

Catching the Big Fish Study Guide

Catching the Big Fish by David Lynch

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

Catching the Big Fish Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Chapters 1-10.....	4
Chapters 11-20.....	6
Chapter 21-27.....	8
Chapters 28-35.....	9
Chapters 36-51.....	10
Chapters 52-65.....	11
Chapters 66-75.....	12
Chapters 76-83.....	14
Characters.....	16
Objects/Places.....	19
Themes.....	22
Style.....	24
Quotes.....	26
Topics for Discussion.....	28



Plot Summary

David Lynch is a world-renowned film maker and director. Since the 1970s, Lynch has brought a unique surrealistic quality to cinema, effectively marrying art house cinema with commercial Hollywood. In *Catching the Big Fish, Meditation, Consciousness, and Creativity*, Lynch shares many experiences spanning his three decades in the film industry. The book is much more than that, however. One of Lynch's primary purposes in writing this tome was to introduce Transcendental Meditation to his legions of followers.

Lynch has practiced Transcendental Meditation (TM) since 1973, meditating twice daily, at minimum. The method of transcending, meditating with the use of a mantra, has taken Lynch to a new place. This place is called the "Ocean of Pure Consciousness," and it underlies everything we do and everything we are. In this ocean, one is able to experience bliss. There is an expansion of intellect and spirit. In this ocean, life's problems come into focus and many fade away. Many find untold amounts of creativity and wisdom.

On a scientific level, the ancient practice of meditation or the realization of the Self, wasn't proven until the theory was tackled by quantum physicists. The physicists were able to measure brain wave activity and in the end, determined that there is, in fact, an underlying place that relates to everything. They call it The Unified Field - same concept, different name.

Lynch is obviously a huge supporter of TM. The author claims a wide array of benefits, from removal of anger and depression to increased intellect and intuition. Once a person has experienced the ocean of pure consciousness, the mind grows and is able to accept so much more. The more one practices, the more one can tap into the bliss.

Lynch's enthusiasm is almost repetitive at some points, yet it all ties together in the end. It is apparent that TM has affected every aspect of the author's life, and he credits his experiences for always finding the next right thing. When it comes down to it, everything and everyone is related. The answer to any problem is accessible and waiting to be found. Along the way, one will learn to appreciate the world and all its beauty. Creativity will soar. Lynch says that he has been lucky and wishes for all to have the same.



Chapters 1-10

Chapters 1-10 Summary and Analysis

Lynch's first experiences with Transcendental Meditation (TM) occurred in 1973. At first, it all seemed like a waste of time and not telling people where "within" is, seems cruel. Lynch learns his sister has been practicing TM for six months. The tone of her voice made Lynch realize he wanted happiness. Lynch went to the TM center in Los Angeles, where he learned about the ease and positive effects of TM. Thirty-three years later, Lynch has not missed a single session. The first few times he practiced TM brought about drastic changes in his behavior. Previously filled with anxiety and fear, Lynch began to notice a release from these negative emotions, which he calls the "Suffocating Rubber Clown Suit." This suit is suffocating in its pervasiveness and it smells bad. Meditation can make the suit fade away. Negative emotions may be good elements in a tragic story but are poison to the artist.

As a child, Lynch spent much time in the woods. Although Lynch liked to paint and draw, the author thought love of art had to be pushed aside to make room for making a living in the "real" world. When the Lynch family moved to Alexandria, Virginia Lynch met Toby Keeler, who contributes to Lynch's development as an artist. When Toby said his father was a fine artist, the author put aside the secondary love of science to live "the art life." Lynch cast aside all that is not art related, which may seem selfish, but that is untrue. It is necessary to have mental preparation before creating and there are also physical preparations. One's idea need not be complete just enough to get started. The creation process is one of construction and destruction, building and changing until a piece is as it was in the mind. Creativity takes time. At the Pennsylvania School of Fine Art, the author worked on one significant painting of a garden at night and noticed the plants seemed to move. From this, Lynch decides he was going to make a moving painting for a contest. The piece was an animated stop motion film and an expensive venture, which quelled any desire to continue in this medium. However, an older student commissions Lynch to build something similar at his home. That was the beginning of it all.

When the lights go down and the curtains open, one enters into an enchanted world in theater. The experience is best viewed when in the presence of another. The theater is the best way in which to enter this world. Lynch sees cinema as a language all its own. It has the ability to say "big abstract things" that cannot be said via any other medium. There are so many elements to a film and all are used to create and shape the final piece. Film needs to stand on its own. Some want to enter the world and experience what they see without having someone else's ideas pushed onto them. Some garner their own meaning from the film; therefore, Lynch believes that saying anything at all could ruin the experience.

Many believe they don't know enough to correctly interpret cinema. This is not true. Cinema is an abstract art that can be "felt" and does not need to be put into words. There is a circle formed when an audience views a film. While the film remains the



same in every way, each viewing takes on a different feeling. Lynch believes that the audience's experiences may be completely different from his own when creating the film. Lynch compares getting an idea to a cartoon character appearing with a light bulb above his head. Ideas arrive in fragments. Once you get the first piece, the rest will come.



