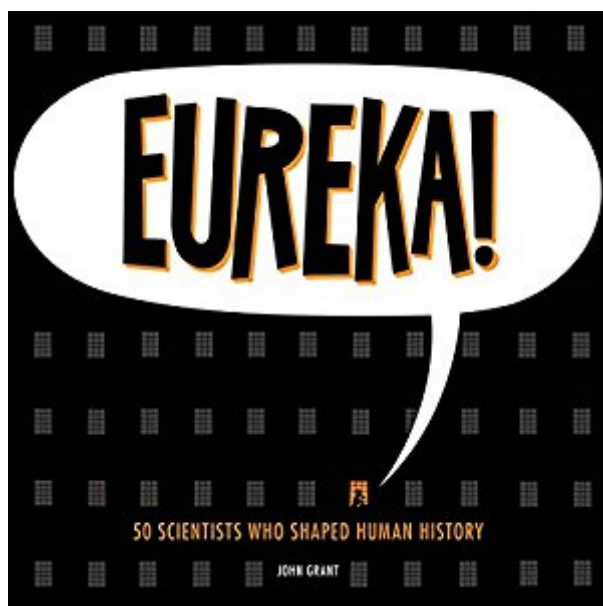


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Eureka!: 50 Scientists Who Shaped Human History



Synopsis

Galileo, Einstein, Curie, Darwin, Hawking - we know the names, but how much do we really know about these people? Galileo gained notoriety over his battle with the Vatican, but did you know that this father of modern science was also an accomplished lute player? And Darwin of course discovered the principle by which new species are formed, but his bold curiosity extended to the dinner table as well. (And how many people can say they've eaten an owl!) From lutes and owls to astronomy and evolution, Eureka! explains how these scientific geniuses have shaped our understanding - and how they spent their free time as well.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Received an advance reader copy in exchange for a fair review. Thanks to NetGalley and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt for the opportunity to read and review Eureka!: 50 Scientists Who Shaped Human History! This book is full of insights into scientific pioneers both professional and personal. From B.C. to modern times, details explaining theories and interesting tidbits of each scientist fill this easy to read informational book - 4 stars!

XXXXXCan you name these people (*answers at the end of this review)? If you can, then maybe you know what they have in common:(1) Victim of a lynch mob, the greatest female mathematician/philosopher of the ancient world.(2) The Hungarian physician whose discovery of the importance of hospital hygiene has saved countless millions of lives.(3) The great Austrian physicist who was also the progenitor of a famous hypothetical

cat. (4) A brilliant experimenter who revealed the mysteries of electromagnetism and the fraudulence of spirit mediums. (5) The U.S. atmospheric scientist who alerted the world to the dangers of climate change. What these five people have in common is that their biographies all found in this informative and easy-to-read book by John Grant. He is a prolific author of fiction and non-fiction books. In this book, Grant offers vivid biographies of fifty important people (in order of birth) who have helped humanity understand our universe in some way. He does not focus just on their ideas and breakthroughs that made them so important but also on their lives and their various quirks. The author realizes that his list is a matter of personal judgement and that some readers may object to certain inclusions and omissions. That's O.K. However, I did find that if you removed any of the people on Grant's list, the wonderful story of science would probably be a different story. Throughout this book, are black and white pictures of most of those people on the author's list. As well, at the beginning of each biography is a summary of the person being profiled. I have given five of these summaries above. At the end of each biography, there's a "But there's more" section that gives that lists interesting facts about the person being profiled and gives suggestions for further reading. This book's subtitle is "50 scientists who shaped human history." Actually, this is not quite true. Even though the majority of people profiled in this book are scientists (such as astronomer, biologist, and chemist), some are not (such as mathematician, philosopher, and monk). The important thing to remember is that all the people listed significantly helped shape the history of science in some way. Yes! If you look at this book's copyright section (which is in small print), you'll see the phrase "Young Adult Nonfiction." Personally, I don't like this phrase because it suggests that this book has been dumbed down. It definitely has not. This book is appropriate for older adults as well. Finally, the only problem I had with this book is that there are no references. Some of the references may be in the "But there's more" section for each biography, but I would have liked to have seen the references formally listed. In conclusion, this is the book to get to learn about those who have helped shape the history of science as we know it!!*As promised, here are the names of the people described above: (1) Hypatia of Alexandria (2) Ignaz Semmelweiss (3) Erwin Schrodinger (4) Michael Faraday (5) James Hansen (First published 2016; introduction; 50 biographies; main narrative 215 pages; index of names; acknowledgements; about the author)XXXXX

