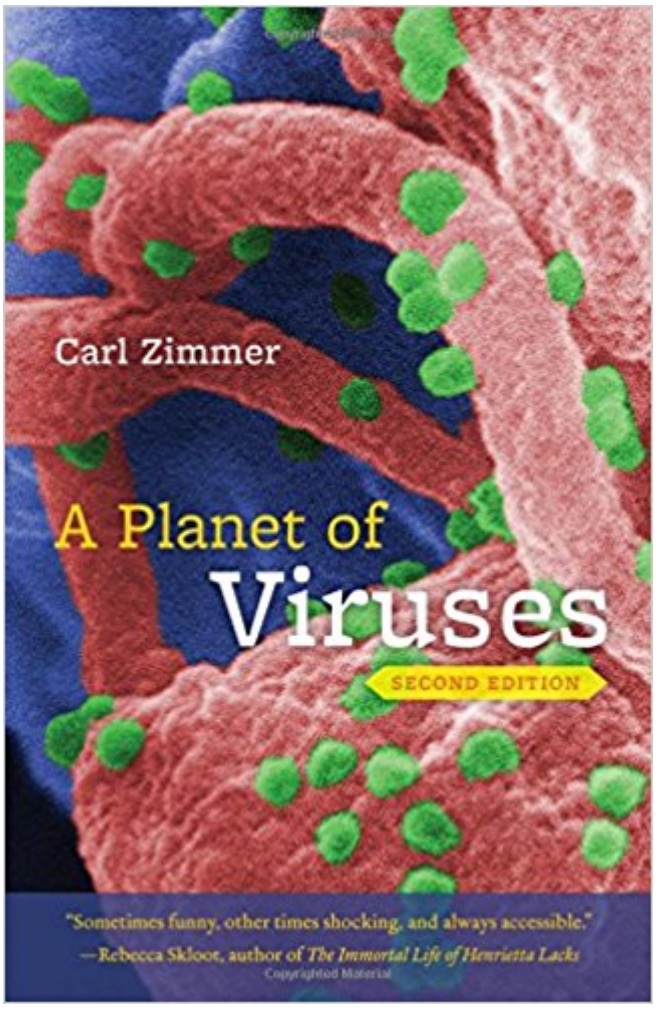
A Planet Of Viruses: Second Edition



Synopsis

The past year has been one of viral panicÃ¢â ¬â •panic about viruses, that is. Through headlines, public health warnings, and at least one homemade hazmat suit, we were reminded of the powerful force of viruses. They are the smallest living things known to science, yet they can hold the entire planet in their sway.A Planet of Viruses is Carl ZimmerÃ¢â ¬â„¢s eye-opening look at the hidden world of viruses. Zimmer, the popular science writer and author of National GeographicÃ¢â ¬â„¢s award-winning blog The Loom, has updated this edition to include the stories of new outbreaks, such as Ebola, MERS, and chikungunya virus; new scientific discoveries, such as a hundred-million-year-old virus that infected the common ancestor of armadillos, elephants, and humans; and new findings that show why climate change may lead to even deadlier outbreaks. ZimmerÃ¢â ¬â„¢s lucid explanations and fascinating stories demonstrate how deeply humans and viruses are intertwined. Viruses helped give rise to the first life-forms, are responsible for many of our most devastating diseases, and will continue to control our fate for centuries. Thoroughly readable, and as reassuring as it is frightening, A Planet of Viruses is a fascinating tour of a formidable hidden world.

Book Information

Paperback: 128 pages
Publisher: University Of Chicago Press; 2 Reprint edition (October 6, 2015)
Language: English
ISBN-10: 022629420X
ISBN-13: 978-0226294209
Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.7 x 8.5 inches
Shipping Weight: 12.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)
Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 31 customer reviews
Best Sellers Rank: #68,261 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #62 inÃ Â Books > Medical Books > Medicine > Internal Medicine > Pathology > Diseases > Viral #73 inÃ Â Books > Medical Books > Medicine > Internal Medicine > Infectious Disease > Communicable Diseases #123 inÃ Â Books > Medical Books > Basic Sciences > Microbiology

Customer Reviews

"A brief, highly accessible introduction to viruses and their impact on the world. . . . Highly recommended." (Choice)Ã¢â ¬Å“Just about everything youÃ¢â ¬â„¢ve always wanted to knowÃ¢â ¬â •and a lot youÃ¢â ¬â„¢ll probably wish you didnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t knowÃ¢â ¬â •about the

viruses that have caused humanity so much grief throughout history.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Praise for the first edition Forbes)Ã¢â ¬Å“In A Planet of Viruses, science writer Carl Zimmer accomplishes in a mere 100 pages what other authors struggle to do in 500: He reshapes our understanding of the hidden realities at the core of everyday existence. . . . Whether heÃ¢â ¬â„¢s exploring how viruses come to America or picking apart the surprisingly complicated common cold, ZimmerÃ¢â ¬â„¢s train of thought is concise and illuminating.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Praise for the first edition Washington Post)Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“Absolutely top-drawer popular science writing. . . . ZimmerÃ¢â ¬â„¢s information-packed, superbly readable look at virological knowledge awakens readers to the fact that not only are viruses everywhere but we couldnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t live without them.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Praise for the first edition Booklist, starred review)Ã¢â ¬Å“A smart, beautiful, and somewhat demented book thatÃ¢â ¬â„¢s likely to give you a case of the willies. In the best way possible.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Praise for the first edition Boing Boing)

