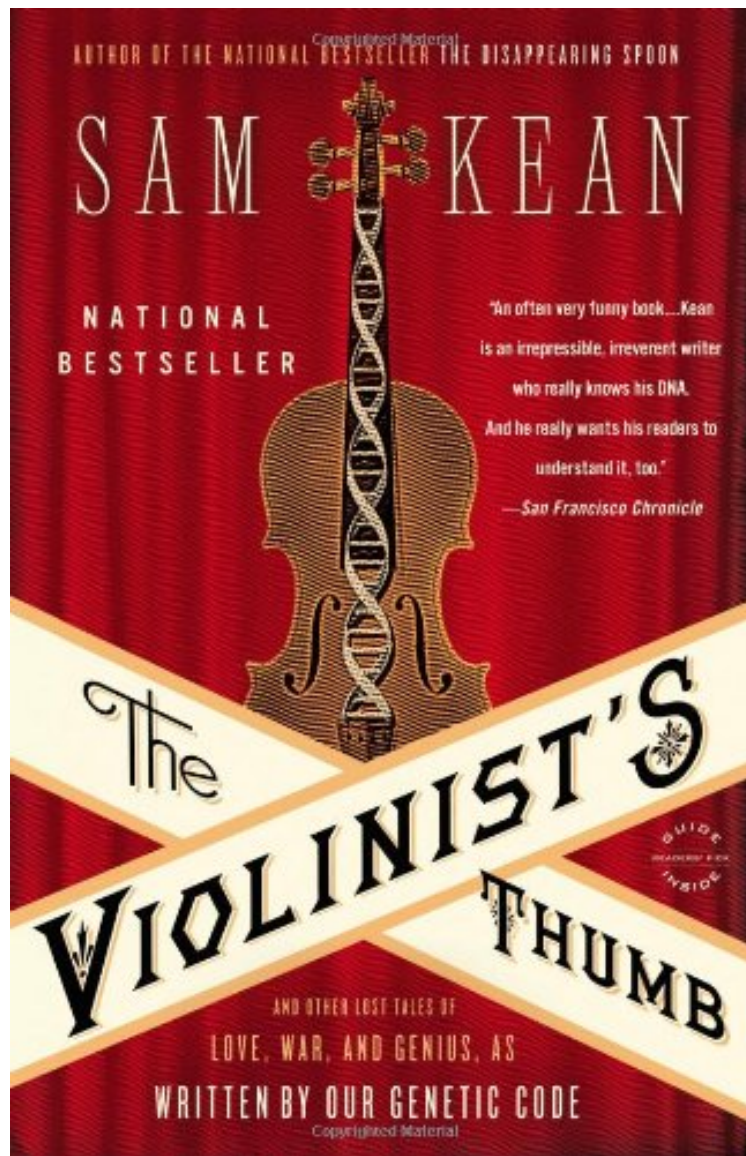


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The Violinist's Thumb: And Other Lost Tales of Love, War, and Genius, as Written by Our Genetic Code

Sam Kean

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#4216 in Books Sam Kean 2013-07-16 2013-07-16 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.25 x 1.25 x 5.501, .85 #File Name: 0316182338432 pages The Violinist's Thumb And Other Lost Tales of Love War and Genius as Written by Our Genetic Code | File size: 59.Mb

Sam Kean : The Violinist's Thumb: And Other Lost Tales of Love, War, and Genius, as Written by Our Genetic Code before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Violinist's Thumb: And Other Lost Tales of Love, War, and Genius, as Written by Our Genetic Code:

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Humorously EruditeBy John D. CofieldWe're all hearing a lot about DNA research and new genetic discoveries these days, but most of us probably have little to no idea of what it all means and what it entails for ourselves. If you want to learn more about the subject but have bad memories of dry as dust high school science textbooks, fear not, *The Violinist's Thumb* is an excellent resource. The title refers to the musician and composer Paganini, who was able to stretch and flex his fingers far more than most of us, and thus was able to perform extremely complex compositions. His story is just one of many enjoyable anecdotes scattered throughout *The Violinist's Thumb* that all illustrate various aspects of DNA and genes. Sam Kean has a great sense of humor and he uses it to render what might be mind numbingly complex descriptions of DNA strands enjoyable and fun. He is a master of the witty aside and the written versions of the sly elbow nudge and the sneaky wink. Do not mistake Kean's levity for lightmindedness. *The Violinist's Thumb* is an excellent overview of the history of DNA and genetic research, and while the anecdotes might make you laugh they also illustrate various aspects of that history. Most interestingly, Kean provides some intriguing speculations as to the future of that research and its implications for us all. I recommend *The Violinist's Thumb* as an invaluable resource for anyone, whether scientist or layman, seeking a better understanding of this fast developing field.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Well doneBy William T. LodgeKean manages to make DNA and genetics interesting and accessible. Kean doesn't assume prior knowledge, but doesn't get sidetracked explaining, instead it all flows together seamlessly. I would recommend this book to all the CSI fans out there. So many people talk about DNA but few know how it works. Kean's book can give its readers some solid information about DNA, and when you combine that with some really interesting characters from history, you get one excellent book. I'd give it 6 stars if I could.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Very goodBy Elizabeth A. GibsonMy favorite chapters in this book were the ones on microbes and epigenetics. I found Kean especially clear and interesting on the latter. Here are a few quotes from the book: Like genetics, epigenetics involves passing along certain biological traits. But unlike genetic changes, epigenetic changes don't alter the hardwired A-C-G-T sequence. Instead, epigenetic inheritance affects how cells access, read, and use DNA. And while biology often distinguishes between environment (nurture) and genes (nature), epigenetics combines nature with nurture in novel ways. About the influence of genes on behavior and disease, Kean writes, With every new genome that scientists sequence, it becomes clearer that genes deal in probabilities, not certainties. A genetic influence is just that, only that. Kean does his best to keep his sometimes technical discussions interesting and lively for the layperson. Overall, this was a fun and interesting read. My only quibble is that Kean's voice can get a little folksy at times, as if he's trying to hide or dial down his intelligence. The best writers on science for general audiences, such as the writers of *Wetware* and *Your Inner Fish* just let the stories and the science speak for themselves and don't let their personalities interfere too much. That said, a fun, insightful, engaging book for the science-inspired layperson.

