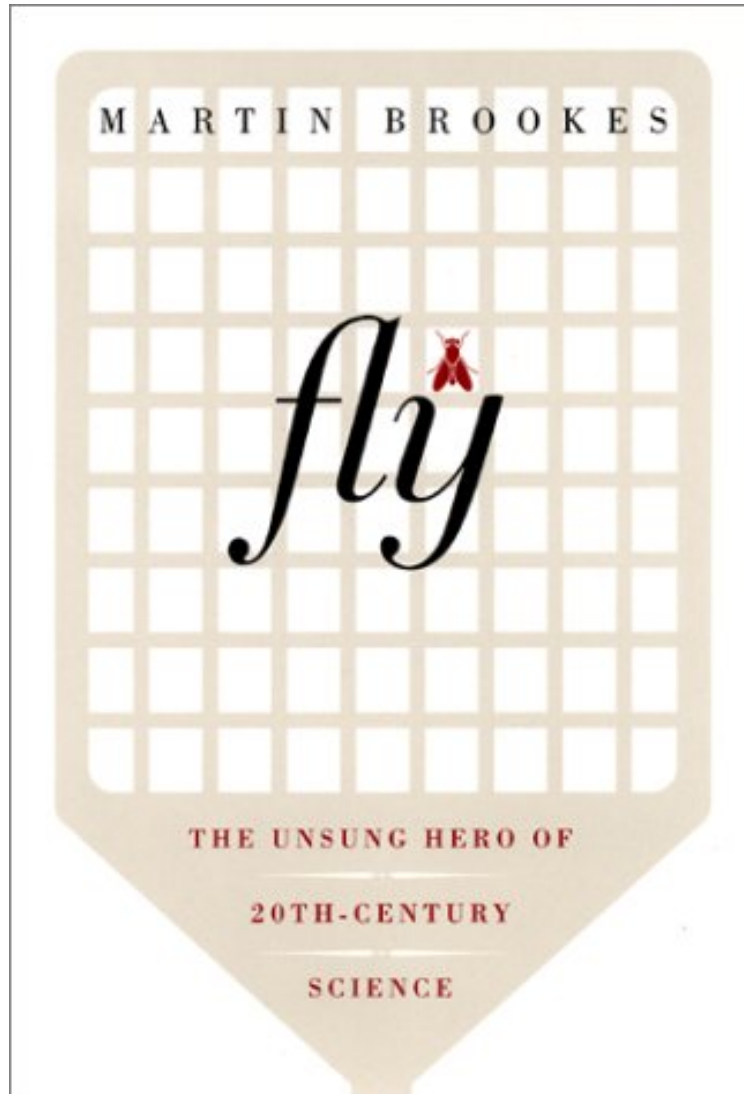


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Fly: The Unsung Hero of Twentieth Century Science

Martin Brookes

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Martin Brookes : Fly: The Unsung Hero of Twentieth Century Science before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Fly: The Unsung Hero of Twentieth Century Science:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Review by an old manBy e-shultThis is an excellent book. There is a small historical error. It was not Morgan who discovered `white eyes'. At the time, Calvin Bridges was a dishwasher and noticed the fly with white eyes in one of the bottles. In trying to save it, it escaped. He then told Morgan about it, and the closing of all the windows and the search began as described in the book. I got this version from Bridge's good friend, C.C. Lindegren. This detail is so minuscule it cannot detract from a book that is wonderfully written and is such a pleasure to read. As for the fly: Most basic principles in modern genetics were first learned from Drisophila

Genetics. Footnote:[It seems ironic, that Sarah Palin, whose child suffers from a chromosomal translocation, declared it a waste of public money to fund research on fruit flies, where translocations were first discovered.]1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. excellent readBy A CustomerThe book's an excellent read for both the layman and the science student. It successfully combines historical detail with contemporary implications of Drosophila research. Written in a breezy colloquial manner, it never gets boring while sacrificing only little of the scientific content. The author does abuse the fly sex theme, often resorting to it with specious warrant. The other shortcoming of the book has to do with its physical quality, which is horrible. Seedy five-buck pocket-size thrillers are printed on paper of incomparably higher quality. Judged on the content, though - a well-written, informative, and entertaining book.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. FlyBy RobAn interesting book, a bit light on the details. Light hearted view of fly genetics, an easy read, certainly worth a look. Not being a carbon based lifeform, I find it a bit difficult to relate to, but interesting non the less. ;-) RR

