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Your Inner Fish: A Journey Into The 3.5-Billion-Year History Of The Human Body

YOUR INNER FISH

A JOURNEY INTO
THE
3.5-BILLION-YEAR HISTORY
OF THE
HUMAN BODY



READ BY MARC CASHMAN

NEIL SHUBIN

AN UNABRIDGED PRODUCTION



Synopsis

Why do we look the way we do? What does the human hand have in common with the wing of a fly? Are breasts, sweat glands, and scales connected in some way? To better understand the inner workings of our bodies and to trace the origins of many of today's most common diseases, we have to turn to unexpected sources: worms, flies, and even fish. Neil Shubin, a leading paleontologist and professor of anatomy who discovered Tiktaalik—the "missing link" that made headlines around the world in April 2006—tells the story of evolution by tracing the organs of the human body back millions of years, long before the first creatures walked the earth. By examining fossils and DNA, Shubin shows us that our hands actually resemble fish fins, our head is organized like that of a long-extinct jawless fish, and major parts of our genome look and function like those of worms and bacteria. Shubin makes us see ourselves and our world in a completely new light. *Your Inner Fish* is science writing at its finest—enlightening, accessible, and told with irresistible enthusiasm. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The book is perhaps at its best in its discussion of the role of DNA in evolution. It is now known that it is possible to turn on a gene that is responsible for the development of an eye, for example. So you can create a fruitfly with an eye almost anywhere you want--such as on a leg--and many of these are functional, although in a primitive way. But it gets even more interesting. Suppose you take a gene from a mouse that controls the development of an eye, and implant it into a fruitfly, what happens? You get a fruitfly eye, not a mouse eye. This says a lot about the basic building blocks of

life.

Neil Shubin is great at writing books which appeal to both science geeks and casual readers alike. He is really good at simplifying concepts and making compelling observations. The story of our connection with the earth and other (prehistoric) animals is truly fascinating. One of the downsides of this book lies in one of its most positive aspects. When trying to simplify topics, Mr. Shubin also tends to be quite long winded. Sometimes it can be hard to get through his stories or analogies to really get to the "meat" of the book. Now I have to hand it to him, in his second book, "The Universe Within", Shubin does a lot better job at this, although he still has his moments. Overall this is a great book and very interesting. Would absolutely recommend it.

This book will do an excellent job at persuading creationists that evolution is real without being combative or even using persuasive language. Shubin specializes in fossils which is the evidence for evolution that is more historically significant in proving the theory as well as the most tangible for the layperson. Even more incredible, Shubin can talk about his experiences being there as some landmark transitional fossils were found! At every turn Shubin clearly points out the predictive power of evolutionary theory - how he knows where to look for fossils and how it informs us about genetic disorders. I was looking for a book to recommend young Creationists curious about the world but a learned hostility to evolutionary science - this is exactly the book to recommend. But it's a joy to read for everyone. Shubin teaches a class on anatomy and is able to use the evolutionary history of our bones to provide a rich context to the human body. He explains in clear and entertaining ways (for those who don't know) how our eyes and our ears work. He discusses the strange and simple ways of animals in our evolutionary history.

Very readable, a fun read. It helps if you know some zoology but certainly not necessary, he gives all the information you need to easily follow what he is saying. Shubin, through his experiences as a paleontologist and anatomy instructor has gained an exciting insight into who we humans are and how we are part of this grand pageant of life on planet earth. My personal view is that we humans are the splendid product of a splendid process begun with a splendid creation leading to a splendid creature (us) made of the dust of the earth yet with intelligence, imagination, and free will. Flawed we humans may sometimes be but we have also achieved remarkable things. Shubin tells the story of how from primitive, insensate animal forms came humanity as we are today. He has seen this story through observing our earliest ancestors' fossilized remains (some from over a billion years

back) and our present anatomical structure. Very pleasurable and informative read.

This book is a celebration of the scientists method. In every chapter is an emphasis on hypothesis and observation, told through anecdotes in part but always towards illuminating the incredible underpinnings of the human body. For me, the only flaw in the book is that it is at a reasonably high level of scientific understanding, which it's unfortunate since the connectedness of the human body to more primitive beasts is, frankly, unbelievably beautiful. He describes evolutionary mechanisms really well, but it does get muddled by jargon at some of the most complex bits. And I found the personal stories to be very entertaining as a former lab scientist myself. All in all, a fun, quick read for anyone who wants to learn more about the evolution of the human body.

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