Chapters 11-20

Chapters 11-20 Summary and Analysis

Desire attracts the first idea and then pulls in all the other ideas. Initial ideas may only be fragments, but larger ideas may be more developed and perhaps even complete. Eventually, there are enough fragments that something will emerge. Lynch believes what the Upanishads says that "There is no happiness in the small." To get to the big fish, one must have an expanded consciousness, which can be gained through Transcendental Meditation. TM gives one a sense of bliss, as well as awakening and expanding the mind. If a person has a golf-ball-sized consciousness, then everything that the person experiences will be golf ball sized, but with an expanded consciousness, experiences expand. Every film is an experiment. If a director explains a concept, the audience will either understand or be confused, so the event goes back to the director to try again. Eventually, it will "feel" right or it won't. Through TM, the creative flow comes faster and easier.

The author claims that TM is not simply to make one feel good but is about an expanded awareness. Through TM, one can delve deeply into the Self and experience internal change, which is inevitable. Lynch talks about his arrival in Los Angeles. Philadelphia was a hellhole to him; Los Angeles would be a whole new experience. Some see LA as a city of sameness. Media shows little of the character that makes the city so desirable. Each neighborhood has its own flavor. The glamor of Hollywood still exists in LA. The light in LA is a prime catalyst for coaxing people to move to its own little world.

Lynch claims that Eraserhead is his most spiritual movie, which surprises people. During the process of making the movie, Lynch could see it evolving but didn't know what it all meant. Lynch struggled with the process until one night he read a sentence (which he won't reveal) in the Bible that made it all click. People have commented on the rapid pace of life for decades, and Lynch believes the pace is increasing. Eraserhead took five years, and author was concerned the world would be different. Lynch stopped listening to music and ceased watching TV. Lynch was out of money and was approached by his brother and father, who tried to convince David to give up on Eraserhead and get a job. David got a job delivering the Wall Street Journal, which netted Lynch \$50 a week. Jack Nance, the actor who portrayed Henry, held on for three years for Lynch to get the funds. This experience mad Lynch realize that while the pace of life may be rushing around you, it's important to focus on the task at hand, the ultimate vision, which is easier using TM.

Lynch has always been drawn to the expressions on the faces of Yogi's which show a sense of dignity and power and an absence of fear. It was a yogi that inspired Lynch to discover enlightenment for himself. During the filming of Eraserhead, Lynch drew a cartoon of a dog which looked very angry. Lynch says that he had to know what was making the dog so angry, so a four panel strip evolved into "The Angriest Dog in the



World." Lynch figured that the dog's environment was making it so angry. The strip is mainly about what the dog hears in his master's house. The strip was picked up by LA Weekly and eventually, the Baltimore Sun. It ran for nine years.

Music must be married to a film. One must feel the part of the music and trust the intuition to know if that song is the right one. In choosing a score for *The Elephant Man*, the author fell in love with Samuel Barber's *Adagio for Strings* and knew in an instant the piece was perfect for the film. The producer purchased nine versions of the song, but none was right. The author finally located the version he'd heard by Andre Previn. It was the correct record. It wasn't just about the notes in the music, it was the way that the notes were played.



Chapter 21-27

Chapter 21-27 Summary and Analysis

Life is full of abstractions and the only way to make sense of it is through intuition. Emotion and intellect must come together in order to create, to know. All film makers have the same tools. It's the putting together of the film sequences that makes the difference. and requires intuition, which is tapped through meditation. One does not dive for specific solutions but to expand consciousness, allowing intuition and the solutions to come easily. TM and the concept of an ocean of consciousness was brought to the western world by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in 1959. Years later, quantum physics proved the ancient wisdom was true with the "The Unified Field" theory. Physicists concluded that everything emerges from a Unified Field. A similar discovery is revealed in Vedic science, a study of laws and nature. All can be known if one will dive into the Self. The result is enlightenment.

Many people transcend without knowing it. Transcending is the realization of a fourth state of consciousness between wakefulness and sleep, between sleeping and dreaming. The author sees it as a circular, white room with blue, red and yellow curtains. The curtains represent the first three stages of consciousness; however, to get from one stage to another, one must pass a section of the white wall. This wall is the fourth state. It's always present, whether one realizes it or not. Through TM, one can see the white wall—the state of bliss and knowing—at any time. That's the beauty of it all. There are many forms of meditation. Some practice contemplation and concentration, which keep one close to the surface. TM takes the practitioner the whole way to the "Atma" or Self. That's what makes TM so unique. Transcending takes one to the ocean of bliss, where one can experience joy in every facet of body, mind, and spirit. Life becomes more interesting and less stressful. The mind gravitates naturally toward this consciousness, and TM is simply the vehicle that can take you there.

Lynch has traveled with Dr. Fred Travis, a neuroscientist, who has proven that transcending is a real and measurable thing. Any brain activity can be measured with an EEG to show the difference in brain waves. In order to use the whole brain, one must learn to transcend. One can meditate anywhere. The author states that he meditates a minimum of twice a day, finding an appropriate space not matter where he is. Another wonderful thing about TM is that it allows people to gain, or regain, their identity. Through the process, a person becomes more real, more actual.