There's a buzz in the air, the sound of a billion wings vibrating to the tune of scientific success. In biology labs across the world, fruit flies are turning up answers to some of the basic questions of life. It's business as usual for the fly, which for generations has been defining biology's major landmarks. From genetics to development, behavior to aging, and evolution to the origin of species, the fruit fly has been a key player in some of the twentieth century's greatest biological discoveries. Techniques to pinpoint genes that play a role in human disease depend on genetic mapping principles first established with the fly. It was experiments on fruit flies that opened our eyes to the dangers of radiation to human health. In fact, everything from gene therapy to cloning to the Human Genome Project is built on the foundation of fruit fly research. Despite its many achievements, the fruit fly remains an unsung hero in the history of science. At last, here is a book that gives the fly its long overdue credit. In a highly original, witty, and irreverent style, Martin Brookes takes us through successive stages in the life cycle of the fly, each illustrating an important concept in biology. Some, such as the fundamentals of heredity, are well established; others, such as sexual warfare, learning, and memory, are still in their infancy. But whether flies are getting high on crack cocaine, enjoying the pleasures and pains of a boozy night out, being trained by punishment and reward, or struggling with insomnia, this book provides a glimpse of how one short life has informed almost every aspect of human existence. The result is a broad introduction to biology with insights into the practical realities of science. Often dismissed as irrelevant outside academic circles, the fruit fly, through this distinctive biography, will come to be recognized for what it really is: an icon of twentieth-century science and a window on our own biological world.

.com Time flies like an arrow, fruit flies like a banana, and biologists like fruit flies. Evolutionary geneticist and science journalist Martin Brookes explores the not-quite-microscopic world of *Drosophila* in *Fly: The Unsung Hero of 20th-Century Science*. Instantly familiar to any student of high school biology, the fruit fly is one of the most thoroughly studied organisms in the world; far more is known about its genetics and behavior than about those of our own species. Brookes tackles his tiny subjects with an enthusiastic wit, sharing tales of his own and others' lab work dating back to the 19th century. As his story unfolds, the spirit of scientific investigation shines through, with all its reliance on blind chance and quirky obsessions. Back in the late 1970's, extreme mutants were all the rage. Take a trip round a hip and happening fruit fly laboratory and you might have been forgiven for thinking that you had stumbled across a fruit fly house of horrors. In the search for new mutants, flies were being force-fed mutagenic chemicals and were leaving a trail of disfigured descendants in their wake. The interested reader will get insight not just into the scientific process, but also into the life of the fly itself. Birth, death, mating, learning--just about every aspect of the creature's life has been documented meticulously, and that level of detail can't help but yield some juicy bits. Though we find their feeding habits distasteful and their courtship maddeningly complex, maybe flies aren't so different from us, after all. Brookes's enthusiasm is catching, and *Fly* will send readers running to their kitchens to catch a glimpse of these scientific superstars. --Rob Lightner
From Publishers Weekly Like Zelig, the ubiquitous guy who turns up at historical moments, Brookes's fruit fly, "a reliable, if unremarkable, laboratory workhorse," is present for some of the great moments in 20th-century science. The fruit fly came to the American South with the slave trade and, later, to the Northeast with the growing trade in rum, sugar and fresh fruits. Around the turn of the century, Victorian biology, with its emphasis on theology and obsessive anatomical description akin to biological stamp collecting, was giving way to experimentalism and Darwin's evolution; at the same time Gregor Mendel's ideas about genetic inheritance were just coming into fashion. Enter Columbia University scientist Thomas Hunt Morgan and his fruit flies and his experiments that would, Brookes suggests, help usher in the age of experimental biology. Brookes, a popular science writer for *New Scientist*, *BBC Wildlife Magazine* and author of *What's the Big Idea? Genetics*, traces the fruit fly's role in the study of mutation to identify control genes, detailing Hermann Muller's X-ray experiments in the 1920s, and the Nobel Prize-winning work of Ed Lewis, Christiane Nüsslein-Volhard and Eric Wieschaus in the 1970s. Brookes explores Russian-born Theodosius Dobzhansky's work in the 1930s that identified genetic diversity in species and genes as "the currency of evolutionary change"; he includes chapters on studies of fruit fly mating, aging and the genetics of behavior, and ends with the complete sequencing of the fruit fly genome. Brookes appears to have picked a rather

narrow topic to write about, which may limit his readership. But his book's enigmatic title alone should warrant a second look, and book buyers just might get hooked. Brookes writes with humor and economy. He places the unsung fruit fly into the much broader and immediate history of the rapidly advancing fields of biology and genetics. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. About the Author Martin Brookes has a Ph.D. in evolutionary biology and spent eight years in biological research. He hates flies.