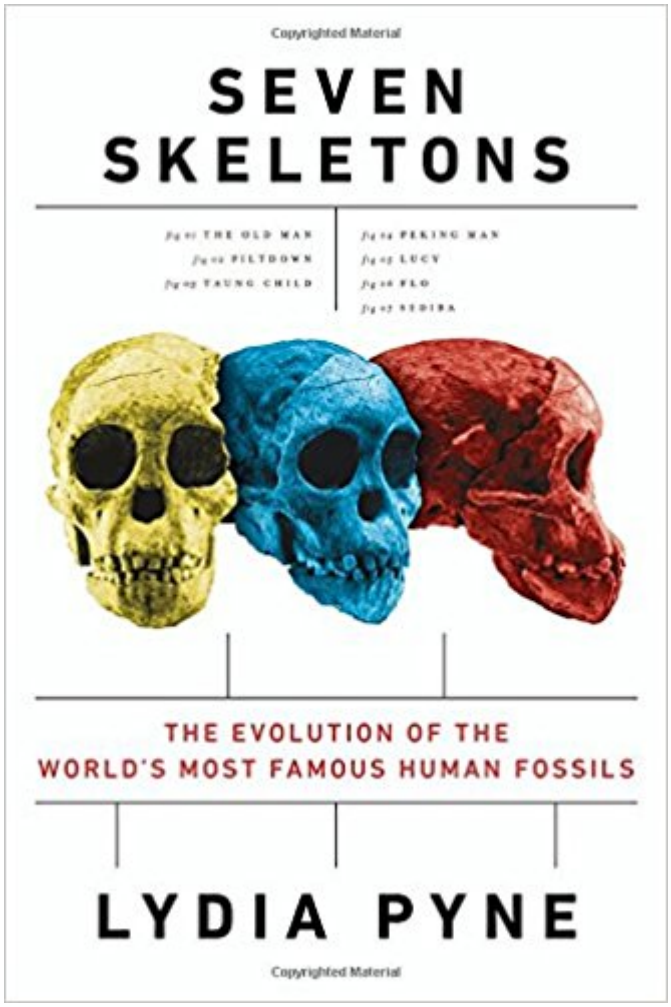
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Seven Skeletons: The Evolution Of The World's Most Famous Human Fossils



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Synopsis

An irresistible journey of discovery, science, history, and myth making, told through the lives and afterlives of seven famous human ancestorsOver 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 personasÃ¢â ¬â •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 fossilÃ¢â ¬â •from its discovery to its afterlife in museum exhibits to its legacy in popular culture. These seven include the three-foot tall Ã¢â ¬Å“hobbitÃ¢â ¬Â• from Flores, the Neanderthal of La Chapelle, the Taung Child, the Piltdown Man hoax, Peking Man, Australopithecus sediba, and LucyÃ¢â ¬â •each embraced and celebrated by generations, and vivid examples of how discoveries of how our ancestors have been received, remembered, and immortalized.Ã Â 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

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Customer Reviews

"Seven SkeletonsÃ Â is not simply a mixtape of paleoanthropologyÃ¢â ¬â„¢s greatest hits. Instead, Ms. Pyne uses each celebrity fossil as a springboard to ask why these particular fossils have captured our attention.... [A]n important reminder that we are a self-obsessed species that loves a good hero story."Ã¢â ¬â •Brian Switek, The Wall Street Journal"[Pyne's] selections highlight the different ways a fossil can achieve celebrity status. Catchy nicknames, media attention, unusual circumstances surrounding a discovery and even scandals can help....Ã Â The book provides plenty of interesting backstory for each fossil.... [A] peek at how the field of paleoanthropology itself has evolved over the last century."Ã¢â ¬â •Science NewsÃ¢â ¬Å“Describing human evolution through accounts of fossils that became media events might seem a publicity ploy, but science journalist Pyne pulls it off. [Pyne] casts her net... widely, adding captivating accounts of how each discovery fascinated the mass media and entered literature and popular culture.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Kirkus Reviews (starred) Ã Â "Highly readable and an excellent title for armchair explorers with dreams of their own history-making discoveries."Ã¢â ¬â •Booklist"Impressively blends the humanities and science to greatly enrich both."Ã¢â ¬â •Publishers Weekly Ã¢â ¬Å“Ever wondered how we got here, and how we think we know?Ã Â Lydia Pyne takes us on a grand romp through some high (and low) points of the scientific discovery and cultural interpretation of the human fossil record, and along the way shows just how intimately the two are intertwined.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Ian Tattersall, author of The Strange Case of the Rickety Cossack and Other Cautionary Tales from Human Evolution Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“How and why do some important fossils become famous and others do not? Seven Skeletons is a story about science, but also its impact in popular cultureÃ¢â ¬Â¦ remind[ing] us that context matters in shaping how we think about science and the past.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Samuel J. Redman, author of Bone Rooms:Ã Â From Scientific Racism to Human Prehistory in Museums Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“As lively and readable as it is informative and instructive. By framing her account around the intimate history of seven individual hominid fossils, Pyne shows that paleoanthropology is about far more than dead and dry bones.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Lukas Rieppel, Assistant Professor of History, Brown University Ã¢â ¬Å“A skilled historian and a lively, colorful writer, Lydia Pyne takes us beyond the headlines and into the archives, revealing intimate details of scientific investigation, discovery, marketing, and myth-making in the stories of seven of the best-known human fossils. Seven Skeletons is a sprightly, informative page-turner with a deeper message: the strange careers of human remains have much to tell us about how we use science to understand what it means to be human.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Nathaniel Comfort, Professor of the History of Medicine, Johns Hopkins University

