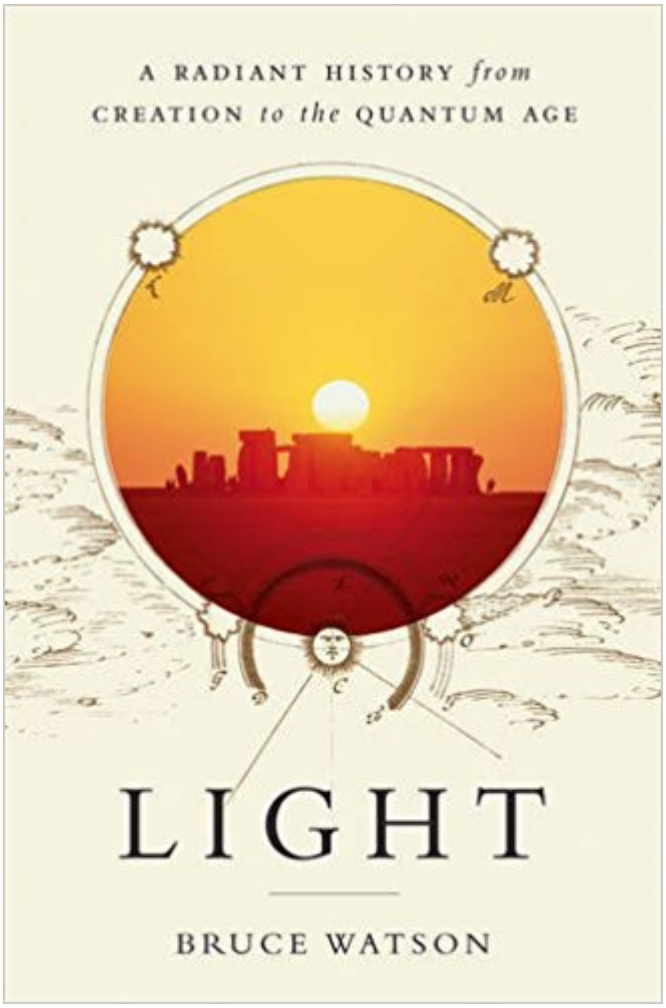
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Light: A Radiant History From Creation To The Quantum Age



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Synopsis

Light begins at Stonehenge, where crowds cheer a solstice sunrise. After sampling myths explaining First Light, the story moves on to early philosophers' queries, then through the centuries, from Buddhist temples to Biblical scripture, when light was the soul of the divine. Battling darkness and despair, Gothic architects crafted radiant cathedrals while Dante dreamed a "heaven of pure light." Later, following Leonardo's advice, Renaissance artists learned to capture light on canvas. During the Scientific Revolution, Galileo gathered light in his telescope, Descartes measured the rainbow, and Newton used prisms to solidify the science of optics. But even after Newton, light was an enigma. Particle or wave? Did it flow through an invisible "ether"? Through the age of Edison and into the age of lasers, Light reveals how light sparked new wonders--relativity, quantum electrodynamics, fiber optics, and more. Although lasers now perform everyday miracles, light retains its eternal allure. "For the rest of my life," Einstein said, "I will reflect on what light is." Light explores and celebrates such curiosity.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Finalist for the Los Angeles Times Book Prizes in Science & Technology" - the Los Angeles Times". . . A sweeping cultural and scientific history of our understanding of light . . . With his trademark good storytelling and wide reading, Watson takes us on a delightful journey." - Alan Lightman, The Washington Post"WatsonÃ¢â ¬â„¢s touch is lyrical and deft . . . . [Light] is an eye-catching display, reflecting and refracting like a gemstone." - Nature"[J.M.W.] Turner established himself as a true Ã¢â ¬Ëœpainter of lightÃ¢â ¬â„¢ with his extraordinary seascapes

and sunsets . . . [And] youÃ¢â ¬â„¢ll appreciate WatsonÃ¢â ¬â„¢s nuanced explanations of exactly how the artist achieved his goals." - Alexandra Witze, The Dallas Morning News"An ingenious combination of science and art history." - starred revew, Kirkus Reviews"Bruce Watson's new book . . . has the buoyant tone of a writer who is having fun--and who is able to convey that sense of excitement and discovery to the reader. Light, the phenomenon, has fascinated people for millennia. Light, the book, will fascinate them now." - Charles C. Mann, author of the New York Times bestsellers 1491 and 1493"Light takes us on a lyrical and illuminating journey from myth to scripture, canvas to cathedrals, prisms to fiber optic networks, all part of our attempt to understand--and to capture--the very essence of the radiance around us." - Laura J. Snyder, author of EYE OF THE BEHOLDER: JOHANNES VERMEER, ANTONI VAN LEEUWENHOEK, AND THE REINVENTION OF SEEING"Maybe this is why WatsonÃ¢â ¬â„¢s book is so important, why it can be such a boon to preachers and teachers: he reminds us just how magical and mysterious light really is." - Christian Century"Bruce Watson has written a great mystery narrative that chronicles how architecture, art, religion, and mythology dovetail with science to provide our modern understanding of light." - Dick Teresi, coauthor of THE GOD PARTICLE and author of LOST DISCOVERIES"This is a story and a book chock-full of great and fascinating figures, each of whose personality and doings Watson deftly presents without detracting from the impetus of his millennia-spanning narrative. A dazzling book, as seems completely appropriate." - starred review, Booklist"Luminous, enlightening, informative, and wide-ranging. Watson has dared to take on the subject of light in all its magnitude and majesty." - Paul Mariani, author of EPITAPHS FOR THE JOURNEY and GERALD MANLEY HOPKINS: A LIFE

