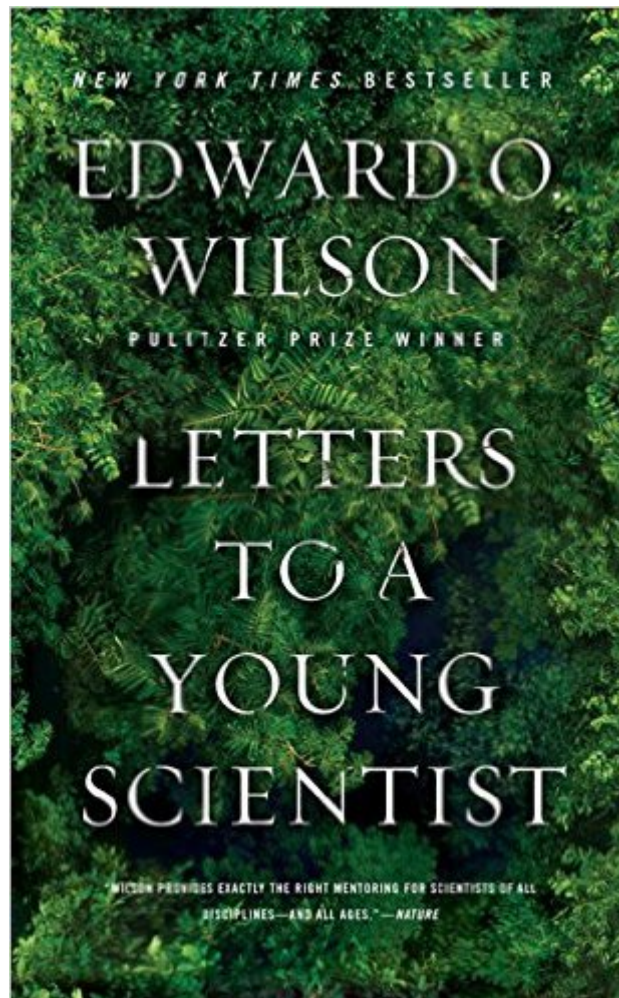


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Letters To A Young Scientist



Synopsis

Pulitzer Prize-winning biologist Edward O. Wilson imparts the wisdom of his storied career to the next generation. Edward O. Wilson has distilled sixty years of teaching into a book for students, young and old. Reflecting on his coming-of-age in the South as a Boy Scout and a lover of ants and butterflies, Wilson threads these twenty-one letters, each richly illustrated, with autobiographical anecdotes that illuminate his career—both his successes and his failures—and his motivations for becoming a biologist. At a time in human history when our survival is more than ever linked to our understanding of science, Wilson insists that success in the sciences does not depend on mathematical skill, but rather a passion for finding a problem and solving it. From the collapse of stars to the exploration of rain forests and the oceans' depths, Wilson instills a love of the innate creativity of science and a respect for the human being's modest place in the planet's ecosystem in his readers. 21 illustrations

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

So, I was more than a little surprised that a new book by EO Wilson was out for more than 8 seconds without a single review yet posted on . I rarely write a review unless I feel passionately about an item -- at one end of the spectrum or another -- but I could not resist the chance to write the first review for a book by a scientist whom I revere and admire for his indomitable energy and unrelenting productivity. I should preface my review by acknowledging that I am a somewhat biased devotee of Wilson's in that I think he and I share much in common: I am a snake biologist (Professor Wilson was nicknamed "Snake" by his comrades as a teenager, as he went through a three-year

stint as an amateur ophiologist [a fancy word for "snake biologist"] before he turned to studying ants), I'm a Southerner (He is too.), I'm an evolutionary biologist (He is too.), an Eagle Scout (So is he.), a science educator (yep, you guessed it...), and I am a proponent of conserving biodiversity (and Ed is the proverbial Patriarch and Anointed High Priest of that unifying concept in science). I mention these aforementioned biases not to share my résumé, but because this book bends to all of those, among others. And so, as I rightly guessed, Mr. Wilson would draw upon a lot of these shared interests in order to make his points and teach us. (This may be a downside for those of you who connect more readily with chemistry, physics, or astronomy examples. This book might have been more aptly called "Letters to a Young Biologist", but I think the title the publishers went with is the right one.) I am also among Wilson's target readers -- young aspiring scientists, but more emphatically -- anyone who would love to be a success as a scientist.

[[ASIN:0871403773 Letters to a Young Scientist]] I found this a completely enjoyable and easily readable autobiographical reflection of one who takes the care and time to observe how nature works. What I found particularly interesting are some of the principles early in the book give a generic perspective of how, in science, any number of viewpoints are important to keep in mind, no matter how intriguing the immediate problem at hand may be. I feel that these could serve individuals at various stages in their career. First, for the young enthusiast who delights in the first discoveries, either in the field or under the microscope, will see how one can start. Secondly, a valuable set of guidelines can serve the undergraduate or graduate biology student who wants to sort out what kinds of questions to ask and how to craft one's own research endeavors. Lastly, these letters might inspire the midcareer scientist to reassess the course of one's own research and the probable directions it might go. Throughout this short volume, references are made to a number of experiments that produced interesting outcomes and enough information is given so that one can read the original literature if desired. Wilson's own successful and failed experiments are mentioned, thereby encouraging a young scientist to continue even if original experiments do not produce interesting or interpretable results. Pasteur's exhortation - chance favors only the prepared mind - urges all of us to think broadly and to observe carefully. Toward the end of the book, an outline is given of an interesting experiment to determine what is the biological succession or repopulation of a single small ecosystem.

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