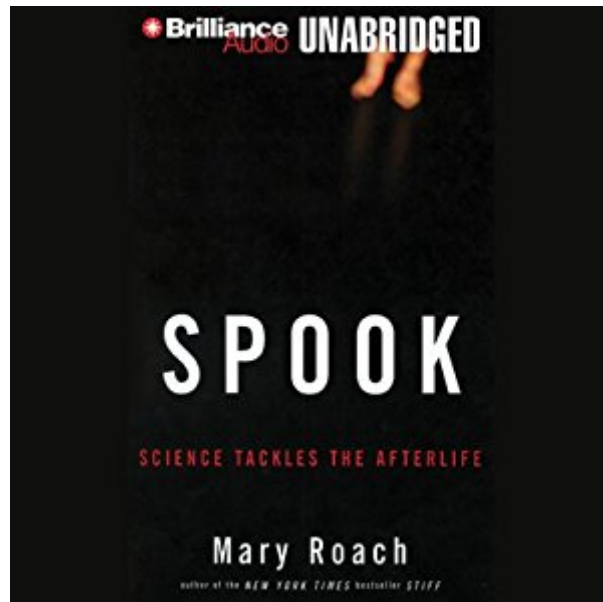


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# Spook: Science Tackles The Afterlife



## Synopsis

What happens when we die? Does the light just go out and that's that - the million-year nap? Or will some part of my personality, my me-ness persist? What will that feel like? What will I do all day? Is there a place to plug in my laptop? • In an attempt to find out, Mary Roach brings her tireless curiosity to bear on an array of contemporary and historical soul-searchers: scientists, schemers, engineers, mediums, all trying to prove (or disprove) that life goes on after we die. She begins the journey in rural India with a reincarnation researcher and ends up in a University of Virginia operating room where cardiologists have installed equipment near the ceiling to study out-of-body near-death experiences. Along the way, she enrolls in an English medium school, gets electromagnetically haunted at a university in Ontario, and visits a Duke University professor with a plan to weigh the consciousness of a leech. Her historical wanderings unearth soul-seeking philosophers who rummaged through cadavers and calved heads, a North Carolina lawsuit that established legal precedence for ghosts, and the last surviving sample of ectoplasm • in a Cambridge University archive. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

People frequently confuse a breezy style, humor and ability to entertain with being superficial. While Mary Roach's latest book isn't quite as compelling as "Stiff" it's an enjoyable journey one step beyond. When Roach is serious (which pops up between very funny quips) she asks some important questions about the afterlife, our perception of it, ghosts and reincarnation. Perhaps it's the subtitle

that disappoints people but having read "Stiff" I knew what to expect. If you come to this book ignoring the subtitle (this skeptical humorist tackles the afterlife and science although more about that later with a sense of humor but doesn't quantify the afterlife with science herself). Roach asks some penetrating questions with humor. For example, she discusses an author that discusses reincarnation, birthmarks and how a pregnant woman can see the corpse of someone. The soul of the slain man turns up in her child. Also, she discusses a pretty creative idea--emotional imprinting from an event that can leave birthmarks on the skin of the unborn creating a duplicate of a birthmark from the person whose soul has flown into the unborn child. She goes on a journey to investigate a family that claims their child has memories from a previous life and while going as an unbiased observer using humor and logic to deflate some of these unusual claims. Yet she's always hopeful. She relates the story of a computer that is used for near death experiences. She discusses Professor Bruce Greyson's experiment in near death experiences using a computer with images that can only be seen if you were hovering below the ceiling. Patients that have had defibrillators put in have their hearts stopped to see if their defibrillators are working (they should restart the patient's heart).

I can see where Ms. Roach probably found herself a bit cornered while exploring the subject of life after death. First, she doesn't want to turn this book into a sprawling tome that explores the meaning of human existence. She also doesn't want to go down the long road of exploring every spiritual quest ever taken on by humanity. Then there are considerations regarding strongly held religious feelings; you don't want to step on the wrong toes. So, I think Ms. Roach took the right approach to the book in exploring a few areas of possible interest, looking at them as objectively as possible and seeing if anything raises an eyebrow. So, the shortcomings of "Spook: Science Tackles the Afterlife" may not be so much the fault of the author. If you've ever watched a Bigfoot documentary, you know that you're going to be disappointed if you expect some hunter to emerge from the woods with an eight foot tall ape-man on a leash. Also, you know that the blurry footage is a guy in a gorilla suit, no matter how much you'd like to believe otherwise. These documentaries always jazz up the footage with a little editing and some scary music. That's because simply showing how unrealistic it is to believe in Bigfoot after all this time doesn't make for entertaining viewing. They're taking advantage of us because we want to be taken advantage of, just a little. Mary Roach respects us more than that and gives us what she can. Unfortunately, it doesn't make for very entertaining reading. The one thing that was really missing for me was that feeling of "Aha!". I understood that Ms. Roach couldn't take on everything regarding the subject but I wished it had been a little wider in scope.

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