Chapters 28-35

Chapters 28-35 Summary and Analysis

Lynch believes that the director should control every word, scene and element. Otherwise, one gives up control over the end result. Lynch learned this lesson the hard way with the movie "Dune," when he gave up the right to make the final cut and the film was not good. Creating a bad film is like dying once; having someone else ruin your vision is more painful and is like dying twice.

Dream logic has only ever happened once for Lynch, during the filming of Blue Velvet. Angelo Badalamenti Lynch sit at the piano. Lynch talks; Badalamenti plays. If the composer misunderstands what Lynch is saying, Lynch changes his words until the music is good. Sound in a film is a critical element, particularly the music. No matter how talented the actor, Lynch will only use those who are married to the part. The author wanted Dennis Hopper to play Frank in Blue Velvet; however, Lynch was told that Hopper was in no shape to act. Later, Dennis was sober and called Lynch to say he had to play Frank; he was Frank. Lynch proved the "marriage" theory by casting a friend, Monty Montgomery, in Mulholland Drive. Lynch was right once again. Rehearsal is imperative to get everyone on the same page. The first rehearsal establishes where everyone is on the page. This includes all parties involved, not just the actors. Eventually, one by one, the light bulb goes off for each person and soon everyone is on the same path.



Chapters 36-51

Chapters 36-51 Summary and Analysis

Many people rely on fear as a motivator, which Lynch thinks is a mistake. Fear causes hatred, which causes anger. Diving within is a more productive way to be creative. People will give more of themselves and have fun doing it. Sometimes things happen in strange ways. In filming the pilot of *Twin Peaks* some crew were moving furniture and one man captured Lynch's attention. The man became an integral part of one of the initial scenes. This was something that Lynch had never planned, yet it turned out to be a magnificent addition to the story. Lynch enjoys "happy accidents." For example, *Twin Peaks* was somehow accepted as a TV pilot, but the show got only a mediocre rating before it aired. On the first night, the market share was huge and the show took off. Another example is the creation of the infamous red room in *Twin Peaks*. The author feels that generalizations are dangerous. No actress represents all women; no actor represents all men.

Many people often ask Lynch why his films are so dark, especially if he is enlightened. Lynch responds that there are many dark things in the world, and the films are no more than stories. A popular misconception about artists is that they must know suffering and angst in order to be prolific. Lynch disagrees. If one lives in negative emotions, the work will suffer. People often point to Van Gogh as an opposing argument. Lynch believes Van Gogh found a little happiness he through his work. If less suffering would have been present, more and better work would have been produced. Negativity is darkness. To get rid of the darkness, one simply turns on a light. TM can take a person to a light that combats all darkness. Lynch knows it sounds too easy to be true. But it is.

Drugs are a misunderstood path to creativity. Lynch admits to smoking marijuana in art school. Friends convinced him to quit and for that the author is thankful. Initially, drugs can help one to expand consciousness, but the experience becomes wholly negative and the ability to expand consciousness, with or without drugs fails. In expanding consciousness aspects of the Self are always present. When a person taps into these abilities naturally, the consciousness grows, and all life becomes better, not just for the moment, but forever.

Lynch asserts that everyone affects the environment. Vibrations can be felt even after a room is empty. *Lost Highway* is, in some part, a reference to the O.J. Simpson trial. Lynch was fascinated by the fact that in the midst of this traumatic event, Simpson was able to laugh and go golfing. The psychological term for this denial is "psychogenic fugue." The mind can trick itself to escape horror.



Chapters 52-65

Chapters 52-65 Summary and Analysis

Restrictions are often a blessing in disguise. If a person has a lot of money, one doesn't have to think as much. Often times, restrictions create the most beautiful and interesting events. The solutions often come through TM.

Scenery is imperative in creating a unique world in cinema. Lynch believes that each world needs to be filled with things that would be found in a real world in order to make it complete. Many film makers prepare a set so wide shots can be taken, and the scenery is appropriate. Lynch believes that all scenes should be complete enough to withstand close scrutiny. Even if the little details are never seen, it's enough to know that they're there. Sound, lighting and texture are also imperative in creating the perfect world for a film. Much can be altered by lighting, but sound and texture are harder to adapt. Lynch believes in marrying all aspects until the magic happens.

The author has a fondness for working with wood. Pine is a favorite because it's a common, soft wood that is easier to manipulate. Douglas fir, however, is Lynch's favorite. The vertical grain makes beautiful pieces. The author recalls a carpenter that used to come to the family home. Lynch was fascinated because the man used no electric tools, only his hands. The pieces the man created were masterful. In order to create, one must have the appropriate set up; otherwise, ideas will come and one will not have the tools to put that idea to use. There are ideas already in existence that can be inspirational. Lynch filmed *The Straight Story*, even though it was not his work. The author fell in love with the script and used his own creativity to express his feelings.