This is a collection of mini biographies of some of the great scientists who have contributed to our current understanding of ourselves, our world and the universe we live in. In his introduction, John

Grant points out that any selection is going to be subjective to a degree, but all the major names are here – Galileo, Newton, Einstein, etc. - as well as several who are less well known, certainly to me. The book is aimed at teens and young adults, but frankly it works equally well for older adults like me, who have only a superficial knowledge of the history of science. Each section follows roughly the same pattern. Grant quickly places the person in the overall timeline of scientific discovery, gives a short personal biography showing how they got involved in their particular area of science, and then explains their major achievements and, in some cases, their failures. The chapters vary in length, from a couple of pages for those people who made one specific contribution to science – like Edward Jenner, the man who discovered that cowpox could be used to create a vaccine for smallpox, leading eventually to its worldwide eradication (why didn't I know about him?!) – to perhaps ten or so pages for those, like Newton or Einstein, who fundamentally changed the perception of the fields in which they worked. The book is structured chronologically, which allows Grant to show very clearly how each generation of scientists built on the work of those before them – in Newton's words: "If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." Grant's writing style is clear and very approachable, never talking down to his audience, and with a good deal of humour laced through the book to prevent the science becoming too dry. He makes the science side clear enough on the whole for even the more scientifically challenged amongst us to understand, at least until we get to relativity and quantum thingummyjigs, at which point my eyes began to roll in my head and my tongue lolled out. However, that's my normal reaction to these things, so I don't hold Grant to blame – he almost got me to sorta understand why the whole $E = mc^2$ thing was important, which is more than many science writers have done. And I briefly felt I'd grasped the Schrödinger's cat thing too... but the moment passed. (I've always felt it would have been of more practical benefit if Schrödinger had explained how to get a cat in a box, myself...) But the science is only part of it. The book is as much about the history of scientific research and gives an unvarnished glimpse at some of the jealousies and backstabbing that happen in that world as much as in any other. Grant shows how sometimes female scientists would be sidelined or have credit for their work taken by their male colleagues, often only being given recognition decades or even centuries after the event. To be fair, this happened to plenty of male scientists too, either because they were outside the snobby scientific community or simply from professional rivalries getting out of hand. Men heavily outnumber women in the book, but this is to be expected since, as Grant points out, until very recently (and still, in some parts of the world) science wasn't considered a suitable occupation for the "gentler sex". Hah! Tell that to Marie Curie, or "mille du Châtelet! Mostly,

though, the story is one of co-operation and collaboration, especially when the book brings us towards the present day. Each chapter ends with a little summary of factlets, such as whether the scientist has had any comets, craters, prizes etc named after her/him, plus suggestions for further reading, and information about films or music that may have been based on or inspired by her/him. These sections, I should warn you, can be fatal to your to-be-read and to-be-watched piles... In summary, I think this is an excellent book, informative, well written and well presented, that gives an overview of the science and scientists which is easily digestible without feeling superficial. Science has changed since I was a girl (they've discovered the Earth isn't flat, for a start) and scientific writers have realised they have to make the subject interesting if they want young people to be attracted into it. This book does that. Grant writes with a warm enthusiasm and respect for the work these scientists do, without ever setting them up as unapproachable objects of reverence. He includes not just the great theoreticians whose ideas about the workings of the universe may be quite hard for the layperson to really grasp, but also more practical scientists, making a difference to our day-to-day lives, in medical research, climatology, computing, etc. I read it straight through and enjoyed getting a feeling for the timeline of science, but this would also work very well as a reference book to look up or remind oneself of what a particular scientist is noted for. Highly recommended for any young person from about 13 up, I'd say, and for any adult who would just like to know a bit more about the subject. NB This book was kindly provided for review by the author, whom I know via the blogging world. However, the review reflects my honest opinion.

from my goodreads review: Get this essential book for your family discussions at the dinner table. Do you want your children to become interested in science and/or world history? Do you have an interest in the history of scientific thought and progress? The concise and well written material on 50 selected scientists covering the ages will enlighten, delight and possibly inspire further study. John Grant has written a beautifully seductive book that will encourage further study on any given topic that particularly interests students. I have the paperback book, and I think it is designed attractively with the perfect presentation for short discussions that could be followed up with further research. I am long past the age of teaching my children as they now teach me, but I know they would all have enjoyed the math and science and history contained in this very rich publication.

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