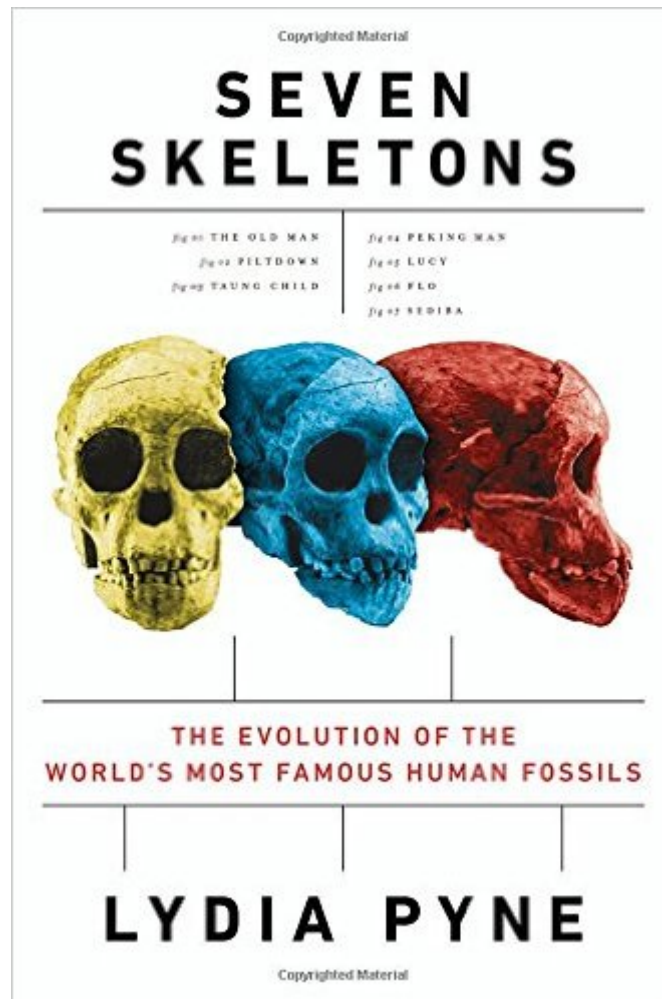


The book was found

Seven Skeletons: The Evolution Of The World's Most Famous Human Fossils



Synopsis

An irresistible journey of discovery, science, history, and myth making, told through the lives and afterlives of seven famous human ancestors. Over the last century, the search for human ancestors has spanned four continents and resulted in the discovery of hundreds of fossils. While most of these discoveries live quietly in museum collections, there are a few that have become world-renowned celebrity personas—ambassadors of science that speak to public audiences. In *Seven Skeletons*, historian of science Lydia Pyne explores how seven such famous fossils of our ancestors have the social cachet they enjoy today. Drawing from archives, museums, and interviews, Pyne builds a cultural history for each celebrity fossil—from its discovery to its afterlife in museum exhibits to its legacy in popular culture. These seven include the three-foot tall hobbit from Flores, the Neanderthal of La Chapelle, the Taung Child, the Piltdown Man hoax, Peking Man, *Australopithecus sediba*, and Lucy—each embraced and celebrated by generations, and vivid examples of how discoveries of how our ancestors have been received, remembered, and immortalized. With wit and insight, Pyne brings to life each fossil, and how it is described, put on display, and shared among scientific communities and the broader public. This fascinating, endlessly entertaining book puts the impact of paleoanthropology into new context, a reminder of how our past as a species continues to affect, in astounding ways, our present culture and imagination.

Book Information

Hardcover: 288 pages

Publisher: Viking (August 16, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0525429859

ISBN-13: 978-0525429852

Product Dimensions: 6.4 x 1 x 9.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars— See all reviews (30 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #22,918 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #1 in Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Animals > Fossils #3 in Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Paleontology #10 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Anthropology > Physical

Customer Reviews

This is a book of seven vignettes about seven sets of famous hominid fossils (one of which was a

fake). Reading this book you will learn more about the evolution of the perception of each fossil than you will about human evolution. In fact, a general knowledge of human evolution will make this book easier to follow. Although the author has a degree in anthropology, she refers to herself as a writer and historian. Unlike many books on paleoanthropology, which are written by researchers in the field, this is the work of a writer on the outside looking in. On the one hand, that means she has no dog in the fight, which is plus for objectivity. On the downside there is less of the sense of the passion found in books by insiders. In many ways this book is more about the reactions of both researchers and the public to fossil discoveries than it is about where they fit in the larger evolutionary picture. Anyone not going in with some context of that larger picture is likely to have difficulty gleaning it from reading these seven stories, which are largely separate, although with cross references. On the other hand, the basic stories of many, if not most, of these fossils will be well known to those who have read up on the field. The challenges that Dart had gaining appropriate recognition for the Taung Child, or the sad story of the Piltdown Man, which contributed to Dart's troubles, are covered in nearly all books on paleoanthropology. So are the discovery of Java Man, and the disappearance of Peking Man. It's hard to imagine anyone picking up this book who hasn't met Lucy, and Flo has had a lot of press, as well. Thus, for most readers, this book will be examining stories they've heard in more detail.

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