Lynch has many heroes in the film industry. Billy Wilder is a favorite, especially his ability to create a complete world for a film. *The Apartment* and *Sunset Boulevard* are two exceptional examples. Hitchcock was also a master at creating complete worlds and at details. Lynch favors *Rear Window* for its simplicity. Lynch had the opportunity to meet two of his favorite directors during his career—Federico Fellini and Stanley Kubrick. Lynch was filming in Italy and had heard that Fellini was very ill in the hospital. Lynch sat with Fellini for half an hour, while the director spoke of the old days and told stories. On the following Sunday, Fellini fell into a coma and never woke.

While filming *The Elephant Man* in England, Lynch and others were invited to Stanley Kubrick's house to watch the famed director's favorite film, which was *Eraserhead*. Lynch claims he could have died happy right then.



Chapters 66-75

Chapters 66-75 Summary and Analysis

The movie "Inland Empire" started out as an experiment for Lynch. The director had become fascinated by digital video and decided to create a digital film to be released on the Internet. One day, while walking down the street, Lynch ran into Laura Dern. The two hadn't seen each other in quite a while. Dern said that they hadn't worked together in quite a long time and needed to do something together. Lynch suggested that he write a film for her.

The film got its title from a conversation Lynch had with Dern. Dern was discussing how her husband was from the Inland Empire in California. At that moment, Lynch named the film. Some time later, Lynch's brother found a scrapbook the director had made when he was only five years old. Upon receiving the scrapbook, Lynch found a map that was titled The Inland Empire. The author knew at that moment that the title of the film was right on track.

Laura Dern was so outstanding in Inland Empire that Lynch knew he could not release the digital video on the Internet. He'd shot seventy minutes of video and was blown away by the quality and beauty of the piece. What made it more fascinating is that the whole film was written scene by scene. Lynch felt that the next puzzle piece would come and in the end, it would all mesh. It did. Lynch knew that Inland Empire had to become a feature film.

During the shooting, Lynch received confirmation of the Unified Field theory. An actor and friend, Krzysztof Majchrzak from Poland, flew in to be a part of the movie. When Majchrzak arrived at Lynch's house with the CamerlImage group, he was wearing a pair of goofy sunglasses. Majchrzak was enamored of the glasses and wanted to wear them for the film. Lynch told the actor that he couldn't wear the glasses. They simply did not work for the film. Majchrzak insisted that he had to have a prop. Lynch went into his office and selected several ordinary items for the actor to choose from to use in the film. The actor chose a red light bulb, much like a transparent Christmas bulb. Majchrzak put the light bulb into his mouth and appeared in the scene. Lynch shot it just that way.

This experience took Lynch back to the Unified Field theory. If there are fragments of things in the world that are not related, then how was it that Majchrzak's use of the red light bulb seemed to make sense? There was a way in which the man and the object related. Lynch noticed how many things related that made no sense in any other context. In thinking about the Unified Field, the ocean of pure consciousness, it all made sense. Everything and everyone must be related in some way. That's why the light bulb worked. That's why Laura Dern was perfect for the movie and the digital video needed to be a feature film, even without a script. It was all about unity.



Lynch is against Director's Commentary on films. It's true that viewers like to have extras on their DVDs, but Lynch refuses to do it. As the author had addressed earlier, making comments on the film changes it somehow. Hearing a director's comments about the process and the meaning of the film takes away the viewer's own thoughts and perceptions. It changes the film and the experience. Lynch likes to tell stories about things that happened while filming the movie but feels the director's thoughts and visions regarding the film should be closely guarded.

Lynch is in love with digital video. In fact, it's all he has used in the recent past. The author has developed a website where experimental pieces can be posted for the world to see. Digital video is not nearly as crisp and precise as modern day film, but that's one of the things that Lynch loves most about it. The grainy, low definition is reminiscent of the movies of the 1930s. Many things in the video may not be clear, but the lack of definition, as seen in a dark corner perhaps, allows the imagination to explore and wander. When film is in high def, little to nothing is left to the imagination.

Another great benefit to shooting in DV is the fact that the cameras are very light and mobile. Lynch says that in comparison, traditional cameras are cumbersome. Mobility is severely hindered with a traditional camera. With a lightweight digital camera, action can take place quickly and naturally. Many times during filming, the process has to stop while the camera is being reloaded with film. With Lynch's digital camera, there is the capability of shooting forty minutes at a time, so that there are no interruptions. Also, the editing process is so immediate and easy that Lynch is able to talk to the actors throughout the filming process. The author admits that he often messes up the soundtrack because his words must be edited out of the final piece.

According to Lynch, anyone can make an attempt at being a film maker. Digital video equipment is increasingly affordable. Now that many people use technological advances such as ProTools, editing is easier. Lynch claims that a thousand pieces of technology were born this morning and ten thousand will be born tomorrow morning.

Film school is a valuable tool for learning. There is also great value in learning by doing.

Video continues to be a large part of the tech revolution. With iPods, movies can be seen on a little screen held in the hand. People use earphones, which increases the importance of sound. Lynch believes that sound will only become more important. Small screens can't capture the magic of a full-size theater screen, but as long as one can find the magic, it's a start.