From New York Times bestselling author Sam Kean comes incredible stories of science, history, language, and music, as told by our own DNA. In *The Disappearing Spoon*, bestselling author Sam Kean unlocked the mysteries of the periodic table. In *THE VIOLINIST'S THUMB*, he explores the wonders of the magical building block of life: DNA. There are genes to explain crazy cat ladies, why other people have no fingerprints, and why some people survive nuclear bombs. Genes illuminate everything from JFK's bronze skin (it wasn't a tan) to Einstein's genius. They prove that Neanderthals and humans bred thousands of years more recently than any of us would feel comfortable thinking. They can even allow some people, because of the exceptional flexibility of their thumbs and fingers, to become truly singular violinists. Kean's vibrant storytelling once again makes science entertaining, explaining human history and whimsy while showing how DNA will influence our species' future.

.com Best Books of the Month, July 2012: Born to parents named Gene and Jean, Sam Kean got enough ribbing in school science classes to develop an early aversion to genetics. Lucky for us, curiosity overcame conditioning as he became increasingly fascinated with the role DNA plays in shaping destiny. As he did in *The Disappearing Spoon*, a captivating chronicle of human interactions with each periodic element, Kean has created another page-turning scientific history in *The Violinist's Thumb*. With fluid gusto, he turns the discovery of DNA into riveting human drama, then unfurls a series of anecdotes that expand our understanding of genetic influence on our lives as (sometimes uniquely gifted) individuals, from presidents to physicists to violin virtuosos with exceptionally dexterous digits. Kean illuminates clues embedded in our genes that help map the meandering trajectory of our species, then leaves readers with the distinct impression that all this has been a fantastic preamble to our species most thrilling (and likely chilling) chapter: manipulating our DNA to remake future humans, and all life on Earth. --Mari Malcolm "As he did in his debut bestseller, *The Disappearing Spoon*, Sam Kean educates readers about a facet of science with wonderfully witty prose and enthralling anecdotes....Kean's thoughtful, humorous book is a joy to read." -- Publishers Weekly "A science journalist with a flair for words...[Kean's] language is fluid and accessible, even for the science-challenged." -- Barbara Hoffert, *Library Journal* "Kean is one of America's smartest and most charming science writers, and his new book could be perfect for summer readers who prefer some substance with their fun." -- Michael Schaub, National Public Radio "The DNA molecule, Kean asserts, is the 'grand narrative of human existence'-and he boldly

sets out to tell the tale, not only explaining genetics and its scientific history but linking Mendel's pea shoots to the evolution of early humans....He's crafted a lively read packed with unforgettable details." -- Sarah Zhang, Discover

"Sam Kean is the best science teacher you never had... a slew of intriguing tales, which Kean spins in light, witty prose while also placing them in a broader scientific context." -- Keith Staskiewicz, Entertainment Weekly

"Sam Kean has started to make a habit of taking scientific subjects that inhabit the outskirts of the popular imagination and reintroducing them with healthy doses of history and humanity....Anyone reading this fine book could be excused for jolting upright...with wide-eyed amazement." -- Jesse Singal, Boston Globe

"[Kean] writes with a humor and humanity that make him poised to become the next Brian Greene, maybe, or Oliver Sacks--explaining small corners of the universe one case study at a time." -- Monica Hesse, Washington Post

"The Violinist's Thumb delivers the same humor and insight--and delightful anecdotes--about DNA that Kean used to make the periodic table of the elements entertaining in his New York Times bestselling debut *The Disappearing Spoon*." -- Brooklyn Daily Eagle

About the Author
Sam Kean is the author of the New York Times bestseller *The Disappearing Spoon*. His work has appeared in *The New York Times Magazine*, *Mental Floss*, *Slate*, and *New Scientist*, and has been featured on NPR's "Radiolab" and "All Things Considered."