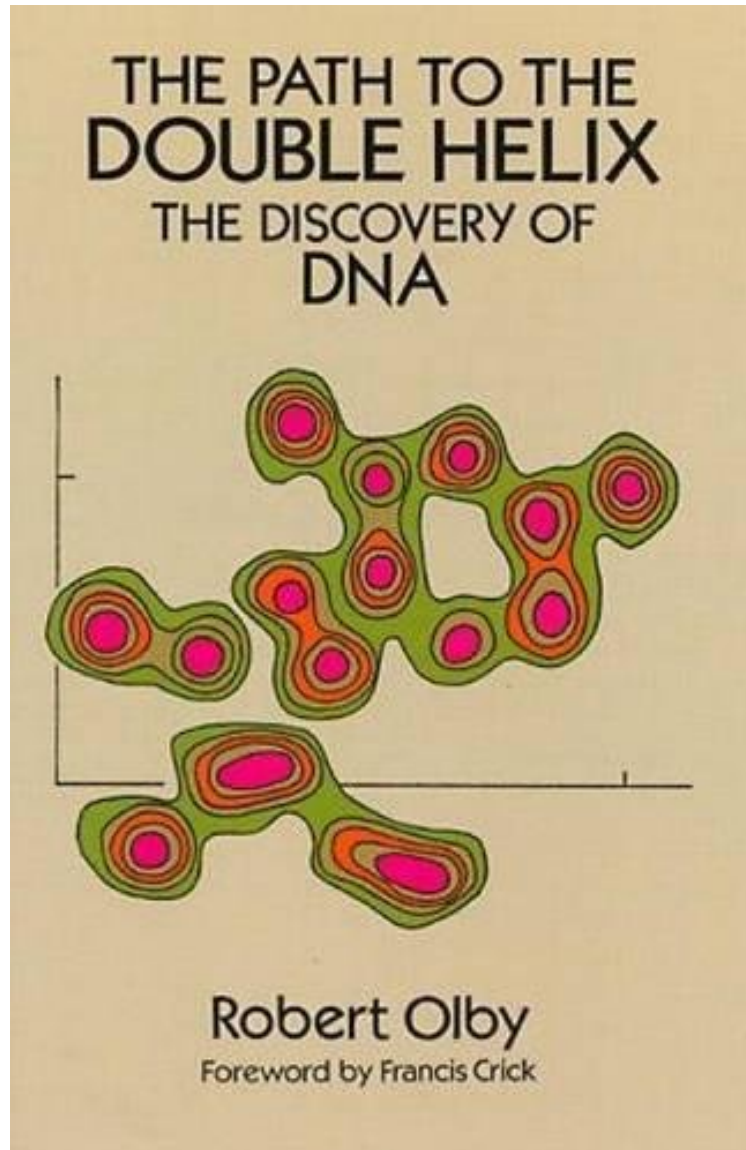


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The Path to the Double Helix: The Discovery of DNA (Dover Books on Biology)

Robert Olby

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Robert Olby : The Path to the Double Helix: The Discovery of DNA (Dover Books on Biology) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Path to the Double Helix: The Discovery of DNA (Dover Books on Biology):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. The definitive Double HelixBy P. B. SharpWatson and Crick's

discovery of the DNA double helix ranks as one of history's greatest scientific breakthroughs but what adds spice, mystery and chutzpah to the immense discovery is an intensely human drama with all the stops pulled out. James Watson, of course, popularized the enormous avalanche of scientific studies which all came together in his "The Double Helix", an astonishing expose of people in action behind great science, great thinking, original thinking, an exciting tale of competition. In this lively enactment of the intense drama of the race to discover the molecular structure of DNA, author Olby takes you into the labs and the hearts and minds of the players weaving an incredible scientific tapestry. The book is heavy on organic chemistry and the reader may feel somewhat bogged down by the structure of the four bases forming the ladders inside the DNA helices with the railings so to speak constituting the phosphate water backbone. The text of the book is very tiny, especially the numerous footnotes. "The Path" is really a text book and author Olby leaves no stones unturned in displaying the parameters of the drama but he scrupulously stays clear of voicing any opinions about controversies that are an inevitable part of scientific research. The most famous altercation- the antagonism of Maurice Wilkins towards Rosalind Franklin- is presented in their letters and lab notes but author Olby does not take sides, however he discusses all sides. And of course he does have the benefit of hindsight. The first edition of his book was published in 1974 and he added a postscript to the 1994 edition. The photographs in the book including a couple of Watson, once with Crick and once with Tracy Sonneborn don't live up to the text. One wants more Watsons and more Cricks and Wilkins and Franklin and Linus Pauling. The numerous rather dark presentations of X ray crystallography patterns are anything but exciting with the exception of Rosalind Franklin's famous 51 which when shown surreptitiously to Watson by Maurice Wilkins precipitated in Watson an Eureka moment: he knew DNA was a double helix. The inter marriages, so to speak of many scientific disciplines- physics, biology, chemistry- resulted in the ultimate discovery, the structure of DNA. You wonder if the two people who put it all together, Francis Crick and James Watson were ordained by fate or perhaps the will of the gods to meet and complement each other's expertise, Yin and Yang so to speak. The discovery of the molecular structure of DNA was inevitable- Rosalind Franklin was almost there and so was Linus Pauling. But it is Crick and Watson's baby, one of the greatest victories in scientific history. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Exemplary By N. Sankaran This book is one of the first history of science books that I ever read, while yet a proto-historian of science at the Rockefeller circa 1996, and so occupies a special place on my Kindle shelf as a book that sparked and kindled my various scholarly fires (overdoing the pun a bit much ... I'll stop now). Anyhow in the years since I first read it, I would have to identify this book as the still-definitive work on the history of the crucial years of DNA research, which does justice to predecessors of Watson and Crick, whose double helix as vitally important and stunningly original in thought as it is, was NOT the discovery of DNA by any means, nor even the discovery of the importance of DNA. Without ever descending into stridency or escalating into hyperbole, Olby's seminal book gives a clear if dense account of the events leading up to the discovery of the double helix. Historians of science and other scholars of the field can't afford to not read this book (it's also a gold-mine of bibliographic resources for the original literature on the subject of DNA from the early years), and others if you're willing to put in the time will find it a balanced and informative background for other better known books including Watson's famous "The Double Helix" and Horace F. Judson's "Eighth Day of Creation." 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. the author doesn't do a good job of placing all the diverse research paths in ... By Ilya How many mistakes can one book have? Does anyone proof-read these things? (I am reading a Kindle version, may be the paper version is better). More generally, while I appreciate the attempt to illustrate the intricacies and complexities of what was at the time cutting edge research, the author doesn't do a good job of placing all the diverse research paths in the context. It was nevertheless both very interesting and useful to read for a scientist.

The 1953 discovery by James Watson and Francis Crick of the molecular structure of DNA ranks among the most dramatic events in the history of science. In this lively, perceptive, and scholarly study, a noted historian of science provides the first in-depth account of this milestone's achievement. Combining scientific and historical approaches, the narrative vividly recaptures the excitement of the conceptualization and evolution of ideas that led to the discovery of the genetic "secret of life." The story unfolds along several major lines: long-chain macromolecules; nucleic acids; bacterial transformations; the intellectual evolutions of physicists, chemists, and biologists; and the cross-pollination of scientific disciplines that unlocked the structural secrets of DNA. Francis Crick provides an illuminating Foreword for this abundantly illustrated and thought-provoking retelling of a great scientific detective story.