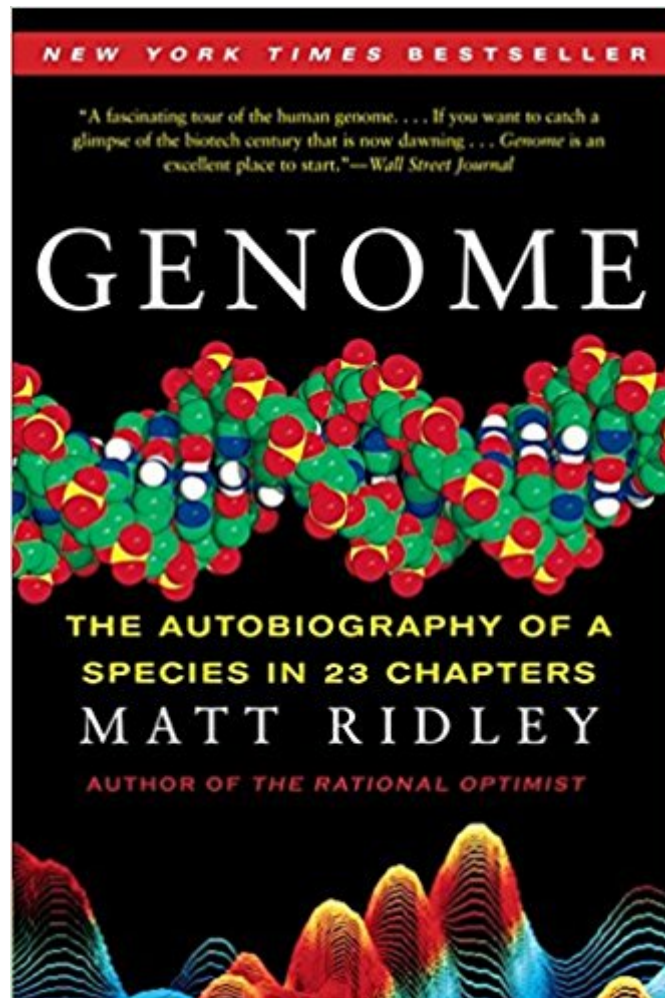




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# Genome: The Autobiography Of A Species In 23 Chapters



## Synopsis

The genome's been mapped. But what does it mean? Arguably the most significant scientific discovery of the new century, the mapping of the twenty-three pairs of chromosomes that make up the human genome raises almost as many questions as it answers. Questions that will profoundly impact the way we think about disease, about longevity, and about free will. Questions that will affect the rest of your life. Genome offers extraordinary insight into the ramifications of this incredible breakthrough. By picking one newly discovered gene from each pair of chromosomes and telling its story, Matt Ridley recounts the history of our species and its ancestors from the dawn of life to the brink of future medicine. From Huntington's disease to cancer, from the applications of gene therapy to the horrors of eugenics, Matt Ridley probes the scientific, philosophical, and moral issues arising as a result of the mapping of the genome. It will help you understand what this scientific milestone means for you, for your children, and for humankind.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Science writer Matt Ridley has found a way to tell someone else's story without being accused of plagiarism. *Genome: The Autobiography of a Species in 23 Chapters* delves deep within your body (and, to be fair, Ridley's too) looking for dirt dug up by the Human Genome Project. Each chapter pries one gene out of its chromosome and focuses on its role in our development and adult life, but also goes further, exploring the implications of genetic research and our quickly changing social attitudes toward this information. *Genome* shies away from the "tedious biochemical middle

