

Universe Down to Earth

By Neil de Grasse Tyson

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This witty and amusing exploration of the physical universe explains fundamental concepts in language that is clear to anyone with little or no scientific background. Tyson transforms everyday experiences into venues of cosmic enlightenment as he probes the philosophy, methods, and discoveries of science, including stellar evolution, the conservation of energy, the electromagnetic spectrum, gravity and thermodynamics. Deftly demystifying astronomical terms and concepts such as the Big Bang, black holes, redshifts, syzygy, and Kirkwood Gaps, *Universe Down to Earth* traces the life of the stars from birth to death; presents the Periodic Table of Elements, highlighting noteworthy elements such as titanium, iron, and hydrogen; gives an unorthodox yet entertaining tour of famous constellations; and tackles modern-day astrology.

(Carl Sagan)

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Universe Down to Earth By Neil de Grasse Tyson Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Booklist
The formulas of astrophysics speak only to those well versed in higher mathematics, but Tyson successfully translates the fundamental meaning of scientific models of the cosmos into language comprehensible to general readers. Whether explaining how to do naked-eye astronomy or how to decode the Hertzsprung-Russell Diagram, the author brings clarity, literary allusiveness, and unpredictable humor to his subject. Breakthroughs of theorists from Newton to Einstein receive simplified and illustrated treatment, complete with helpful analogies drawn from everyday experiences with toys, pets, and food. (A falling cat, for example, becomes a remarkably clear object lesson in angular momentum.) As they reflect upon the shape of the cosmos or upon the chemistry of carbon, readers are invited to ponder the nature of the scientific enterprise itself. Though not for specialists, this book will attract numerous readers seeking to understand the imaginative and cultural significance of science. *Bryce Christensen*

From Kirkus Reviews
Readers who find the physical sciences intimidating might profit from a look into this witty and accessible introduction to the foundations of modern science, with an emphasis on astronomy, by Tyson (Astrophysics/Princeton). The book is more a collection of related essays than a unified whole. Tyson begins with several cornerstones: numbers, measures, methodology, and terminology. The approach is often irreverent and whimsical: The chapter on the numerical prefixes used in scientific work concludes with a series of groan-inducing puns; the survey of astronomical terminology divides its material into such categories as ``Terms that sound like diseases'' and ``Terms with too many syllables.'' On the other hand, his discussion of the philosophy and methodology common to most sciences maintains a serious tone while using analogies from common experience (sports cars, lawn sprinklers, The Wizard of Oz) to hold the reader's interest. Perhaps the most valuable section of the book is the middle third, where the author discusses such important concepts as the electromagnetic spectrum and the Periodic Table of the Elements- -clarifying basic principles for the novice and providing food for thought even for those who consider Scientific American a good read. His chapter on the center of mass covers a range of subjects from high-jumping technique to black holes and subatomic particles, vividly and with easily grasped examples. The third section of the book covers astronomy, including a hilarious survey of the constellations and a gleeful demolition of astrology. The ``Suggested Reading'' list includes a wide range of generally accessible periodicals as well as useful books on all the aspects of the sciences discussed. Well-written, authoritative, and almost always entertaining- -highly recommended. -- *Copyright ©1994, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Review

A delightful, witty, informal, and wise guide to a sampling of essential principles, processes, and concepts of science.

(*Skeptical Inquirer*)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Virginia Swain:

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