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Amazon.com Review

Despite scientific evidence to the contrary, as far as the health care profession is concerned the standard operating design of the human body is male. So when a book comes along as beautifully written and endlessly informative as Natalie Angier's Woman: An Intimate Geography, it's a cause for major celebration. Written with whimsy and eloquence, her investigation into female physiology draws its inspiration not only from scientific and medical sources but also from mythology, history, art, and literature, layering biological factoids with her own personal encounters and arcane anecdotes from the history of science. Who knew, for example, that the clitoris--with 8,000 nerve fibers--packs double the pleasure of the penis; that the gene controlling cellular sensitivity to male androgens, ironically enough, resides on the X-chromosome; or that stress hormones like cortisol and corticosterone are the true precursors of friendship?

The mysteries of evolution are not a new subject for Angier, a Pulitzer Prize-winning biology writer for the New York Times whose previous books include The Beauty of the Beastly and Natural Obsessions. The strengths of Woman begin with Angier's witty and evocative prose style, but its real contribution is the way it expands the definition of female "geography" beyond womb, breasts, and estrogen, down as far as the bimolecular substructure of DNA and up as high as the transcendent infrastructure of the human brain. -- Patrizia DiLucchio

From Publishers Weekly

Did postmenopausal women invent the human race? Are males more similar to females than females are to males? These are among the many stimulating questions at the core of Angier's provocative "scientific fantasia of womanhood," a spirited and thoroughly informedAif admittedly biasedAstudy of how the body is "a map of meaning and freedom." Angier (The Beauty of the Beastly; Natural Obsessions) presents new theories on the evolution of women's anatomy, physiology and social behaviors. She points out, for example, that the X chromosome has a "vastly higher gene richness" than the Y, which by contrast is "a depauperized little stump," and she champions the argument of anthropologist Kristen Hawkes that the role of postmenopausal grandmothers, who could help younger females nurture their weaned but still dependent offspring, "invented youth.... And in inventing childhood, they invented the human race. They created Homo imperialis, a species that can go anywhere and exploit everything." With wit and verve, Angier discusses such topics as ovulation, conception and birth; the social and physiological functions of breasts; orgasm,

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The Pulitzer Prize-winning Angier has prompted a lot of type with this funny and insightful mapping of women's history through our beastly, complicated bodies--from our popular breasts to our slippery DNA. This keen-eyed, provocative study challenges some of the mythology asserted by evolutionary science to date. (LJ 2/1/99)

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A Pulitzer Prize-winner offers a book about femaleness --- in body and mind --- that could prove as important as The Second Sex or Our Bodies, Our Selves and as fresh as Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom. With the clarity, insight, and sheer joy of language that has secured her reputation as one of the New York Times's premier stylists, Natalie Angier lifts the veil of secrecy from that most enigmatic of evolutionary masterpieces, the female body, exploring the essence of what it means to be a woman. Angier's thoughts on everything from organs to orgasm evince her famously playful originality, yet stand their ground in scientific fact. She also dives into hot topics such as menopause and evolutionary psychologists' faddish views of "female nature," creating a sparkling, fresh vision of womanhood.

• Sales Rank: #411360 in Books

• Brand: HOUGHTON MIFFLIN HARCOURT

• Published on: 1999-04-06

• Ingredients: Example Ingredients

• Original language: English

• Number of items: 1

• Dimensions: 9.00" h x .56" w x 6.00" l,

• Binding: Hardcover

• 416 pages

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A must read

By Ron Blouch

A spectacular book by a clear thinking, open minded author who is beholden to no orthodoxy yet not operating on the far fringe of the believable. Angier's take on the female body and the science that we use to explain it is refreshing and mind expanding at the same time. A must read for women and men alike.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Best textbook ever!

By Jessica

I was assigned this book as a textbook for my biology of women class, along with a more text book-y title, The Second X, and another novel-y one, Birth in Four Cultures. I have had a hard time keeping up with the other two text books because I can't put this one down. I have never looked forward to reading a textbook before like I look forward to this one. Believe I'll be giving a copy to my midwife as a post birth gift.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

Gotta get it!

By A Customer

Fascinating information. Now that I know young children have a hormonal rush around the age of four, I'm much more patient with my four year old daughter. I guess I empathize. If you're the mother of a daughter, it's a must read. Hopefully for both of you. The information on sexually transmitted diseases is the best I've read. Remember when we were told not to be promiscuous? Well, if anyone had explained it to me like this, I would've said NO, instead of YES. There's a much better way to explain the risks of STD's that is currently being passed on.

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