Chapters 76-83

Chapters 76-83 Summary and Analysis

Lynch offers this advice: "Stay true to yourself." Express your true voice and don't allow anyone to alter it or you. Don't be hindered by the opinions of others. It's fine to accept a good idea and to refuse a bad idea. Above all, meditate.

By meditating, a film maker is open to a realm of possibilities. The process will help any film maker. Diving within and expanding the consciousness and intellect will allow creativity to flow. It will change one's life. The practitioner will experience growth and happiness, as well as increased intuition. People will begin to gravitate toward that bliss. Friends will become happier with you. People will want to sit beside you. And, as Lynch jokes, "People will want to give you money!"

Meditation is best experienced when one has had enough sleep. Sleep is crucial to a person's ability to function. Studies have shown that a person functions better when there has been enough rest. Otherwise, the person's abilities are dulled. Lynch states that when he hasn't had enough sleep, his meditations aren't as good. However, when there has been enough sleep, one is able to meditate completely and reap the benefits. It has been proven that where the mind goes, the body follows. When a person reaches the deepest state of consciousness, the restorative properties are three times better than the deepest sleep. Being rested will get you there.

Living the art life is a tricky thing. On one hand, one must practice art; on the other hand, one has to make a living in order to survive. There must be a balance. Lynch claims he has been very lucky in this regard. There have been people who have helped him along the way so that the creative life remained open. Many people may have to get jobs that are so taxing that the art takes a back seat or perhaps fades away altogether. An artist cannot let this happen! It is important to find a job that allows at least a little time for art and rest. Allow the puzzle pieces to fit together, and the next move, the next idea will come.

Success and failure are the best and worst things that can happen to a person, creative or not. When one comes off a huge success, there is a fear that the next project could fail miserably, and it all could come crashing down. On the other hand, when one has failed, fear may be removed since there seems as if there is nothing to lose.

Balance between success and failure is the key. The only way to truly achieve this balance is to live on the Unified Field. The Unified Field is your friend. One can't pretend - one exists on the Field or one doesn't. When the Field is completely in play, and the body, mind and spirit are enlivened, you can't fail.

When a project is done, there are often mixed emotions. It feels good to have completed it, yet there is a feeling of emptiness that comes along with the completion.



The thing that one has focused on for so long is over and done, it's gone. Lynch compares the process to fishing. One day you may catch a large and beautiful fish. The next day, you return to the same spot with the same bait, but nothing happens. Perhaps it's no longer the right area. Maybe you move. This move changes the consciousness, and the desire to catch another big, beautiful fish may be fulfilled. On the other hand, if one waits long enough at that original spot, a big, beautiful fish may appear. There's no way to know for sure.

Lynch asserts that practicing meditation is not a selfish act. The author compares it to being on a plane and having to put on the oxygen mask. One puts the mask on oneself first, particularly if traveling with a child. It may sound selfish, but you get the mask first. Why? Can you be any good to the child if you are dead? By saving your own life, or at least your ability to function, you are able to care for the child. Nurturing and care must start with oneself. Through meditation, one is able to realize the Self, become more fulfilled and, therefore, happier. That happiness shows in every way, and, soon, the people around will want what you have. You can teach others to transcend and experience the bliss. It's like a ripple in a pond.

One of the things that made Lynch speak publicly about TM is the results the author has seen in children. There are many schools that have integrated TM into classrooms with great success. Children who meditate in the morning, even for ten minutes, have a greater love of learning and discover early on that there is so much more out there. Violence rapidly decreases through the use of TM. Lynch started his own foundation, The David Lynch Foundation for Consciousness-Based Education and World Peace, to promote the cause.

World peace has become so clichéd that it's almost humorous. Every beauty pageant contestant wishes for world peace when giving her mandatory speech. Is it such a cliché because no one thinks it's possible? Is the state of the world so bleak that we, as a collective, have given up hope? Lynch believes that world peace is possible.

Study groups of meditators have been formed, and there is proof that the environment around these groups drastically improves, also showing a great reduction in negativity, crime and violence. There is much to be gained and nothing to be lost.

TM is the answer for Lynch and so many others throughout the world. The author states that every day is a step toward enlightenment, and every day gets better and better. Each person on the earth deserves to know bliss, to expand his or her mind and swim in the ocean of consciousness.

Characters

David Lynch

David Lynch (1946-) is a noted filmmaker, video and performance artist, composer and painter. "Catching the Big Fish, Meditation, Consciousness, and Creativity" is a rare glimpse into the genius of a pop-culture icon. Throughout the book, Lynch details his upbringing, beginning in a small town in Montana to various points throughout the country, and discovering himself as an artist. The author attended the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and the American Film Institute, where he gained a master of fine arts. It was at the American Film Institute, where Lynch filmed "Eraserhead" (1977) after receiving a \$10,000 grant from the school. Although Eraserhead was filmed sporadically due to a lack of funding and was considered to be virtually unreleasable by his instructors at its first showing, the film quickly became a cult classic. The film gained even more interest after avant-garde filmmaker Stanley Kubrick nominated Eraserhead as one of his all-time favorite films.