Carl Zimmer is a columnist for the New York Times, writes for National Geographic and other magazines, and is the author of thirteen books, including Parasite Rex, Soul Made Flesh, and Microcosm. He is also a lecturer at Yale University, where he teaches writing about science and the environment.

If youÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢re looking for a light, but entertaining book about viruses, look no further than A Planet of Viruses by Carl Zimmer. Even if you have an active interest in viruses, this book will still provide new information and stories about scientists and discovery. For instance, do you know how Roman scholars tried to cure the common cold? What virus, aside from smallpox virus, has been eradicated? How was the bacteriophage discovered? See, now youÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢re hooked.One of the things I loved about A Planet was its inclusion of non-pathogenic viruses. The book starts with the story of Tobacco Mosaic virus found in the Cave of Crystals, and a small history of virology. As humans, we often focus on only microbes that make us ill, but in reality, only a tiny, tiny proportion of the microbes that we know of can do so. The reminder that much of virology is based in viruses that infect plants and other organisms was refreshing. That being said, the other chapters about human pathogens were fun to read and very informative. The wide breadth of environments covered (from caves to the human body to animals to the oceans) was one of my favorite aspects of this book.Additionally, often times, I find popular books about science to read like a Nature paper rather than a story. Carl Zimmer avoided that with entertaining stories about how specific viruses were discovered and what experiments were done. It never reads like an

encyclopedia, rather, the book is more like an anthology of short, interesting scientific essays. The chapters range from smallpox- an eradicated virus with a long history- to Ebola- a newer virus with a shorter, but devastating history. He also includes less serious, but still costly viruses like rhinovirus.Overall, I thought A Planet of Viruses was an enjoyable read with plenty of information to keep even virus enthusiasts entertained.-KG

Nice primer on the world of viruses where we learn that the word virus 'originally signified either a life-giving substance or a deadly venom'. Perhaps reflecting etymology, it is no longer entirely clear whether viruses are alive or dead. However, they contain very few genes and are unable to reproduce without infecting other organisms. Apart from the recently discovered mimivirus and mamavirus, viruses are generally about one hundred times smaller than bacteria which in turn are about one hundred times smaller than a typical mammal cell. Nobody really know when and how the first virus originated but what is clear is that viruses are ubiquitous. Both outside and inside us! There are hundreds of trillions of them in the oceans, in the earth crust, and in the atmosphere. In the oceans, there are about one million of virus-derived genes, including some that encode proteins involved in photosynthesis. It is estimated that about 10% of the oxygen in the air is produced with proteins that have a viral origin. 'We humans are an inextricable blend of mammal and virus'. About 8% of the human genome is derived from ancient retroviruses! For comparison, our estimated 20000 genes represent less than 2% of our genome!

This book served as a wonderful introduction to Virology and Human Viruses (including Ebola, retroviruses, influenza, rhinovirus, human papillomavirus, and more). The language of the book is easy to comprehend even for people with very limited background in molecular biology, microbiology, immunology, or virology. Rather than delving deeper into the natural history of each virus, the book highlights information that is applicable to the reader's life in the status quo (e.g. how public health responds to viral outbreaks, resources that are available to the public such as the CDC MMWR (mortality and morbidity weekly report)). The book also utilizes a colloquial language that possesses a narrative effect; therefore, I enjoyed reading the book, and I wasn't drowned by technical jargon.I would highly recommend this book to anyone interested in learning about the impacts viruses have on our lives. I would recommend this book to people who are interested in learning more about the history and the anthropological impacts of each virus. For people with extensive background in human viruses, this book may be repetitive; however, the book contains a wealth of facts regarding the sociological aspects of the virus including the researchers associated

with significant viral discoveries. A key target audience could be high school students or college undergraduates who are interested in infectious disease!

Nice overview on several viruses. Plenty of facts on each to wet your appetite. Go buy other books if you want explicit details.

Very interesting history of the virus on our planet and their plausible role in the origin of life, their potential health benefits and the quest to find their weaknesses. Before the 20th century, we didn't know about the existence of galaxies, neither about the viruses, so learning more about them extend the universe in both dimensions, to the biggest and to the smallest. Carl Zimmer writing is very fluid, understandable and enjoyable.

School book for my son. He's in a phase of hating reading but got through this very easily.

Carl Zimmer is the best science writer alive!