. (Nov.)

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From [Booklist](#)

Wolman, a proud southpaw and lover of all things left, decided to delve into the science and culture of left-handedness, hoping to discover if there is any significance in 10 percent to 12 percent of the population's natural preference for the left hand. What Wolman finds are a lot of theories but few concrete answers. One scientist thinks a phenomenon dubbed *Right Shift* is responsible for the language and right-handed dominance that set humans apart from other mammals. Or do they? Another scientist believes chimps exhibit a similar preference for the right hand. Yet another posits that the divide is more along the lines of single-handedness versus mixed-handedness. Along the way, Wolman meets some colorful characters, including a handwriting guru and a man who had his left hand attached to his right arm after an accident. For those with

a keen interest in the subject, Wolman debunks many of the myths associated with handedness and provides a lively account for those interested in the significance of being a lefty or a righty. *Kristine Huntley*
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

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