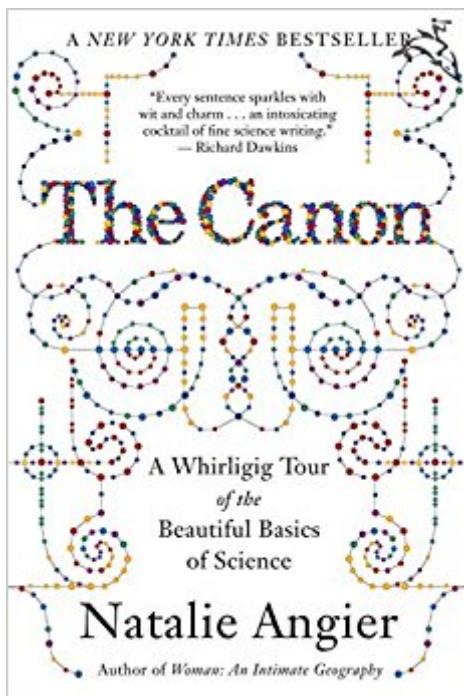


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# The Canon: A Whirligig Tour Of The Beautiful Basics Of Science



## Synopsis

The New York Times bestseller that makes scientific subjects both understandable and fun:

“Every sentence sparkles with wit and charm.” •Richard Dawkins From the Pulitzer Prize-winning New York Times science journalist and bestselling author of *Woman*, this is a playful, passionate guide to the science all around us (and inside us) •from physics to chemistry, biology, geology, astronomy, and more. Drawing on conversations with hundreds of the world’s top scientists, Natalie Angier creates a thoroughly entertaining guide to scientific literacy. For those who want a fuller understanding of some of the great issues of our time, *The Canon* offers insights on stem cells, bird flu, evolution, and global warming. For students •or parents whose kids ask a lot of questions about how the world works •it brings to life such topics as how the earth was formed, or what electricity is. Also included are clear, fascinating explanations of how to think scientifically and grasp the tricky subject of probability. *The Canon* is a joyride through the major scientific disciplines that reignites our childhood delight and sense of wonder •and along the way, tells us what is actually happening when our ice cream melts or our coffee gets cold, what our liver cells do when we eat a caramel, why the horse is an example of evolution at work, and how we •are all really made of stardust.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I enjoyed the ideas in this book (though I really didn't learn anything new) and in general I liked that the author worked to make the science approachable. The author obviously loves language and finds ways to bring pop culture references in to help non-scientifically minded readers understanding. I do think that this will in the longer term give the book a "dated" feel and someday make it unreadable by younger audiences. The problem I had was that at times the author seemed to be more focused on finding cute ways to say things than on the ideas themselves. The biggest reason for this seemed to be to avoid scaring any unwary readers with "math" or "hard" science. The best example of this comes right at the end when the author talks about the Drake equation. Rather than just give the equation and tell what the variables mean (to me a wonderful way to understand how astronomy intersects historical sciences), the author mentions, almost off-handedly, a few of the variables and then only really explains the last one. In all, a good way to bring the science fearful into a basic understanding that could be nurtured into interest or even love. However, probably not a book for someone who has seen their way through less flowery, more information dense tomes.

The author has to be in the top 10% of all I.Q.s. The attempt to personalize "science and scientists" by cutesipie finishes to many major statements gets a little distracting after awhile. But, the points made and the education enhancement I received made putting up with her 'popular' writing style.

Excellent book for anyone who was interested in science as a child and had it slowly leached out of them by the public school system. This book provides and starting point for the adult whose interest has been rekindled. Her writing is a bit facile, but it's still a great read.

Entertaining, enlightening, clever. Really terrific narrative that puts much of the science world in a pragmatic easy read. Atoms, molecules, space, energy, evolution....this book covers it all.

This book provides an introductory overview of contemporary scientific understanding, apparently aimed at people who have a limited background in science. As such, Angier's treatment is neither rigorous nor systematic, and many key topics in the "the canon" receive little or no mention. In other words, the level is well below university science courses, and perhaps closer to middle-school level. Despite these limitations, Angier still manages to convey quite a lot of information, and she does it reliably. I even learned some things, despite having a strong science background. Moreover, I

thought the earlier chapters dealing with scientific methodology, statistics, etc. were a nice touch. That's the positive. The biggest negative is that Angier's writing style is excessively cutesy and flowery due to her incessant use of analogies, metaphors, and jokes. I found the analogies and metaphors to be more distracting than helpful, and I found the jokes to be more corny than funny. She was overzealous and should have realized that adult readers of a book like this will already be interested in science, so she needed to just cut to the chase. Considering all of this, perhaps I can still recommend this book to readers with a limited science background, particularly readers who don't mind the writing style (I suggest reading some samples of the text to judge that). But for everyone else, this might be a book to skip. Some alternatives to consider are as follows (in roughly increasing order of sophistication):-  
- A Science Explained: The World of Science in Everyday Life (Henry Holt Reference Book)-  
- A Natural Science: Bridging the Gap, 5e-  
- A The Age of Science: What Scientists Learned in the Twentieth Century-  
- A Magic Universe: A Grand Tour of Modern Science-  
- A Scientific American: Science Desk Reference-  
- A The Scientific Companion: Exploring the Physical World with Facts, Figures, and Formulas (Wiley Popular Science)-  
- A The Ascent of Science

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