Lynch's first major success was the film the Elephant Man (1980); the project made possible by director Mel Brooks.

Throughout his career, Lynch has developed an unorthodox style of creating narrative films. Despite sporadic commercial success, Lynch has always managed to capture the attention of fellow filmmakers and actors worldwide. The author's films include Blue Velvet, Dune, Wild at Heart, Lost Highway and Mulholland Drive. Lynch is also known for his iconoclastic and quirky TV series Twin Peaks.

Along with an extremely rare glimpse into the mind of the genius, Catching the Big Fish reveals the creative processes of one of pop culture's most evasive icons.

Among the author's non-artistic ventures is the David Lynch Foundation, a school which promotes Transcendental Meditation among children.

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (1917 - 2008) is the founder of the controversial Transcendental Meditation technique. Maharishi was born in India to a Hindu family, who practiced the worship of Shiva. As a young adult, Maharishi received a degree in physics at Allahabad University.

In 1939, Maharishi became a disciple of Swami Brahmananda Saraswati, who the Maharishi says inspired his teachings and eventual move to the Indian Himalayas. The Maharishi's first tour teaching transcendental meditation was in 1958. From then on, Maharishi traveled extensively all over the world, imparting the technique to a wide variety of people, including many notable celebrities. The most notable include the



Beatles, the Beach Boys, Andy Kaufman, Doug Henning, Clint Eastwood and David Lynch.

Transcendental meditation is a practice of meditating in restful alertness twice daily. The results may include inner peace, improved health, improved brain function, awareness and increased creativity.

Maharishi has established a number of educational institutions, dedicated to teaching Transcendental Meditation, as well as an alternative medical system titled Maharishi Ayur Veda, Maharishi Jyotish, Maharishi Gandharva Ved, Maharishi Sthapatya Veda, Vedic astrology, Vedic architecture and various programs related to education, music, management and government.

Federico Fellini

Federico Fellini (1920-1993) was a famous Italian film director. Fellini was well known for award-winning and often highly-unusual masterpieces.

Stanley Kubrick

Stanley Kubrick (1928-1999) was an iconoclastic American film director. Kubrick's films were always a visual feast; however, the end result was often peculiar. One of Kubrick's most famous films is "A Clockwork Orange."

Bushnell Keeler

Bushnell Keeler was the father of Lynch's friend, Toby. Keeler was the first person Lynch ever met who pursued his love of painting as opposed to getting a day job to provide traditional security.

Dennis Hopper

Dennis Hopper (1936-) is an American actor and film-maker. Hopper is widely recognized for playing characters who are mentally unstable.

Laura Dern

Laura Dern (1967-) is an American actress best known for appearances in Lynch's films Blue Velvet and Wild at Heart. She is the daughter of veteran actors Diane Ladd and Bruce Dern.



Samuel

Samuel "Billy" Wilder (1906-2002) is probably the most recognized director in the world. Wilder directed and produced sixty highly-acclaimed films during his career. Most notable are *Some Like it Hot* and *Sunset Boulevard*.

Angelo Badalamenti

Angelo Badalamenti (1937-) is an American composer, who is well known for his work with David Lynch. Two of his most notable Lynch works are for the TV series *Twin Peaks* and the film *Blue Velvet*. Lynch says that Badalamenti is one of the few composers who really "gets" him.

Actors

Lynch has a great fondness for casting and recasting certain actors in his films. Once someone can accurately portray Lynch's vision, reusing them seems wise.

Critics

Lynch subscribes to the adage that "those who can't, teach." Critics fall into this arena and the author thinks that many critics are too eager to tear apart a film rather than simply enjoy it for what it is.



Objects/Places

Eraserhead

"Eraserhead" is Lynch's first full-length feature film. The author states that it took five years to shoot, due to the lack of financing required for such an expensive project. Some say that Eraserhead was symbolic of David Lynch's twisted sense of creativity but that the film had a feeling of being disjointed due to the long period of time it took to create it from beginning to end.

Lynch references Eraserhead throughout the book, using the process as a great learning experience. The author learned that ideas come from the strangest places and not all at once. An initial thought can spur the opening scene of a movie and from there, one piece of the puzzle merges into another until the film is complete. Authors typically say the same about characters in novels. While an outline may be present, fictional characters begin to take on a life of their own and soon are telling the author what to do and say.

Lynch quickly became known as someone who could create a dreamlike quality in film, often leaving the audience confused as to what was real. Also present were pointed observations to ordinary items, such as a patterned carpet.

Since Eraserhead was a small, independent film, it didn't receive much notice at first. The surrealistic horror flick quickly gained cult status, however. After Lynch's release of the major motion picture "Fire Walk With Me," based on the Twin Peaks television series, Eraserhead was released in cinemas nationwide, giving viewers an early glimpse into the film maker's head. The showings also created a new generation of fans for Lynch.

