**Who We Are and How We Got Here by David Reich**

This book describes the field of ancient DNA research and the new science of the human past. Current human populations are made of mixtures of previous populations, and by tracking these mixtures through recent history, researchers can see the route humanity took when we migrated ‘out of Africa’ to cover the world. 30 different population mixtures are mentioned in this book as Reich takes us through the last 500,000 years of human history tracked through genetics. Starting in our deep history and taking the reader through the biggest revelations of the field, the final three chapters look to the future and address issues of equality and diversity. Here, Reich mentioned the scientific debate over whether there are biological quantifiers for racial groups, leaving the reader in no doubt of his views and displaying his clear passion for equality.

Reich is a leading researcher in the field and has been at the forefront of many discoveries and advances and is able to communicate the genetics and methodology behind his statements, however it was quite dense in some places and I wouldn’t recommend it for someone with no experience of genetics.

*Who We Are and How We Got Here* sparked my interest in an area of research which is rapidly growing, introducing the readers to the key players in the field and the most significant research papers from the last 20 years and how they have then gone on to influence the field.

Overall, I would strongly recommend for anyone with a passing interest in genetics or genomics, human evolution or our prehistory.

**Emma Pettengale**  
(Portland Press/Biochemical Society, UK)

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**Theranostic Bionanomaterials edited by Wenguo Cui and Xin Zhao**

*Theranostic Bionanomaterials* provides a very broad literature review in the field of functional bionanomaterials. Part I of this book aims to explain the fundamentals, however it fails to build a comprehensive description or to lay the foundation for future discussions despite listing substantive findings of numerous primary publications. Part I recites research papers that are 10 years old (or older) at the time of the book’s publication. It is difficult to read due to extremely long sentences and the abundance of generic statements that do not add value to the discussion.

In contrast, Part II looking into biomedical applications of different theranostic bionanomaterials covers the cutting-edge research with much more relevant references and well-organized flow of thought. It is suitable for specialists in the field interested in fine-tuning of bionanomaterials and those looking to translate their nanomaterials into biological and medical applications.

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**Flora: Inside the Secret World of Plants published by DK**

*Flora* provides a comprehensive introduction to the world of plants to anyone who has an interest in the natural world. It has been made in collaboration with scientists at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew, London.

The book introduces the reader to the classification of the plant kingdom and continues to describe plants in terms of their roots, stems and branches as well as their leaves, flowers, seeds and fruit. Information is delivered through cross-sectional diagrams, annotations, intriguing content boxes and numerous awesome illustrations which, alone, can be considered to be photographic art pieces. Included in the book are also four splendid botanical prints. The innovative ways in which plants are portrayed distinguish this book from a regular botany textbook.

Throughout the book, there are recurring references to the role of plants in different forms of art, which range from Renaissance artworks to Japanese woodblock prints. Emphasis is made on how plants provide beauty and inspiration to our lives, besides carrying out their essential biological functions. This book highlights the meeting point between art and science by explaining how, for example, the 18th century was considered to be the Golden Age of botanical painting. Collaborations between artists like Ehret and the botanist Carl Linnaeus, resulted in beautiful, scientifically-accurate botanical illustrations.

In addition, the book is full of plant-related fun facts. What affects the colour of hydrangea flowers? What colours are different pollinators attracted to? What external stimuli cause flowers to open or close? Such questions are answered in this book, *Flora.*

**Rosalin Bonetta**  
(University of Malta, Malta)

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**Theranostic Bionanomaterials** suffers from very low-quality visual material – the illustrations and figures reproduced directly from the research papers are printed in low resolution, making several of them unreadable, or redundant (such as bar graphs and XY plots). The text font is inconsistent across figures. Additionally, the majority of the visual material is sourced from the publications of the chapter’s authors.

Overall, *Theranostic Bionanomaterials* focuses on listing what has been done in the literature, omitting critical discussion of theoretical and methodological contributions to the field. The reader will find Part II very valuable if they already have a background in bionanomaterials, because Part I does not provide sufficient account of the vocabulary or basic knowledge.

**Jolanta Beinarovica**  
(University of Nottingham, UK)
How to Build a Dragon or Die Trying: A Satirical Look at Cutting Edge Science by Paul and Julie Knoepfler

Aimed at every reader: young, non-scientists, or academics, How to Build a Dragon or Die Trying gives a good overview about the number of considerations a scientist makes while designing a research project. This book covers every section one would normally write in a grant proposal: from state-of-the-art knowledge, passing through the potential bottlenecks and contingency plans, as well as the impact of the project on society and the possible ethical considerations. While for a scientist working in academia a lot about this may sound like ‘just the usual stuff’, the book is packed with interesting facts about the animals one would consider as a starting point for creating a dragon, as well as plenty of references for those willing to consider the idea from an even more realistic point of view. Complex scientific concepts, such as CRISPR, stem cells, and embryonic development are explained concisely but clearly, making this book educational and accessible for the non-scientist as well. In addition, the idea of creating a mythical creature will likely spark the interest for research among the youngest readers.

Almudena Ponce-Salvatierra
(International Institute of Molecular and Cell Biology, Warsaw)

Marie Curie (Little People, Big Dreams) by Isabel Sanchez Vegara (Author), Frau Isa (Illustrator)

Discover the life of Marie Curie, the Nobel Prize-winning scientist in this offering from the Little People, BIG DREAMS series—books and educational games that explore the lives of outstanding people. All of them achieved incredible things, yet each began life as a child with a dream, the series aims to inspire the next generation of outstanding people who will change the world with Little People, BIG DREAMS! Most importantly, what did the target audience think?

We really liked this book, there were lots of good things that happened, but it was also a bit sad.

It was very interesting to read and learn about Marie Curie, her life, and the science she did.

We were very happy that she won the awards.

We liked the pictures too, they were very nice!

Isabel and Holly
(6 years old)

Password XVIII
By Benoit Leblanc
(http://peopleinwhitecoats.blogspot.co.uk)

Even back in the Middle Ages, people took information security very seriously.