



## The Violinist's Thumb: And Other Lost Tales of Love, War, and Genius, as Written by Our Genetic Code

By Sam Kean

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**From *New York Times* bestselling author Sam Kean comes incredible stories of science, history, language, and music, as told by our own DNA.**

In *The Disappearing Spoon*, bestselling author Sam Kean unlocked the mysteries of the periodic table. In *THE VIOLINIST'S THUMB*, he explores the wonders of the magical building block of life: DNA.

There are genes to explain crazy cat ladies, why other people have no fingerprints, and why some people survive nuclear bombs. Genes illuminate everything from JFK's bronze skin (it wasn't a tan) to Einstein's genius. They prove that Neanderthals and humans bred thousands of years more recently than any of us would feel comfortable thinking. They can even allow some people, because of the exceptional flexibility of their thumbs and fingers, to become truly singular violinists.

Kean's vibrant storytelling once again makes science entertaining, explaining human history and whimsy while showing how DNA will influence our species' future.

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**The Violinist's Thumb: And Other Lost Tales of Love, War, and Genius, as Written by Our Genetic Code** By Sam Kean **Bibliography**

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### Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

**Amazon Best Books of the Month, July 2012:** Born to parents named Gene and Jean, Sam Kean got enough ribbing in school science classes to develop an early aversion to genetics. Lucky for us, curiosity overcame conditioning as he became increasingly fascinated with the role DNA plays in shaping destiny. As he did in *The Disappearing Spoon*, a captivating chronicle of human interactions with each periodic element, Kean has created another page-turning scientific history in *The Violinist's Thumb*. With fluid gusto, he turns the discovery of DNA into riveting human drama, then unfurls a series of anecdotes that expand our understanding of genetic influence on our lives as (sometimes uniquely gifted) individuals, from presidents to physicists to violin virtuosos with exceptionally dexterous digits. Kean illuminates clues embedded in our genes that help map the meandering trajectory of our species, then leaves readers with the distinct impression that all this has been a fantastic preamble to our species' most thrilling (and likely chilling) chapter: manipulating our DNA to remake future humans, and all life on Earth. --*Mari Malcolm*

Review

**Named one of *Entertainment Weekly's* Best Books of 2012**

"The DNA molecule, Kean asserts, is the 'grand narrative of human existence'-and he boldly sets out to tell the tale, not only explaining genetics and its scientific history but linking Mendel's pea shoots to the evolution of early humans....He's crafted a lively read packed with unforgettable details." -- Sarah Zhang, *Discover*

"Kean turns his clever eye and engaging prose to unveiling the secrets of our DNA." -- *Denver Post*

"Kean's accessible genetic overview, written for the layman, is often as simple and elegant as a double helix." -- Keith Staskiewicz, *Entertainment Weekly*

"The wonderful thing about Kean...is his ability to focus on a spiraling narrative while he climbs up the double-helix ladder in this history of genetics, remaining more or less at the center of the rungs while he goes from the struggles of Mendel and Miescher to the Human Genome Project....It is a handsome story." -- Jimmy So, *Daily Beast*

"Kean offers up strange stories of how our genes help and hinder us." -- *Newsweek*, "Brainy Beach Reads"

"Science is made fun whenever best-selling author Kean...is narrating." -- Susannah Cahalan, *New York Post*

"Kean's real knack is for digging up strange details most textbooks leave out....More than an assortment of trivia, the book is an engaging history." -- Allison Bohac, *Science News*

"As he did in his debut bestseller, *The Disappearing Spoon*, Sam Kean educates readers about a facet of science with wonderfully witty prose and enthralling anecdotes....Kean's thoughtful, humorous book is a joy to read." -- *Publishers Weekly* (Starred Review)

"A science journalist with a flair for words...[Kean's] language is fluid and accessible, even for the science-challenged." -- Barbara Hoffert, *Library Journal*

"Kean is one of America's smartest and most charming science writers, and his new book could be perfect for summer readers who prefer some substance with their fun." -- Michael Schaub, *National Public Radio*

#### About the Author

Sam Kean is the author of the New York Times bestseller *The Disappearing Spoon*. His work has appeared in *The New York Times Magazine*, *Mental Floss*, *Slate*, and *New Scientist*, and has been featured on NPR's "Radiolab" and "All Things Considered."

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