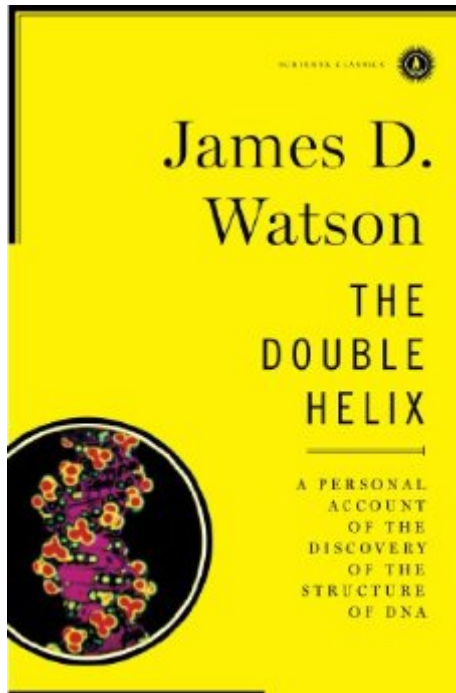


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The Double Helix: A Personal Account Of The Discovery Of The Structure Of DNA



Synopsis

The classic personal account of Watson and Crick's groundbreaking discovery of the structure of DNA, now with an introduction by Sylvia Nasar, author of *A Beautiful Mind*. By identifying the structure of DNA, the molecule of life, Francis Crick and James Watson revolutionized biochemistry and won themselves a Nobel Prize. At the time, Watson was only twenty-four, a young scientist hungry to make his mark. His uncompromisingly honest account of the heady days of their thrilling sprint against other world-class researchers to solve one of science's greatest mysteries gives a dazzlingly clear picture of a world of brilliant scientists with great gifts, very human ambitions, and bitter rivalries. With humility unspoiled by false modesty, Watson relates his and Crick's desperate efforts to beat Linus Pauling to the Holy Grail of life sciences, the identification of the basic building block of life. Never has a scientist been so truthful in capturing in words the flavor of his work.

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Customer Reviews

XXXXXIn this book (first published in 1968), "Honest Jim" (as a scientist friend called him) or Dr. James Dewey Watson has explained his "version of how the structure of DNA was discovered" and "this account represents the way [he] saw things then, in [the fall of] 1951 [to the spring of] 1953."

(The discovery was announced in April 1953.) That is, he has "attempted to re-create [his] first impressions of the relevant events and personalities" that he encountered along the way to making the discovery. Thus, understand this is not a book of historical facts. Also, because of the personal nature of this book Watson states that "many of the comments [that he makes] may seem one-sided and unfair, but this is often the case in the incomplete and hurried way in which human beings decide to like or dislike a new idea or [a new] acquaintance." This book revolves around five main people: (1) Dr. Francis Crick (1916 to 2004) of the Cavendish Laboratory in Cambridge, England (2) Dr. James Watson (born 1928) also of the Cavendish Laboratory (3) Dr. Rosalind Franklin (1920 to 1958) of King's College, a division of the University of London (4) Dr. Maurice Wilkins (1916 to 2004) also of King's College (5) Dr. Linus Pauling (1901 to 1994) of the California Institute of Technology. However, along the way the reader meets many other people, both scientists and non-scientists. As Watson explains, the above five people are in a "race" to discover DNA's structure. However, I got the impression that neither Franklin nor Wilkins knew they were in a race. By the end of the race, Watson was "one of the winners" who shared the Nobel Prize in 1962 with Crick and Wilkins.

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