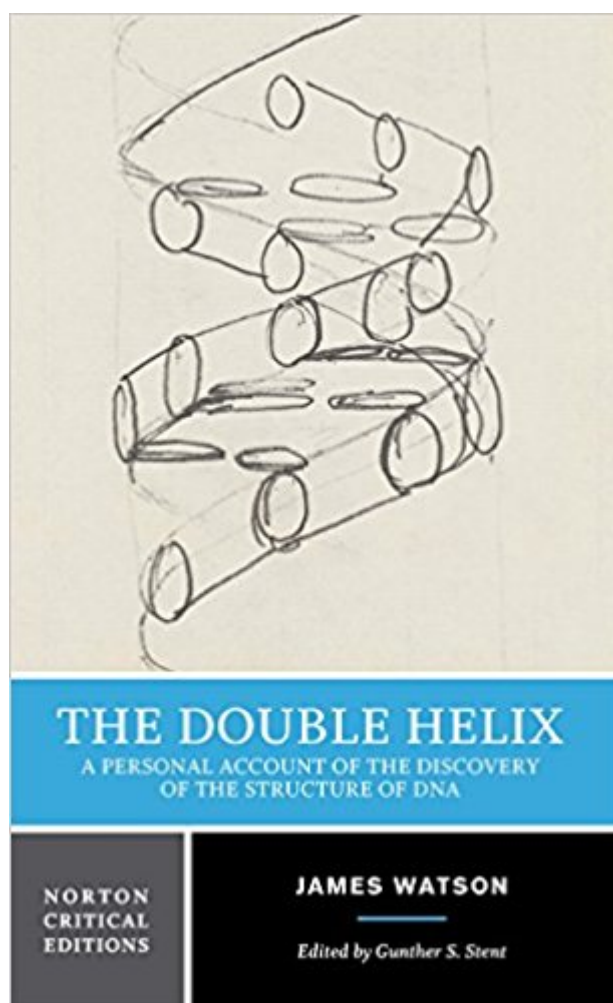


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# The Double Helix: A Personal Account Of The Discovery Of The Structure Of DNA (Norton Critical Editions)



## Synopsis

Since its publication in 1968, *The Double Helix* has given countless readers a rare and exciting look at one highly significant piece of scientific research—Watson and Crick's race to discover the molecular structure of DNA. In this Norton Critical Edition, Watson's lively and irreverent account is placed in historical perspective by Gunther Stent's introduction and by retrospective views from two major figures in the adventure, Francis Crick and Linus Pauling, and by Rosalind Franklin's last student, Aaron Klug. Background materials include reproductions of the original scientific papers in which the double helical structure of DNA was first presented in 1953 and 1954. In *Criticism*, which begins with "A Review of the Reviews" by Gunther Stent, other scientists and scholars reveal their own experiences and views of Watson's story. There are reviews by Philip Morrison, F. X. S., Richard C. Lewontin, Mary Ellmann, Robert L. Sinsheimer, John Lear, Alex Comfort, Jacob Bronowski, Conrad H. Waddington, Robert K. Merton, Peter M. Medawar, and André Lwoff; as well as three letters to the editor of *Science* by Max F. Perutz, M. H. F. Wilkins, and James D. Watson.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Science seldom proceeds in the straightforward logical manner imagined by outsiders," writes James Watson in *The Double Helix*, his account of his codiscovery (along with Francis Crick) of the structure of DNA. Watson and Crick won Nobel Prizes for their work, and their names are memorized by biology students around the world. But as in all of history, the real story behind the

deceptively simple outcome was messy, intense, and sometimes truly hilarious. To preserve the "real" story for the world, James Watson attempted to record his first impressions as soon after the events of 1951-1953 as possible, with all their unpleasant realities and "spirit of adventure" intact. Watson holds nothing back when revealing the petty sniping and backbiting among his colleagues, while acknowledging that he himself was a willing participant in the melodrama. In particular, Watson reveals his mixed feelings about his famous colleague in discovery, Francis Crick, who many thought of as an arrogant man who talked too much, and whose brilliance was appreciated by few. This is the joy of *The Double Helix*--instead of a chronicle of stainless-steel heroes toiling away in their sparkling labs, Watson's chronicle gives readers an idea of what living science is like, warts and all. *The Double Helix* is a startling window into the scientific method, full of insight and wit, and packed with the kind of science anecdotes that are told and retold in the halls of universities and laboratories everywhere. It's the stuff of legends. --Therese Littleton --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

First published in 1968, this classic story of the discovery of DNA has never been released as an audiobook. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Quite possibly the worst book I ever kinda read. The writing is not good and the subject matter is micro-biology and organic chemistry. Unless you are degreed in one or both of those fields, I would say this book is not for you. The plot is great and I could see a screen writer doing something wonderful with it, dumbed down to an everyman level. As it is, it's just a bunch of names footnoted in scientific history and the above mentioned heavy science. I am a degreed engineer. 35 years in my field. I had 2 semesters of chemistry and 2 of physics, 40 years ago and the meat of this book and their discovery is over my head. Maybe I'm just stupid. I think it would have been a better read if Linus Pauling had made the discovery instead of Watson.

