



In Search of the Double Helix

John Gribbin

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UNRAVELING THE MYSTERY OF LIFE ON EARTH The search began with Darwin's historic voyage on the Beagle and it continues today in the laboratories of the genetic engineers. How did life on earth begin? What is the key to evolution that insures only the fittest survive? How do we differ from other species? And how might tomorrow's scientists read—and alter—the biological blueprint to eliminate disease, birth defects, and even create new life forms? Acclaimed science writer John Gribbin draws on his expertise in quantum physics to tell the story of one of the greatest and most dramatic of scientific discoveries. His search for the elusive double helix takes us through the twists and turns of disappointment and discovery on a fascinating quest to the source of life itself. In clear, straightforward language, he presents the lives and thoughts of the men and women whose pioneering work in physics, biology, genetics, and chemistry combined to provide a basic understanding of how life evolved—and continues to evolve—on earth. He follows the trail of discovery from X-rays, mutations, quantum mechanics, the molecular clock, and sexual reproduction—all the way to the innermost workings of the human cell. And he shows how modern science first learned to "crack" the genetic code of life and the profound consequences this new knowledge will have on our future.

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