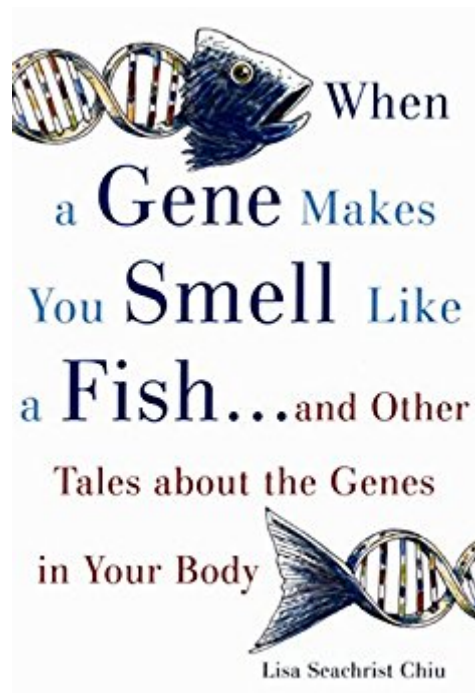


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When A Gene Makes You Smell Like A Fish: ...and Other Amazing Tales About The Genes In Your Body



Synopsis

From the gene that causes people to age prematurely to the "bitter gene" that may spawn broccoli haters, this book explores a few of the more exotic locales on the human genome, highlighting some of the tragic and bizarre ways our bodies go wrong when genes fall prey to mutation and the curious ways in which genes have evolved for our survival. Lisa Seachrist Chiu has a smorgasbord of stories to tell about rare and not so rare genetic quirks. We read about the Dracula Gene, a mutation in zebra fish that causes blood cells to explode on contact with light, and suites of genes that also influence behavior and physical characteristics; the Tangier Island Gene, first discovered after physicians discovered a boy with orange tonsils (scientists now realize that the child's odd condition comes from an inability to process cholesterol); and Wilson's Disease, a gene defect that fails to clear copper from the body, which can trigger schizophrenia and other neurological symptoms, and can be fatal if left untreated. Friendlier mutations include the Myostatin gene, which allows muscles to become much larger than usual and enhances strength and the much-envied Cheeseburger Gene, which allows a lucky few to eat virtually anything they want and remain razor thin. While fascinating us with stories of genetic peculiarities, Chiu also manages to effortlessly explain much of the cutting-edge research in modern genetics, resulting in a book that is both informative and entertaining. It is a must read for everyone who loves popular science or is curious about the human body.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

So why didn't I award five stars if it was all of the above? Page after page of jaw-breaking scientific terminology, words with endless numbers of letters, arcane and almost unpronounceable terms, etc. made the task difficult. Any science writer must occasionally use the language of their profession. Cosmology, physics, geology, mathematics - all use technical terms that are difficult for outsiders to comprehend. Biology is at a disadvantage due to its taxonomy and its use of Latin as a universal tongue. Yet Gould proves that one can speak to both the layman and the professional with his essays (layman) and large detailed technical works (professional). How much easier (and enjoyable) this work would have been if the Appendix had become a preface! There are incredible tales here - the story of how genes affect us in all our myriad ways from the way we smell to what we can eat or taste. The heartbreaking stories of those with rare but now identifiable genetic ailments again demonstrate the incredible workings of the human body. The way proteins, DNA, chromosomes and genes interact is nothing short of a miracle. One can almost understand the belief in Intelligent Design until one realizes that the "design" aspect in these cases is not only faulty but also malevolent. Perhaps the most interesting aspect was not the weird afflictions but the workings of the body - how genes work together, turning on and off chemical reactions in an astounding, continuous series of billions of simultaneous reactions. The good thing is that for the first time in history we are at the point of correcting nature's mistakes and ending much misery. Ms Chiu makes a good case for natal scanning of a wide range of diseases and hopefully we will soon have the tools to fix the defective ones we find.

This is such a cool book! I offer "bonus books" to my high school students each year; basically a list of science-related books that they can read each quarter to earn bonus points for their class. This has become an instant favorite for its use of shock value to draw kids in ("There's a gene that will make your urine black?? What?!") and then its use of humor to keep them hooked.

This book is a good read if your into understanding genetics and all the weird quirks that make people the way they are. If you have no background in science, there will be parts that go over your

head. Even if you do enjoy science, there are sections that do bore but are necessary its purpose. Overall, it was fun and enlightening. I am a biology major so I am somewhat bias.

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