

The Wonder of Genetics: The Creepy, the Curious, and the Commonplace

By Richard V. Kowles

Reviewed by Michalis Hadjimarcou, Cyprus

The *Wonder of Genetics* is a user-friendly guide through the wonderful – and, to some, scary – world of genetics. Everyone can benefit from reading it: lay readers will have the opportunity to learn, in the first few chapters, the basic principles of genetics, whereas more knowledgeable readers will appreciate the more complicated material that follows (with the help of accompanying diagrams and the extensive glossary). Readers who are reasonably fluent in English will have no problem with the level of language used in the book.

Although they might be tempted to skip a few introductory pages, biologists and even geneticists will have a lot to learn from *The Wonder of Genetics*. The book contains the most recent facts and figures on well-known topics, clarifications of misconceptions about common applications of genetics, and the latest discoveries and advances in the field.

Every aspect of genetics, from the most common and well known that affect our daily lives and decisions to the most bizarre and unfamiliar, is explained in this book. The reader can learn how genetics might be responsible for, or at least involved in, a long list of traits and processes such as alcoholism, criminality, IQ, schizophrenia, ageing, evolution, genetically

modified organisms and foods, gene therapy, DNA fingerprinting and cloning.

But *The Wonder of Genetics* is more than a collection of issues affected by genetics. Instead, the author goes a step further, discussing the implications of genetics and genetic discoveries for important areas, such as economics, politics, ethics, religion, racism, the media and even the movie industry.

A secondary-school biology teacher can find an endless supply of good quality instructive material in this book, including diagrams, descriptions of molecular genetic techniques and examples of genetically influenced diseases, their frequency in the population and current developments in the efforts made to cure them.

Students in advanced secondary-school biology classes (aged 16-18) can use *The Wonder of Genetics* to enhance their understanding of genetics and its many applications. They can also find excellent case-study material suitable for small projects, for example to look at the pattern of inheritance of various genetic traits. Furthermore, the book's coverage of issues that have provoked debates all over the world could be useful for interdisciplinary studies that encompass subjects from biology and sociology to religion and economics. Examples of such controversial

topics are nature versus nurture, evolution versus creationism, the use of stem cells, and the creation of genetically modified organisms.

Details

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