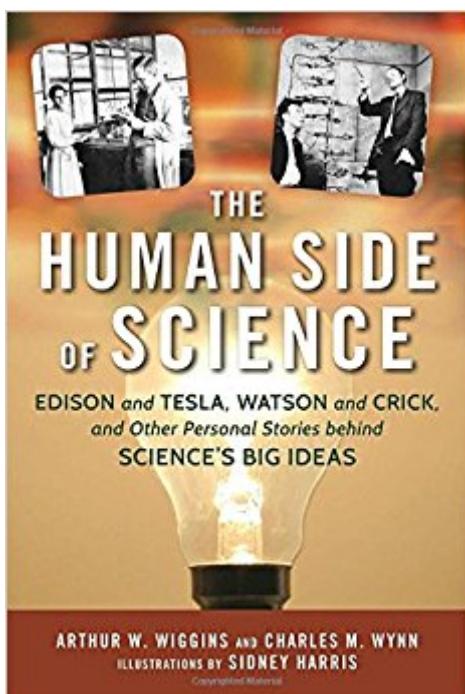


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# The Human Side Of Science: Edison And Tesla, Watson And Crick, And Other Personal Stories Behind Science's Big Ideas



## Synopsis

This lively and humorous book focuses attention on the fact that science is a human enterprise. The reader learns about the foibles and quirks as well as the admirable ingenuity and impressive accomplishments of famous scientists who made some of the greatest discoveries of the past and present. Examples abound: James Watson and Francis Crick formed a legendary partnership that led to the discovery of DNA, but they essentially ignored the contribution of female colleague Rosalind Franklin. Later, in the race to sequence the human genome, Watson criticized J. Craig Venter's technique as a process that "could be run by monkeys." Nikola Tesla once worked for Thomas Edison, but then quit after a dispute about a bonus. Robert Hooke accused Isaac Newton of stealing his ideas about optics. Plato declared that the works of Democritus should be burned. With tongue-in-cheek illustrations by renowned science cartoonist Sidney Harris, this book takes the reader behind the scenes of scientific research to shine new light on the all-too-human people who "do" science.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

PRAISE FOR THE JOY OF PHYSICS: "Wiggins' friendly, stress-free approach will teach readers how to measure, observe and calculate, and he enriches his study with short history lessons and biographies of physics pioneers... Clever cartoons by Sydney Harris and quotes from such worthies as Jeff Foxworthy provide laugh-out-loud moments, while the very human travails of pioneers like

Tesla and Bernoulli remind us that life (and science) is seldom easy, even for geniuses. A welcome volume, Wiggins' gentle but thorough text could do much to quell perennial student bellyaching over introductory physics courses. *Publishers Weekly* *“An entertaining, informative romp through electromagnetism and light, dynamics, quantum mechanics and the big bang.”* *New Scientist* *“Filled with examples and simple demonstrations and experiments you can do yourself, it’s a hands-on approach to the fun of discovery.”* *“Here is a route not only to understanding physics—which, after all, deals with the biggest cosmic questions such as workings of the universe—but doing physics.”* *Skeptical Inquirer* *“Conveys the delight of understanding in a way that requires the reader to be comfortable with math no more complex than first-year algebra. Even more appealing is the manner in which the author uses math to explain a series of generally accessible experiments, with instructions that accompany many of the essays. Relevant cartoons by Sidney Harris amuse and enlighten the reader along the way.”* *A fine resource for teachers who need to reinforce their own understanding of fundamental physics.* *“It is a pleasure to read and will help teachers provide answers to students’ questions on the underlying principles of physical science.”* *This book will reinforce the idea that physics is not only an important school subject but that it explains a great deal about the world we encounter every day.* *NSTA Recommends*, National Science Teachers Association *“rather than relying just on clear explanations, amazing results and interesting anecdotes to engage readers, The Joy of Physics also takes readers through a series of easy and fun practical experiments such as demonstrating simple harmonic motion with a yo-yo that illustrate physical concepts. The book is also peppered with illustrations by the famous science cartoonist Sidney Harris and each chapter begins with a humorous quotation.”* *Physics World*

Arthur W. Wiggins is the author of the *Joy of Physics* (with cartoons by Sidney Harris) and the coauthor, with Charles M. Wynn Sr., of the *The Five Biggest Ideas in Science*, *Quantum Leaps in the Wrong Direction*, *The Five Biggest Unsolved Problems in Science*, and the textbook *Natural Science: Bridging the Gaps*. Wynn and Wiggins have also edited *And God said, “Let There Be Evolution!”: Reconciling the Book of Genesis, the Quran and the Theory of Evolution.* Wiggins is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Physics, Oakland Community College in Michigan. Charles M. Wynn Sr. is Distinguished Professor of Chemistry at Eastern

Connecticut State University. Besides the above-named titles coauthored with Arthur W. Wiggins, Wynn is also the author of Quantitative and Qualitative Experiments for General Chemistry. Sidney Harris was called "America's premier science cartoonist" by Isaac Asimov. He has contributed to American Scientist for many years and provided illustrations for The Five Biggest Ideas in Science, Quantum Leaps in the Wrong Direction, and The Five Biggest Unsolved Problems in Science.

