



A Guinea Pig's History of Biology

Jim Endersby

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"Endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved," Darwin famously concluded *The Origin of Species*, and for confirmation we look to...the guinea pig? How this curious creature and others as humble (and as fast-breeding) have helped unlock the mystery of inheritance is the unlikely story Jim Endersby tells in this book.

Biology today promises everything from better foods or cures for common diseases to the alarming prospect of redesigning life itself. Looking at the organisms that have made all this possible gives us a new way of understanding how we got here--and perhaps of thinking about where we're going. Instead of a history of which great scientists had which great ideas, this story of passionflowers and hawkweeds, of zebra fish and viruses, offers a bird's (or rodent's) eye view of the work that makes science possible.

Mixing the celebrities of genetics, like the fruit fly, with forgotten players such as the evening primrose, the book follows the unfolding history of biological inheritance from Aristotle's search for the "universal, absolute truth of fishiness" to the apparently absurd speculations of eighteenth-century natural philosophers to the spectacular findings of our day--which may prove to be the absurdities of tomorrow.

The result is a quirky, enlightening, and thoroughly engaging perspective on the history of heredity and genetics, tracing the slow, uncertain path--complete with entertaining diversions and dead ends--that led us from the ancient world's understanding of inheritance to modern genetics.

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