Recently I was asked to do a short paper on military innovation for a conference to be held in South Korea. Having read somewhere that this is the best book on how scientific discoveries are made, I bought it and read it from cover to cover. Even though much of the science is above my head. Much of the book is devoted to backbiting aimed at Prof. Watson's associates. Including the most important one among them, Francis Crick. In other ways, though, it provides a vivid picture of the politics, intrigues, frustrations, and joys of doing research. I also found the descriptions of

grantmanship and life at Cambridge, England, during the early 1950s interesting. All in all a good read, though not the spectacular one I thought it would be.

The Double Helix, A Personal Account of the Discovery of the Structure of DNA, is a great book, which I would highly recommend. Written by James D. Watson, it is a novel about the adventures and struggles James Watson and Francis Crick went through to finally discover the double helix structure. The book is very well written and you can never put the book down. The subject is so informative and interesting that you can't help but keep flipping through the pages. This was such an amazing discovery, which makes the book that much better to read. Watson is great at thoroughly explaining the challenges they went through. They fail many times, like all scientists sometimes do, but it all paid off in the end. He tells the story very well, and explains the different encounters he had with many different scientists. He talks about his times working with Crick in the Cavendish laboratory, and what they went through to finally discover DNA. Watson writes a lot about the scientific part of his discovery, but also writes about the adventures and vacations he went on, which make the story that much more interesting. The novel also has pictures in it, which I love. They help me follow the plot of the story, and help me form an image in my head of what he is talking about. Some of the images are also diagrams that are labeled to help you understand the scientific part of the book. I would recommend this novel to anyone, even if you are not interested in science or DNA very much. The book is well written and gives a great story of how one of the best discoveries of all time was made.

After so many years and at least three readings, The Double Helix is still thrilling and totally inspiring. I highly recommend this book. Honest Jim shoots from the hip and is therefore, a very good guide for those who either plan to engage in science and have no idea what it feels like to partake in great discoveries, or for those who simply think that science is not fun.

"The Double Helix: A Personal Account of the Discovery of The Structure of DNA", James D. Watson, Simon & Shuster, NY 1968/2001. ISBN-13: 978-0-7432-1630-2, PB 226 pages, 20 B/W Photos & 11 Diagrams, plus 3 pg. Foreword by Sir L. Bragg & 4 pg. Intro. by S. Nasar. 8 1/2" x 5 1/2". Written by Dr. James D. Watson in 1968, reprinted several times, this is one of the most intriguing, personal stories of scientific endeavors written to unravel the molecular basis of heredity and the genetic code of life itself, the DNA molecule - deservedly referenced as the Holy Grail of scientific inquiry. With an explanatory apology, Watson describes his maturation from an initial lazy

undergraduate at Univ. of Chicago having primary interest in ornithology and avoiding chemistry and physics courses, to doing post-doctoral research abroad, first in Copenhagen and subsequently in Cambridge where he began serious research with Francis Crick that culminated in elucidating the molecular structure of the double helix DNA molecule with base-pairing of A-T and G-C, allowing a model construct possessing correspondence to its X-ray crystalline lattice structure. Much of the time it appeared to a 'Mission Impossible'. Success came in 1953, Watson was then 25 years old. The author's prose and pace of relating this story reveals the passion of his quest to establish his mark in science - and he relates intimate anecdotes of his cohorts, teachers and the scientific cult of divisions enjoyed by the scholarly, erudite academicians in England and elsewhere. In the end, he shared along with his associate Francis Crick, and Maurice Wilkins, the Nobel Prize in 1962. The future of medicine was forever changed. The book is a compelling, refreshing read for anyone with a modicum of curiosity - a science background is not essential.

Always a great read. Technical on chemistry at times...but a great story on the creative process shines through. My third time reading the book in 25 years.

Great

Wonderful book if you're interested in how the mind of a scientist works. Considering the immense importance of discovery of the double helix, it should be required reading for anyone interested in evolution. A bit heavy on the chemistry side but just pass over it as you read. It's the personality revelations that are truly enlightening.

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