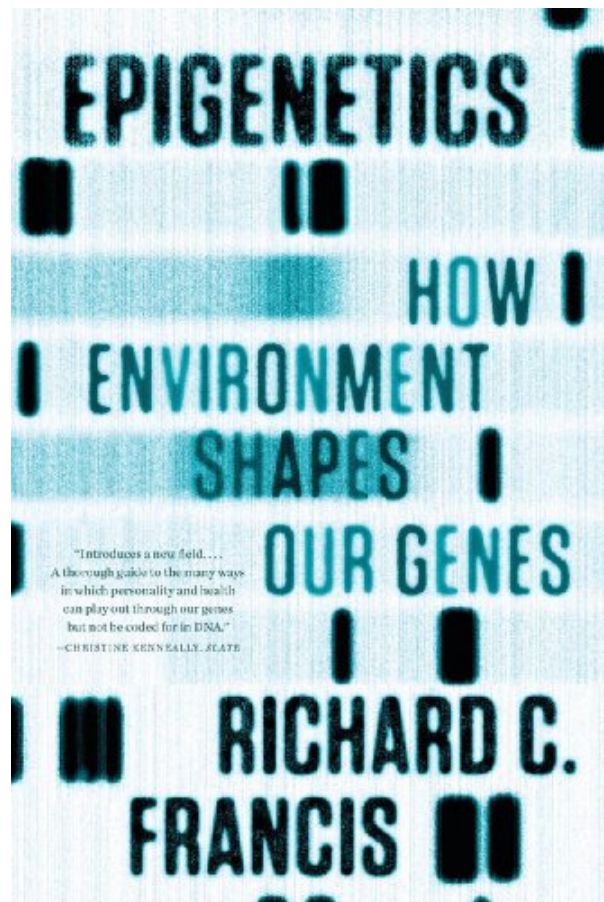
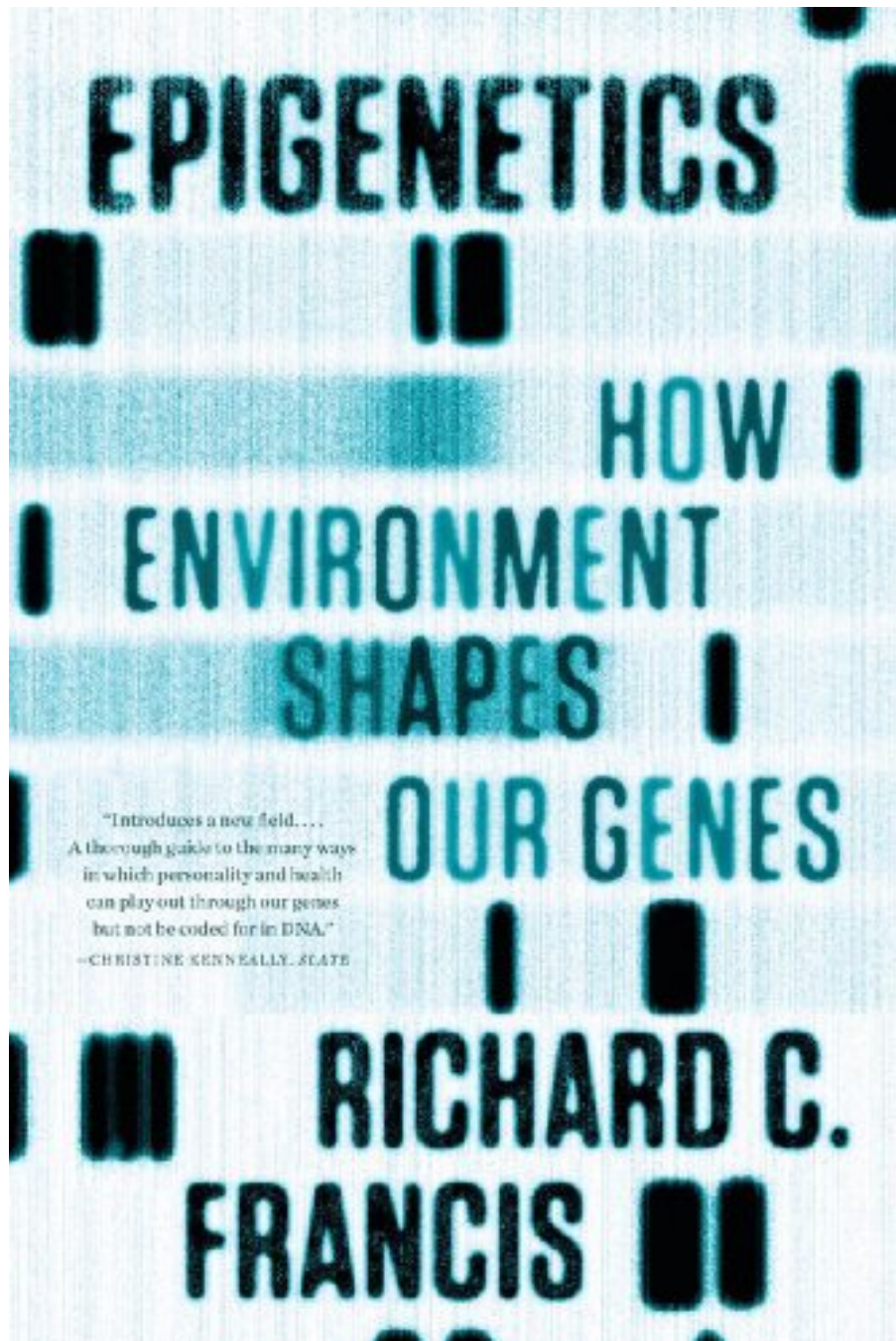


