

MEGHAN GUINNEE, DEPARTMENT

BIOGRAPHY

Francis Crick: Discoverer of Genetic Code. By Matt Ridley. HarperCollins Publishers. Lives Series (ISBN 0060823333). pp. Hardcover. \$19.95.

Francis Crick (1916–2004) was a British scientist, along with James Watson, an American, who first suggested a double helix structure for DNA. One of the greatest discoveries of the 20th century, the structure of DNA, along with the working of the genetic code, paved the way for modern molecular biology. This is an excellent short account of the life of Francis Crick that is part of the “Eminent Lives” series that provide brief biographies of major historical figures.

Crick is in many ways an underdog hero in the history of science. He started out as a physicist who was forced to convert to biology after the end of World War II. His early career was unimpressive, and it took him a long time to earn a Ph.D. In fact, he was still working on his doctorate at age 35 when he met up with James Watson in 1953 at the Cavendish Laboratory in England.

After their triumphal journey through, Crick went on to make major contributions to biology, including helping to determine the genetic code and proposing a model for the protein structure. Amazingly, using only X-ray diffraction data, he helped to determine how information was transmitted from the four nucleotide language of DNA to the 20 letter amino acid language of proteins. Later in life, Crick focused on understanding the neurologic

MEGHAN GUINNEE received her M.S. in evolutionary ecology from the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. Recently, she developed biology programming for children and adults at the Buffalo Institute of Science in Buffalo, NY. She currently works as a statistician and coordinator for an education evaluation company. She has published numerous scientific research articles, popular science articles, and book reviews, listed at MeghanGuinnee.com. She can be contacted at: mguinnee@gmail.com.