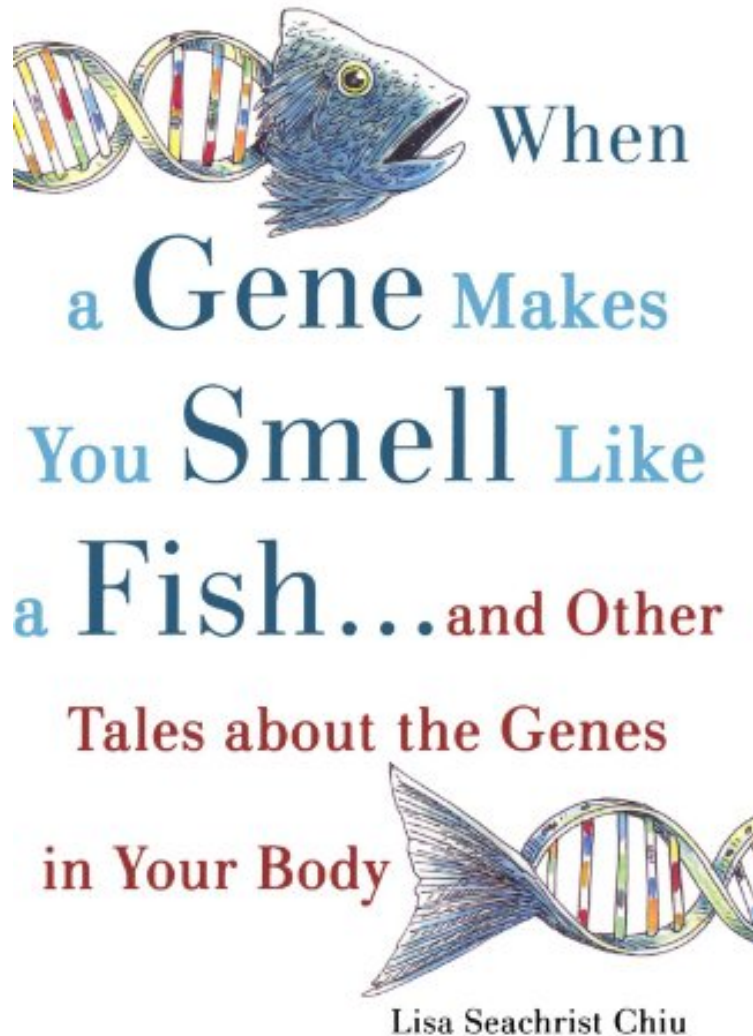


[Mobile library] When a Gene Makes You Smell Like a Fish: ...and Other Amazing Tales about the Genes in Your Body

When a Gene Makes You Smell Like a Fish: ...and Other Amazing Tales about the Genes in Your Body

Lisa Seachrist Chiu

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From the gene that causes people to age prematurely to the "bitter gene" that may spawn broccoli haters, this book explores a few of the more exotic locales on the human genome, highlighting some of the tragic and bizarre ways our bodies go wrong when genes fall prey to mutation and the curious ways in which genes have evolved for our survival. Lisa Seachrist Chiu has a smorgasbord of stories to tell about rare and not so rare genetic quirks. We read about the Dracula Gene, a mutation in zebra fish that causes blood cells to explode on contact with light, and suites of genes that also influence behavior and physical characteristics; the Tangier Island Gene, first discovered after physicians discovered a boy with orange tonsils (scientists now realize that the child's odd condition comes from an inability to process cholesterol); and Wilson's Disease, a gene defect that fails to clear copper from the body, which can trigger schizophrenia and other neurological symptoms, and can be fatal if left untreated. Friendlier mutations include the Myostatin gene, which allows muscles to become much larger than usual and enhances strength and the much-envied Cheeseburger Gene, which allows a lucky few to eat virtually anything they want and remain razor thin. While fascinating us with stories of genetic peculiarities, Chiu also manages to effortlessly explain much of the cutting-edge research in modern genetics, resulting in a book that is both informative and entertaining. It is a must read for everyone who loves popular science or is curious about the human body.

From Publishers WeeklyAlthough Chiu uses a catchy title, cute jokes and soft watercolor illustrations by her mother to disguise this book as popular science, she has produced a rigorous and detailed survey of the most recent developments in human genetics; a "Genetics Primer" is appended, and many readers will no doubt need it. The first chapter, on a woman who smelled so badly of fish she had to take a three-month leave of absence from work, seems at first the usual, chatty fare of much popular science writing. Within a few paragraphs, however, Chiu has launched into a complex discussion of gene mutation and enzymes. Chiu writes best in her detailed accounts of these genetic oddities, but the names Chiu and others have given the genes responsible ("The Cheeseburger Gene," "The Werewolf Gene," "The Calico Cat Gene") often belie their seriousness, a problem echoed in Chiu's personal anecdotes, which seem to serve less as relevant commentary than as deliberate bids for a larger readership. Chiu's greater contribution is in her willingness to trust her audience with explanations of genetics research that are long, dense, complicated and surprisingly accessible. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "This book can be strongly recommended to anyone, of any age, who is looking for an authoritative yet entertaining account of modern genetics. Lisa Seachrist Chiu is also the perfect guide to help readers make greater sense of the onrush of discoveries which they encounter day after day through the media." -- Bernard Dixon, Biologist "In telling these stories, the author explains how genetic information controls human traits." -- Science News "One of the joys of Chiu's catalog of genetic oddities is that you can flip through it and imagine yourself endowed with abilities conferred by one of these tiny molecules: the ACE gene, which increases endurance, and the Schwartzenegger gene, which boosts muscle mass, would make you into a heck of an athlete, for example. Another joy is that, in reading, you learn that these are not really oddities at all, but changes in common cellular machinery shared by us all.... Chiu tells these tales not as a genetic Ripley's Believe It or Not, but as cleverly drawn illustrations of how the body works, highlighting ways in which our greater understanding of things that at first seem just weird lead to paths to the greater good, including roads that may lead to the better treatment of disease." -- Josh Fischman, Senior Writer, US News World Report "This is an enjoyable and fascinating tour through modern genetics. Tucked among the interesting anecdotes about the settlement of early America and the madness of King George are easy to follow explanations of single-gene disorders, the recently identified phenomenon of imprinting, and new research into how genes are born and evolve over time. Readers will come away not only with a better understanding of biology but some curious tales to tell their friends." -- Carol Ezzell Webb, Freelance writer and editor "This is a layman's guide to human genetics. It provides a fascinating and thoroughly delightful way to learn about the field all the way from classic mendelian genetics to

epigenetics to transposons and genomics. This is a remarkable collection of stories about the discovery and elucidation of some rare or not so rare genetic disorders." --Victor A. McKusick, University Professor of Medical Genetics at The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, author of *Mendelian Inheritance in Man*, and recipient of the National Medal of Science

About the Author Lisa Seachrist Chiu is a journalist and writer who has covered the cutting edge of genetics, medicine, and molecular biology for more than a decade. She's been published in *United Press International* syndicate papers, *Science*, *Science News*, *BioWorld Today*, *Discovery.com*, and the *Howard Hughes Medical Institute*. She lives in Washington, DC.