The title of the book says it all. A wonderful reading experience, a combination of history and science. I loved it. It's not a fast read because you want to absorb information you've never heard before.,, or forgot.Nancy Meise

Great book, science and those names I've heard since back in school come alive. The Human Side of Science is making it fun to read a science text.

Far from being a dry treatise, this book is thoroughly enjoyable reading and frequently eye opening. The ways some great scientific discoveries or inventions happened or almost didn't happen are wonderfully summed up on the human side--and it is amazing some of them occurred at all, because of squabbles, jealousies, angers, romances, affairs, competitions and even dirty tricks among experimenters, researchers, thinkers and other great minds that we hold in high esteem today. In short, the eminent thinkers behaved pretty much like the rest of us when they weren't pondering big ideas, big mysteries or big breakthroughs. This text from the authors' introduction gives a good summation of what's in store inside this fine book: "...some people believe science operates in a cut-and-dried fashion, with rational logic always prevailing. Those people are mistaken. There are elephants in science's rooms. All the steps in the scientific method involve (italics)people(end italics). And you know what that means. The seemingly well-defined procedural steps of the scientific method are, when put into practice, actually fuzzy--and subject to the full range of human foibles." The authors don't just focus on the negative side of the human equation, fortunately. There also are looks at friendship-based collaborations among scientists and others that brought solid and beneficial results. And there are vignettes that help bring some of the great minds into sharper focus as connected, positive human beings. Albert Einstein, for example, was an outspoken opponent of racism against African-Americans and joined the NAACP in 1942. He also did not let fame and awards go to his head. He once insisted: "Whoever undertakes to set himself up as a judge of Truth and Knowledge is shipwrecked by the laughter of the gods." (My thanks to

Prometheus Books for providing a review copy.)

Wiggins, and his colleagues Charles Wynn and Sydney Harris, have written and illustrated another winning popular science book for non-scientists; although I know that many scientists would thoroughly enjoy the book as well. There's not an equation in the book -- well almost none if you don't count  $E=mc^2$  -- to distract the reader from the fast moving story lines. Reading about the human, every day foibles of scientists during their discovery process and in their personal lives (the good and bad interactions) I found fascinating. To realize that they are human beings (as the title implies) and not superheroes is also very nice to read about in a well-researched work and not just as anecdotal accounts. I was also fascinated by the connections from one scientist to another that I was never aware of until Wiggins put it all together. I highly recommend *The Human Side of Science* to science lovers of any age.

Since Wiggins is a physicist and Wynn is a professor of chemistry with a keen interest in evolutionary biology you can be sure these guys are not going to gum up the science. And as far as I can tell they don't. But job one here, make no mistake about it, is entertainment. Note the numerous cartoons by Sidney Harris adorning the text. I didn't think the cartoons were all that great but I suspect Sidney Harris cartoons are an acquired taste much like *The New Yorker* magazine cartoons. What is great is the engaging writing by Wiggins and Wynn. It's not like they haven't done this before. They both wrote *Quantum Leaps in the Wrong Direction* and *The Five Biggest Unsolved Problems in Science* and other works also with cartoons by Harris. What they do here is make science very interesting. They begin with Democritus and Aristotle contemplating the atomic nature of matter and end with J. Craig Venter, James Watson and Michael Hunkapiller as they race to sequence the human genome. Along the way they sort out Einstein's love affairs, and referee some science spats and priority claims between Newton and Leibniz, and between Lavoisier and Benjamin Thompson, and others. They relate how alternating current and direct current battled for supremacy (Chapter 7: *Westinghouse and Tesla versus Edison*). Einstein gets center stage in two chapters. The story of the discovery of the expanding universe by Hubble and Shapley is covered as is the startling and horrific consequences of  $E=mc^2$ . There are ten honorable mention mini-chapters which touch on dark energy and dark matter and the Higgs boson. There's even a bit about Fermi.

paradox and the Drake equation and speculations about aliens. Stephen Hawking and black holes make an appearance, and did you know that glamourous actress Hedy Lamarr was an inventor with a patent dealing with weapons security? I didn't. All in all this is a book that is fun to read and one that might even keep you up late at night like a well-done suspense novel. --Dennis Littrell, author of "Hard Science and the Unknowable"

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