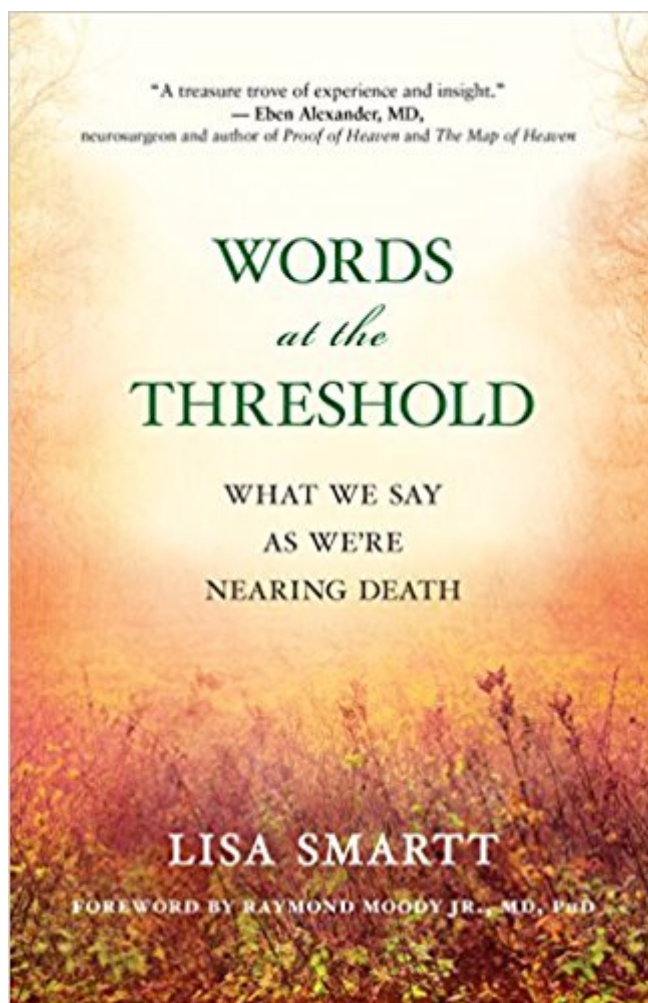


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# Words At The Threshold: What We Say As We're Nearing Death



## Synopsis

What Our Last Words Reveal About Life, Death, and the Afterlife A person's end-of-life words often take on an eerie significance, giving tantalizing clues about the ultimate fate of the human soul. Until now, however, no author has systematically studied end-of-life communication by using examples from ordinary people. When her father became terminally ill with cancer, author Lisa Smartt began transcribing his conversations and noticed that his personality underwent inexplicable changes. Smartt's father, once a skeptical man with a secular worldview, developed a deeply spiritual outlook in his final days—a change reflected in his language. Baffled and intrigued, Smartt began to investigate what other people have said while nearing death, collecting more than one hundred case studies through interviews and transcripts. In this groundbreaking and insightful book, Smartt shows how the language of the dying can point the way to a transcendent world beyond our own.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Words at the Threshold is a treasure trove of experience and insight around the last words spoken by the dying, as revealed through the mind of a linguist, proposing that birth and death are different facets of the same process, that both are essential in the cycle of life, and that our soul connections do not end with death. The words of the dying provide some of the most salient clues as to how we can best live our lives on earth." • Eben Alexander, MD, neurosurgeon and author of Proof of Heaven and The Map of Heaven "With Words at the Threshold, Lisa

Smartt has given the world of near death studies a fresh new path for research. Deeply moving and meticulously researched, this book offers a feast of fresh information about communications with the other side that may take place at the time of death. This is an insightful book worth reading.

• Paul Perry, coauthor of *Glimpses of Eternity* “Rarely can we say a book has the ability to profoundly affect the way we live and think, but *Words at the Threshold* is truly such a book. The research is impeccable, and the insights that Lisa Smartt gives us into the realm of the threshold open doors of perception that help us understand what it is to be part of the human experience.

• Michael Wayne, PhD, LAc, author of *The Quantum Revolution* and producer and host of *Interviews with the Leading Edge* “*Words at the Threshold* marks a new era in the understanding of the process of dying. Lisa Smartt’s work has profound psychological, spiritual, and clinical implications for the care of terminally ill patients and their families. And I believe that her work also opens unexplored pathways for the genuinely rational investigation of human kind’s deepest mystery: the prospect of life after death.

• from the foreword by Raymond Moody Jr., MD, PhD, author of *Life After Life* “Lisa Smartt gently invites us to listen to the utterances of the dying with an inner ear attuned to another kind of reality. She charts how the dying use eerily familiar metaphors, symbols, time loops, and more to express their expanded, nonlinear experiences. In so doing, Smartt affords us a precious glimpse of their inner worlds as they linger at the threshold of death. Through her linguistic analysis of the nonsense on the lips of the dying, the underlying creativity and purpose of final words are revealed. *Words at the Threshold* is a significant step toward transforming the current views of dying from a process of failure into a process of ever-deepening meaning and wonder.

