

## Reflections for Living and Growing

**Webster Edwards**

AuthorHouseUK (Sep 6, 2018)

Softcover \$23.00 (418pp)

978-1-5462-9299-9

*Reflections for Living and Growing is an uplifting collection of thoughts on self-improvement, growth, and positivity.*

Jamaican minister Webster Edwards's motivational book *Reflections for Living and Growing* contains inspiring words of wisdom that are focused on building a healthy, balanced, and productive life.

Edwards's reflections are divided into seven overarching categories, including "Celebrate Life" and "Make the World a Better Place." Within such sections, entries cover a wide range of self-improvement topics, focusing on gratitude, tolerance, punctuality, and selfless service. The text is straightforward and the groupings are effective: sections' messages are accessible and easy to grasp. Breaks are clear, and headings are distinct.

The essays are inspiring, and their cumulative effect is encouraging. They celebrate life—the book's perspective is that life is a gift and should be treated as of value—and ably embrace notions of personal growth. They are all brief and concise, and their messages are unmistakable as a result.

Entries are often general, even formal; personal touches are held off until the last section. By the end, the feeling that dreams can be accomplished through discipline, open-mindedness, and creativity is strong. Failure is presented as a stepping stone; perfectionism is discouraged. However, the fact that reflections contain such similar messages becomes detrimental as sections progress; they become repetitive, and interest wanes.

Language is persuasive and hopeful, though, and personal addresses are used to develop a relationship with the audience. The tone is positive and gentle, personable but not demeaning: "Everything will not always be to our liking, and things will sometimes go awry," Edwards cautions. Much of the advice is both apt and familiar, and rhetorical questions make the work more conversational.

The last part of the book is its most streamlined. It works to inspire Jamaicans specifically to come together to build their country while recognizing its unique treasures. It is distinct within the book and far more personal than preceding sections, though it echoes their themes of patience and hard work. Its particularity is what makes it stand out. Its call to make the most out of every opportunity is emphatic—opportunities that come once, it asserts, may not come again. The words of Olive Lewin, the late founder of the Jamaica Folk Singers, are a repeated feature, used to speak on the importance of working hard, practicing, and achieving excellence.

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EDITH WAIRIMU (December 13, 2018)

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