

Life Science suggestions for reading and other things

Incoming students often ask what they should read/watch in preparation of coming to University. The honest answer is: nothing. You should rest and relax. However, if you are keen on suggestions for reading to stimulate your scientific and inquiring mind, below is a 'reading list' that brings together suggestions from a number of Life Sciences colleagues working across the field of biology. It includes fact-based and fictional works, also some opinion and journalistic books too. We absolutely do NOT expect you to have read these books but thought they might entertain and enlighten you.

New Scientist, Scientific American and Biological Sciences Review (ed. by Professor Moffat)
Always good for keeping up with new and developing ideas in science.

Richard Dawkins **The Ancestor's Tale**
This is particularly recommended.

The Oxford Book of Modern Science Writing (ed. by Richard Dawkins)
A volume of short extracts on many aspects of science.

Paul Colinvaux **Why big fierce animals are scarce**
Good for ecology.

Oliver Sacks **An Anthropologist on Mars: Seven paradoxical tales**
Stories of the histories of seven people with neurological disorders.

Alice Roberts **The Incredible Unlikelihood of Being: Evolution and the Making of Us**
A masterful account of why our bodies are the way they are.

Ben Goldacre **Bad Science**
More journalistic and focused on biomedicine.

Francis Ashcroft **Life at the Extremes: [The Science of Survival]**
How do people survive extremes of heat, cold, depth, speed etc?

Peter Godfrey-Smith **Other Minds: The Octopus and the Evolution of Intelligent Life**
What if intelligent life on Earth evolved not once, but twice?

Ed Yong **I Contain Multitudes: The microbes within us and a grander view of life**
A "microbe's-eye view" of the world.

Georgina Ferry **Dorothy Hodgkin: A Life**
Biography of the Nobel prize winner. A pioneer in her field and in new technology, but also shows a scientist as a human being.

Frans de Waal **Are We Smart Enough to Know How Smart Animals Are?**
In what way we are different from the rest of the animal kingdom?

Rebecca Skloot **The immortal life of Henrietta Lacks**
The award-winning story of the ethics and impact of the origin of HeLa cells.

Alex Boese **Elephants on Acid and Other Bizarre Experiments**
The title says it all!

Primo Levi **The Periodic Table**
A collection of short stories each centred around a specific element from Levi's experiences in Fascist Italy, and in Auschwitz.

John Pilger **Distant Voices**
Something political that is relevant to being a scientist.

Fiction

Margaret Atwood **The MaddAddam trilogy**
The Year of the Flood / MaddAddam / Oryx and Crake
Atwood is a scientifically literate author who writes great books.

For examples of concise and excellent story telling:

Raymond Carver **Cathedral**
A short story by the poet and author.

Jorge Luis Borges **Labyrinths**
Short stories by the Argentinian writer.

JD Salinger **Nine Stories**
Includes a couple of the famous short stories from the author of The Catcher in the Rye.

Also perhaps have a look at:

The Naked Scientists podcasts at: <https://www.thenakedscientists.com/>

BBC iPlayer **Pain, Pus and poison: The search for modern medicines**
This is an excellent BBC series on pharmacology with Michael Mosley.