managers" that only a nerd could love and instead goes for the A-material: genes associated with cancer, intelligence, sex (of course), and more. Readers unfamiliar with the jargon of genetic research needn't fear; Ridley provides a quick, clear guide to the few words and concepts he must use to translate hard science into English. His writing is informal, relaxed, and playful, guiding the reader so effortlessly through our 23 chromosomes that by the end we wish we had more. He believes that the Human Genome Project will be as world-changing as the splitting of the atom; if so, he is helping us prepare for exciting times--the hope of a cure for cancer contrasts starkly with the horrors of newly empowered eugenicists. Anyone interested in the future of the body should get a head start with the clever, engrossing *Genome*. --Rob Lightner --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Soon we'll know what's in our genes: next year, the Human Genome Project will have its first-draft map of our 23 chromosomes. Ridley (*The Red Queen*; *The Origins of Virtue*) anticipates the genomic news with an inventively constructed, riveting exposition of what we already know about the links between DNA and human life. His inviting prose proposes "to tell the story of the human genome... chromosome by chromosome, by picking a gene from each." That story begins with the basis of life on earth, the DNA-to-RNA-to-protein process (chapter one, "Life," and also chromosome one); the evolution of *Homo sapiens* (chromosome two, which emerged in early hominids when two ape chromosomes fused); and the discovery of genetic inheritance (which came about in part thanks to the odd ailment called alkaptonuria, carried on chromosome three). Some facts about your life depend entirely on a single gene--for example, whether you'll get the dreadful degenerative disease Huntington's chorea, and if so, at what age (chromosome four, hence chapter four: "Fate"). But most facts about you are products of pleiotropy, "multiple effects of multiple genes," plus the harder-to-study influences of culture and environment. (One asthma-related gene--but only one--hangs out on chromosome five.) The brilliant "whistle-stop tour of some... sites in the genome" passes through "Intelligence," language acquisition, embryology, aging, sex and memory before arriving at two among many bugbears surrounding human genetic mapping: the uses and abuses of genetic screening, and the ongoing debate on "genetic determinism" and free will. Ridley can explain with equal verve difficult moral issues, philosophical quandaries and technical biochemistry; he distinguishes facts from opinions well, and he's not shy about offering either. Among many recent books on genes, behavior and evolution, Ridley's is one of the most informative. It's also the most fun to read. Agent, Felicity Bryan. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Excellent, easy to understand explanation of how chromosomes function, and the details about how genes code for proteins that are essential to our bodies. He explains how genes turn on and off during our lifetime for various reasons and how this can affect our health. While it's a book about biology, I was impressed with how it does not read like one. The book was first published in 1999, and while the extensive research he discusses was conducted before that, and the science of genetics subsequently advanced; by and large the basic science he presents is still applicable because of how he presents each concept. From a historical perspective, he discusses what is now seen as groundbreaking experiments that established the field of genetics in the mid to late 20th century - without fully realizing it from today's viewpoint. It's good insight to the ground floor of the largest expanding field of science in our lifetime.

A good introduction into the subject matter, but still lacking in some respects. I enjoyed the structure of 23 chapters actin as a biography of sorts on each of the gene pairs. While there is far too much information to be completely covered in a single book, there are a couple of shortcomings that kept this from being as good as I had hoped. A little more background into the process of extracting and identifying DNA would have been appreciated. Although this information may have not been complete at the time of the original publishing, in 2013 DNA was commonly used in criminal and civil courts, as well as some daytime talk shows. Secondly, while I can appreciate the author's interjection of humor to lighten some of the heavier passages, it seems to happen too frequently and ends up detracting. In particular, a few analogies seem to be taken a bit too far after the point has been clearly made. Lastly, the subject of Gene therapy (treatments) could use a better explanation of how the mechanism works to get the altered genes into the code of the patient. Otherwise, it is an enjoyable read and an good introduction to the subject matter.

If this book were a genome, I'm not sure it would have survived. Somewhere in its transcription from print to kindle, mutations sprung up on every chromosome, and it looks like it hasn't evolved any sort of "double-checking" mechanism. Some of the common errors: -"The" replaced with "die," -"1" replaced with "i" (think "the years i957-i960") -"tl" regularly replaced with "d" (think "Aristode" and "litde") -Headings appear randomly in the text ("GENOME 157" in the middle of a sentence) -several others If you don't mind sentences like "Aristode discovered die GENOME 157 idea," (not an actual quote, but a representation of the regular errors) go for it. In science, however, names really matter. These types of errors render the entire text unreliable. Ever want to quote that interesting thing you

learned? Well don't, because the book might have gotten the name wrong through a typo and you'll look like an idiot rather than a smarty-pants who reads scholarly books on the weekend. I think there are enough reviews of the text itself to give a potential buyer a good idea of what they can expect, so I won't go into much other than the fact that I read these types of books regularly, and while I would definitely read it again (interesting ideas), I felt like I was trudging through the text. The author is particularly fond of letting you know he just lied to you or made something up, sometimes to demonstrate his points. Just like every gene should not be expressed, every idea that enters an author's mind shouldn't make it to the final print. So there you have it, an interesting but flawed production that could use some encouragement from natural selection.

I bought this book as a text book for a class I was dreading. I am NOT a math or science person, but the subject matter is of interest. This book is a pleasant surprise. It dumbs down the material enough for us novices, but still is written intelligently where we have to reach a bit to understand it. I actually enjoyed most of the book and couple with my professor's teaching style, I learned and retained a lot more than I imagined. Would be a great book as an introduction for personal knowledge and growth, for math and science people as well as those of us who are not.

Although ostensibly about DNA and the human genome, it is actually more of a philosophical view of the human condition using a handful of genes as examples of the way us naked apes function, mentally, physically, emotionally, even socially. The book thankfully does not often get heavily into the deep scientific aspects of DNA research. For the most part, an entertaining book written in a generally engaging manner. As mentioned elsewhere, it is a bit uneven. Sometimes Mr. Ridley had to really reach to come up with a gene that he could write about, or enough to say about it to pad the article out to chapter length. Somewhere around chromosome 17 or 18, I don't know if he started running out of steam or I did. Don't try to read the whole thing continuously; take a few days off between chapters, you'll find it easier to maintain enthusiasm.

Was disappointed at the date of the book . Originally published in 1999 , then 2002 , then 2006 . At that age the book is barely relevant to today's fast pace . should go out it's way to specifically note the latest published date especially with tech books. Not a keeper

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