Bruce Watson is a frequent contributor to Smithsonian magazine, writing on topics ranging from eels to pi to profiles of artists and writers. His work has also appeared in the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, and other publications. Watson is the author of four books, including Bread and Roses, Sacco and Vanzetti (nominated for an Edgar Award), and Freedom Summer. He lives in western Massachusetts.

My only claim to hanging out with geniuses was cataloguing the Sarton History of Science library at Harvard. Nothing except dust rubbed off on me, and certainly no curiosity about the composition of light. The sun comes up and makes things easier to see, right? Well! Watson's book is a glorious achievement. It reads like a thriller written by a poet who double majored in philosophy and physics and audited every anthropology course in the catalog. I was riveted. I read myself into terminal

presbyopia. The book stretched my brain and imagination. I feel improved.

I found the book to be very informative and easy to follow and understand. I've been in the lighting business most of my career and never dreamed there was so much history behind light and how understanding of its nature has so slowly evolved over such a long time. I would recommend the book to anyone who wants or needs to have a basic understanding of light, its evolution, application and possible future direction.

Beautiful, elegant, informative, readable, fun. A book for any age. The mystery, the wonder of light. Something we take for granted today brought into sharp relief as fantastic, moving, hopeful, full of joy even playfully. Don't miss this!!

an incredible book that should be right up there with all those one word books (you know the ones--SALT, COD etc etc) but really is more expansive and philosophical than any of them.

Watson is an established historian with a keen attention to detail. I was introduced to him first through his book Bread and Roses, which, unexpectedly, Watson turned into a page-turner. From there I read his detailed, 'politically neutral' presentation of the controversial Sacco & Vanzetti Case. By then a committed fan of the author, I picked up Freedom Summer a few years back and have followed him ever since, as I learn so much from historical author's like Watson with well-established credentials. I have rarely read historical accounts that inspire me to read onward, well into the night. This man brings history to life.Having just completed his latest book Light, I must say this is his finest and most ambitious work to date. It is a slower read than Watson's previous books, primarily due to the amount of detailed material provided within. It deviates from the books mentioned above only in scope, as it is a very vivid presentation of the history of an amorphous phenomena; one taken for granted by a species that depends upon it for their very lives. It is an excellent presentation of disciplines as disparate as science, aesthetics and mysticism. It provides what is oftentimes esoteric material in a format easily understood by the layman, with the author's skillful prose maintaining a compellingly cohesive thread throughout.A truly encyclopedic exposition into a topic gleaned from not only the detailed research I have come to rely upon from Watson, much is offered firsthand as he recounts his travels around the globe to witness the various examples of how light has been observed, employed and used by humanity throughout the centuries. Whether discussing the use of light in paintings, architecture, religious scripture or pagan

ritual, you feel transported to the location and at times are seemingly with Watson, from the ruins of the ancient Valle dei Templi in Sicily, seeing the constellation Orion as clearly as he, brought to our eyes from a distance light years away! He has developed a penchant for helping me feel what he is writing about, and that was never more in evidence in going through Light. Having no aversion to nor preference for any religion, ritual or myth, I discovered through this portion of the book the degree of reverence which man has held for light since time immemorial. I understand that reverence and now feel it myself.If you have a penchant for history, are an academic aspirant, or you're simply an autodidact seeking to expand your understanding of our this Earth, Solar System, Galaxy and Universe(s) we are all a part of, I highly recommend taking the time to read this fantastically comprehensive treatise, one that brings the topic of light from the location it has been relegated to by modern man: the shadows.

Not just for science buffs. Art history fans will love it. Historians will love it. Anyone just looking for a fascinating look at a timeless topic will find this book a compelling read. Amazing research, masterfully written. A wonderful exploration of one of the great mysteries of the universe.

A great read! A fascinating recounting of the stories about the scientists who ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœenlightened ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ our understanding of the world and some of the artists who captured light for all time. Even learned something new about my religion. Loved it.

Wonderful!

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