• Julia Assante, PhD, author of *The Last Frontier* “At the end of life, the curtain between worlds tears. *Words at the Threshold* documents what the dying say and see and hear in that moment of truth. This book is a gift to all of us who seek to peer past death into the world of spirit.

• Matthew McKay, PhD, author of *Seeking Jordan* “The many suggestions about engaging loved ones as they die and the cogent advice on ways to provide a more peaceful passing give the volume considerable value.

• Booklist “Books like *Words at the Threshold* by Lisa Smartt only come along every now and again and when they do they shine out as publications that genuinely break new ground and greatly expand our understanding of the mysteries of life and death. Highly recommended as an essential read.

• Spirituality Today “*Words at the Threshold* has the potential for profound implications on the care of terminally ill patients and their loved ones, and is a wonderful, comprehensible, and sensitive starting point to a topic and

experience that many . . . have found hard to approach. • Unravel: The Accessible  
Linguistics Magazine

Lisa Smartt, MA, is a linguist, educator, and poet. She founded the Final Words Project, an ongoing study devoted to collecting and interpreting the mysterious language at the end of lives. She lives in Athens, Georgia.

As a 15-year hospice volunteer and co-author of *The Journey Home: Inspiring Passages From Near-Death Experiences to Comfort the Dying*, I have first-hand experience that validates Lisa Smartt's *Words at the Threshold*. It should be required reading by all hospice staff, volunteers, and anyone who wants to understand more about the nature of human consciousness. There was a time when the utterances of the dying were relegated to the realm of dementia or the influence of drugs. But increasingly, we are learning, with the help of pioneers like Lisa Smartt, that the words of the dying as exemplified in *Words at the Threshold* are distinctly different and illuminating from the dementia or drug-induced language. The language of the dying increasingly reveals to us that the dying often have their feet in this world and the next, simultaneously. And to witness this phenomenon with patients who are at the edge of the most intimate and sacred time of their life is perhaps the most sacrosanct opportunity in the healing profession. I experience enormous gratitude at these precious moments. So whether you are a loved one assisting someone who is preparing to transition, a hospice professional or volunteer, or someone who wants to comprehend more about this hallowed subject, you will be strengthened and inspired by *Words at the Threshold*. All of us will eventually take this step. So I encourage you to keep *Words at the Threshold* as a valued keepsake to share with others while reinforcing your understanding that this journey is not about death at all, but about the next step in your life. *The Journey Home: Inspiring Passages From Near-Death Experiences to Comfort the Dying*

Never an easy topic to broach. Lisa Smartt does so with elegance and grace. "Words at the Threshold" is a treasure for those left behind...and for those of us preparing to send our loved ones across the transom to the other side of death and dying. This book breaks through the boundaries we have erected between the words of life, passing and beyond. Its a keeper!

This book is about words, however after reading it I have none, speechless really. Maybe it's the timing, but this was the most remarkable and important read for me. There was something of an

other worldly dimension hovering between the lines, quite ineffable really. I am somehow different, better, for this reading experience. It seems a most pleasing shift of both paradigm and perspective occurred on my journey thru these pages. Wonderful. Don't miss this opportunity...

This book goes deep into understanding the language of the dying. In my opinion it also is the language of love. Lisa Smartt's book offers us a groundbreaking and comforting glimpse into the mystery of the other side. Her book can bring you peace.

Lisa Smartt's *Words at the Threshold* opens the door to a new area of study around one of life's great mysteries. What happens when we die? With her academic work in linguistics and the heart of a poet, Smartt shows us common language patterns, universal themes and piques our curiosity to know more. Her groundbreaking research gives new insight into a topic ripe for exploration.

Well written, from a 'unique' point of view....I've read so much about the dying process and NDE's, but the 'language of the dying.....choice of words, metaphors. A whole new way (for me, anyway...) of looking at this amazing process. Excellent!

I hate to be harsh, but I was so enraged for more than 50% of the book that I swore I would give it one star. However, I could not do that because there are a few gems in here. My primary objection is that although the author's writing is more or less technically competent, if not inspired, the structure is that of a dissertation and not that of a book for the masses and I felt a bit ripped off. Even assuming a dissertation she published as a book without reworking it much, I do not believe she proved her premise. She said she received much external input, but she uses the same examples over and over and over. I got it the first time. The third time is irritating. And she must have broken a record for the most uses of the word "ineffable" - it felt like it appeared in every other paragraph. However ineffable is a good word and I would say as it applies to the living, that she used it so frequently because her "nonsensical" language was incapable of expressing what she intended. I also disagreed with her assessment of what is nonsensical and what is not, even though she uses the term in a different sense. If you are looking for words to help you with grieving or assessing the dying, you may find some help in the second half of the book. If you are a professional, you might consider the area worthy of further study. As a general reader I don't think you'll find anything new here that commonsense wouldn't tell you. Also, because I truly believe the book was a dissertation subsequently published, there are several notable omissions of topics that

should have been explored and she knew this and still brushstroked it.

All I can think to say is IT's AMAZING. I'm still reading it. When I'm finished I'll start again just like Miracles From Heaven.

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