Lydia PyneÃ Â has degrees in history and anthropology and a PhD inÃ Â history and philosophy of science from Arizona State University. She hasÃ Â participated in field and archival work in South Africa, Ethiopia, Uzbekistan, Iran, and the American Southwest. She has published articlesÃ Â and essays inÃ Â The Atlantic,Ã Â Nautilus, andÃ Â Public Domain Review. She lives in Austin, Texas, where she isÃ Â an avid rock climber andÃ Â mountain biker.

While the subject of this book is the question of why some fossils become famous and others do not there is also a very good discussion of the scientific importance of these seven skeletons as well as a few non-famous ones. I found the book especially enjoyable because of the authors writing style. There is erudition with a brief touch of humor along with some unexpected allusions (a bit like the writing style of The Economist).

Fantastic and unique book for the science lover and the student of popular culture. Well and engagingly written with a mix of well-researched historical and cultural context and attention to a popular reader’s needs. This is great science education for us non-scientists.

It’s a good read, but if you’re looking for anthropological details, they’re not here. It’s about the anthropologists and how people reacted to their discoveries.

This was a fascinating journey through time and space; a series of stories about the discovery of, and meaning of, seven ancient hominid skeletons. Somehow Lydia Pyne manages to weave together a narrative of discovery and meaning that explains both our origins, or the best theories of our origins at the present time, and how our perceptions and views rooted in our culture bring us to conclusions about those origins.

That’s book in careful and sometimes tedious style describes the seven iconic skeletons with Jim brass a majority of human history. A reader with an interest in human anthropology will learn a great deal about The hominem s And the man who discovered them. It is fascinating reading and a great deal of new information is provided.

Each chapter is like a journey through the seven wonders of the world of paleoanthropological milestones. Dr. Pyne makes it incredibly difficult to put down this collection of scientific tales

allowing little time for tending to daily responsibilities. Very enjoyable and thoroughly educational.

I received a free electronic copy of this fine book from Netgalley, Penguin Group Viking, and Lydia Pyne in exchange for an honest review. Thank you, folks, for sharing your work with me.And this is an exciting and encouraging look at the field of paleoanthropology and access to these marvelous discoveries by both professional and amateur alike. As this field has grown over the last hundred years, the knowledge accrued has escalated in both quantity and speed of revelation to the point where new finds are shared rapidly with the scientific community and the public very quickly. Lydia Pyne does a detailed history of the seven most well-known fossil finds - Lucy, The Old Man of La Chapelle, Piltdown, the Taung Child, Peking Man, Flo and the newest finds, Sediba. She explains in layman's terms why these fossil finds are the seven best known out of thousands of important finds, and what it tales to generate a famous fossil. An important work for all of us interested in archaeology and the evolution of humanity.

This book presents the stories behind the discoveries of seven well-known paleoanthropology finds. I really enjoyed this book, as I have my MA in this field. Although I've studied the fossils (actually I've studied photos and replicas of the fossils), I knew very little about the background behind their discoveries and the people that found them. It can be hard to find a book that doesn't read like a textbook when talking about these fossils, but Pyne does an excellent job engaging the reader.The author covers "hobbit" (H. floresiensis), Lucy (A. afarensis), La Chapelle-aux-Saints 1 (H. neanderthalensis), Taung Child (A. africanus), the fossil assemblage known as Peking Man (H. erectus), A. sediba, and the Piltdown Man hoax. Pyne puts the fossils into the context of the discovery era. She discusses the scientific landscape of the time, and how these fossils changed our understanding of the human story. It was rather enjoyable reading about the people who worked on these famous (or infamous) discoveries and how the mind frame of the scientific community progressed with improved technologies.I highly recommend to anyone interested in human evolution, paleoanthropology, or science history in general. Reading about scientific discoveries becomes much fuller when you get the backstory of the people working in the field.I was given an advanced readers copy of this book from NetGalley for my honest review.

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