EPIGENETICS: HOW ENVIRONMENT SHAPES OUR GENES BY RICHARD C. FRANCIS



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Review

“Epigenetics explains all this in clear, no-nonsense prose. . . . One particularly excellent chapter explains epigenetic change through the body of steroid-addled baseball player José Canseco, from his brain to his testicles.” (Josh Rothman - Boston Globe)

“Francis’s primer introduces a new field. It’s a thorough guide to the many ways in which personality and health can play out through our genes but not be coded for in DNA.” (Christine Kenneally - Slate)

About the Author

Richard C. Francis is a science journalist with a PhD in neurobiology from Stony Brook University. He is the author of the acclaimed books *Domesticated*, *Epigenetics* and *Why Won’t Men Ask for Directions?* He lives in northern California.

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EPIGENETICS: HOW ENVIRONMENT SHAPES OUR GENES

BY RICHARD C. FRANCIS PDF

Goodbye, genetic blueprint. . . . The first book for general readers ?on the game-changing field of epigenetics.

The burgeoning new science of epigenetics offers a cornucopia of insights?some comforting, some frightening. For example, the male fetus may be especially vulnerable to certain common chemicals in our environment, in ways that damage not only his own sperm but also the sperm of his sons. And it's epigenetics that causes identical twins to vary widely in their susceptibility to dementia and cancer. But here's the good news: unlike mutations, epigenetic effects are reversible. Indeed, epigenetic engineering is the future of medicine. 18 illustrations

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Most helpful customer reviews

85 of 91 people found the following review helpful.

High hopes, but was disappointed

By T. Eagan

There is definitely a market for a good popular science book about epigenetics, and I eagerly awaited this one. But it fell short of my expectations. It simply is too short, and too lacking in depth. For the epigenetics of inheritance and evolution, there already is an excellent book out there: *Evolution in Four Dimensions: Genetic, Epigenetic, Behavioral, and Symbolic Variation in the History of Life* (Life and Mind:

Philosophical Issues in Biology and Psychology) . However, the book by Jablonka & Lamb is getting a little old (in this field, things sure develop rapidly), and it lacks the issues that I was most interested in - the effects of epigenetic change on health. However, I'll restate, for the evolutionary side, the Jablonka & Lamb book is great.

Back to the book by Francis, 160 pages is just too short. I will acknowledge the great many notes and large bibliography included, but the first 160 pages are so superficial, I doubt the author finds the right audience for the notes/bibliography.

The author's writing style and explanations are fine, so if you want a quick overview on a topic of which you have zero knowledge before, this book will serve you well.

However, for many of us, we must wait for a book with more depth, or a vastly expanded second edition.

For an example of excellent and in depth popular science writing, try Power, Sex, Suicide: Mitochondria and the Meaning of Life.

45 of 50 people found the following review helpful.

Engaging epigenetics

By Jerry M. Wright

This is a fascinating introduction to the new field of Epigenetics - a word to which most people react blankly. Most have no idea what how epigenetics changes the way that we conceptualize human development and inheritance, as well as conditions ranging from cancer to Alzheimer's disease.

Francis starts each chapter with a well-chosen, true story or observation that serves to illustrate the main points of that chapter. Frequently he circles back to the information presented in earlier chapters and it is clear that he is slowly building, in completely understandable terms, the reader's ability to understand the implications and intricacies of this burgeoning field of study, culminating in an outstanding discussion of stem cells.

From the Dutch famine of World War II to the growing obesity crisis to the fact that the experience of past generations can influence the current one - and the scary thought that what we do and experience will also have ramifications for future generations - the book is well-written, witty, and very timely. Don't be surprised if you start to read and can't stop until you are done!

18 of 19 people found the following review helpful.

Readable epigenesis

By tles

This is a pretty accessible treatment of a somewhat arcane topic for non-biologists. It is probably too advanced for the totally lay reader, but for a person willing to make the effort to understand what is being said, it is really important. Epigenetics is one of the most important avenues for understanding many of our modern maladies (e.g. diabetes, cancer), and will eventually lead to new and more effective treatment regimens for many conditions. This work presents the basic ideas of epigenesis pretty clearly. In my mind it doesn't go far enough to detail what the processes are that result in its implications. However, it is a start.

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