Twin Peaks

"Twin Peaks" was David Lynch's first television series. The entire premise of the series was to find out who killed Laura Palmer, a young girl who lived in the rural northwest town of Twin Peaks. Lynch capitalized on his former film successes to capture an initial audience but was surprised when the TV show became a huge smash hit. Throughout the series, Lynch took the opportunity to explore his quirky sense of film making. There were many dream sequences and scenes that left the audience baffled until the truth was revealed. One of the most memorable was the backward talking dwarf, who consistently appeared with cryptic messages. Another was the Log Lady, a psychic who was never without a wooden log.

The TV series eventually spurred a feature film, titled "Fire Walk With Me." The film, however, did not receive nearly as much critical acclaim for Lynch. Twin Peaks was a huge vehicle for actors such as Kyle McLachlan and Sherilyn Fenn.



The mystery was eventually solved, leaving viewers both relieved and disappointed that the ride was over.

Los Angeles

Lynch relocated to Los Angeles after attending art school in Philadelphia. According to Lynch, LA is perfect for a film maker and for his lifestyle.

Transcendental Meditation

Transcendental Meditation is a type of spiritual meditation developed by the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Lynch has practiced TM for over three decades and attributes his great creative success to the practice.

American Film Institute

The American Film Institute is considered to be the premier film institute in the world. Lynch attended the AFI to learn the craft of film making.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Lynch moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to attend the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art. While there, Lynch had his first experience with creating film. The author completely despised the City of Brotherly Love, calling it a hellhole.

Missoula, Montana

Missoula, Montana was where Lynch was born and raised for the first few years of his life. The rural atmosphere had a profound impact on the author.

Cinema

The cinema is David Lynch's great love, a world that is completely immersed in magic.

Blue Velvet

Blue Velvet is one of Lynch's most widely-acclaimed films. It starred Laura Dern, a fixture in many Lynch films.



Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art

The Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art is the prestigious Philadelphia school Lynch attended to learn the craft of fine art painting. It was there that the author's created his first film.

Cannes, France

Cannes, France is Mecca to film makers, directors and actors. Lynch received much acclaim at Cannes for his work.

Lost Highway

Lost Highway is a bizarre, violent film that Lynch developed after hearing about the OJ Simpson trial. It is known as one of Lynch's best works.



Themes

Transcendental Meditation

Transcendental Meditation is a form of consciousness expanding meditation that Lynch practices daily. Developed by the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Transcendental Meditation is a way that one can delve deep into the subconscious to learn about the Self. Through this practice, many experience bliss and an expansion of mind, body and spirit.

Once the mind has been expanded and one begins to know the true self, life begins to change. For Lynch, Transcendental Meditation was a much needed release from anger and depression that had been plaguing him for many years. In fact, it was such a part of the author's life that he wasn't fully aware of how it was impacting his life and the lives of those around him. Once Lynch began to practice Transcendental Meditation, the anger and depression began to vanish. This anger and depression is what the author currently refers to as the "Suffocating Rubber Clown Suit of Negativity." Lynch realized how much he had suffered while inside the suit.

Lynch also uses Transcendental Meditation to spark and enliven creativity. The author believes that meditating twice daily gives him peace and the ability to tap into the flow of life and creative intuition. The more one practices Transcendental Meditation, the more aware one becomes of life, one's surroundings and the capabilities every person has within. You just have to be willing to take the dive.

Creativity

Creativity may be one of the most misunderstood elements of an artist's life. Many would like the bystander to believe that there is a flash of light or a visit by a mythical Greek muse before a great idea comes to light. More often than not, this is untrue. The author was obviously born with a creative spirit; however, creativity, like any craft with which it is paired, requires skill. The skill to recognize and capture creativity must be honed and fostered if one expects it to grow.

Lynch uses Transcendental Meditation to help expand his creative consciousness. By diving down into the Self, one is able to leave behind the distractions and petty annoyances that prevent creativity from coming to the surface. The author uses the analogy of fish to make his point. If one wants to catch small fish or small ideas, then staying near the surface of the water is fine. However, if one wants to catch big fish or big ideas, then one must dive down deeply. It may be scary at first, but the big fish are beautiful and much more rewarding in a creative sense. Lynch wants only the big fish.

As with anything, realizing and fostering creativity will help it to grow in many ways. One will be able to recognize ideas, both good and bad, more readily and be willing to accept or reject them. However, Lynch makes it clear that focus is of paramount importance



when being creative. If one gets too distracted, the work will suffer. The art life requires the art to come first.

Cinema

Cinema and David Lynch have had a long and productive love affair. As a painter, Lynch had no desire to be involved with cinema; he only wanted to paint. That is until the painter created a stop motion animated painting/film for an annual sculpture and painting exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art. The film captured Lynch's interest, and soon, everyone wanted a piece of his creations. A film maker was born.

The American Film Institute taught Lynch all he needed to know about the technical aspects of creating a film. The blossoming film maker began to see more clearly how his visions could be translated into film and still manage to capture the once-elusive beauty he could only find on canvas. Perhaps this is why Lynch's films tend to be very visual in an ephemeral sense, and the repeated use of incidental items and people leave a lasting impression on the moviegoer.

Toward the end of the book, Lynch claims that film as a medium is dead for him. It's hard to imagine such a highly-acclaimed film maker uttering such a statement. Lynch's new love is digital video. One can only hope that in some way, this new love will make its way into the magical world of the cinema for all to enjoy.



Style

Perspective

David Lynch is a world-renowned film maker and director. The author is also a long-time practitioner of Transcendental Meditation. In *Catching the Big Fish*, Lynch tells how he marries the two (creativity and TM) in order to gain the maximum potential of creativity for his art.

Lynch started out as a boy who wanted to paint and draw but thought that once a person grew up, artistic pursuits were no longer an option. Meeting a friend's father, who was a fine artist, changed all that for Lynch. The author abandoned his secondary love of the sciences and went to art school. Art school led to film and the move to LA, where Lynch still resides.

Since Lynch's first film in 1977, the author turned film maker has developed the reputation of being a creative genius. Lynch's films are always a feast of imagination and vivid imagery. Lynch's practice of Transcendental Meditation goes back to 1973. The author claims that TM has opened an entirely new world in every possible way. TM has influenced great life changes, creativity and expanded awareness of self and surroundings. The author uses this knowledge and life experiences to create a book for anyone who wishes to reach enlightenment.

Tone

The tone of "*Catching the Big Fish: Meditation, Consciousness, and Creativity*" is one of optimism. Lynch is not another California kook who lives in his own little unreal world. On the contrary, Lynch is a world-renowned film maker/director, who has used a particular series of lifestyle choices to help him achieve. Throughout the book, Lynch shows where he began, and how life took him through a series of events that led him to where he is today.

Creativity is an important factor in Lynch's life. In fact, it is the creativity and process of making art that is the most important in the author's life. As Lynch stated in the chapter titled "The Final Cut," it is better to have control over the whole process than to sell out. If one can achieve the vision and it fails, at least the vision has been achieved. If one sells out and the vision fails, it's like dying twice.

All readers, regardless of their profession, can gain insight from *Catching the Big Fish*. Lynch's walk through life using Transcendental Meditation as a guide and a tool shows that anyone can have it all. It will be interesting to see where Lynch's continued practice of TM and consciousness expanding lifestyle will take him next.



Structure

"Catching the Big Fish: Meditation, Consciousness, and Creativity" is a book that is written in small passages, each with its own unique qualities. The book is 177 pages long and is comprised of 83 chapters.

Each chapter is self contained, even though most of them are very short. The shortest chapter is one sentence long, while the longest chapter is two pages. Most average three paragraphs.

Lynch keeps the reader interested by intertwining life stories, along with details about Transcendental Meditation and similar practices used to expand mind, body and soul. It is evident that Lynch practices what he preaches, yet the structure of the book keeps it from being "preachy" or painting Lynch as a zealot.

Fans will also find that the book contains much information about Lynch's career. The author details the making of many of his most famous films, including Eraserhead, Blue Velvet and the Lost Highway, as well as the television series Twin Peaks.

In the end, Catching the Big Fish is an ideal volume to keep on the nightstand for a quick read or shot of creative inspiration.



Quotes

"If you want to catch little fish, you can stay in shallow water."
Pg. 1

"I call that depression and anger the Suffocating Rubber Clown Suit of Negativity."
Pg. 7

"All the dreaming, all my friends, existed in that small world. But to me it seemed so huge and magical."
Pg. 9

"When I catch an idea for a film, I fall in love with the way cinema can express it."
Pg. 17

"I like the saying: 'The world is as you are.' And I think films are as you are."
Pg. 21

"Inside every human being is an ocean of pure, vibrant consciousness. When you 'transcend' in Transcendental Meditation, you dive down into that ocean of pure consciousness."
Pg. 27

"Life is filled with abstractions, and the only way we make heads or tails of it is through intuition."
Pg. 45

"The thing about meditation is: You become more and more you."
Pg. 57

"Ideas come along in the strangest way when you just pay attention."
Pg. 77

"The idea is the whole thing. If you stay true to the idea, it tells you everything you need to know, really."
Pg. 83

"It's good for an artist to understand conflict and stress. Those things can give you ideas."
Pg. 93



"Don't fight the darkness. Don't even worry about the darkness. Turn on the light and the darkness goes."

Pg. 98

"All religions flow ultimately to one ocean."

Pg. 101

"I'm through with film as a medium. For me, film is dead."

Pg. 149

"Stay true to yourself. Let your voice ring out, and don't let anybody fiddle with it."

Pg. 159

Topics for Discussion

Do you think David Lynch would have been as successful if he had concentrated on painting rather than film? Why?

How did Lynch's experiences in Philadelphia and California shape his vision?

How might Lynch's work have developed if he had not become involved in Transcendental Meditation?

Lynch is known for using the same actors in many different movies. Does this choice help or hinder his films?

Twin Peaks was a huge success for the iconoclastic Lynch. What elements of the TV series made it so unusual?

As a movie goer, are you eager or reluctant to share your personal views on a film? Why?

Lynch states that in order to catch the big fish, people must swim in deeper waters. What experiences have you had that make this statement true?

The author claims to be in love with every single film he has created. How would the films differ if the author had produced his films for commercial purposes?

How might Lynch's work change through working with digital video instead of film?