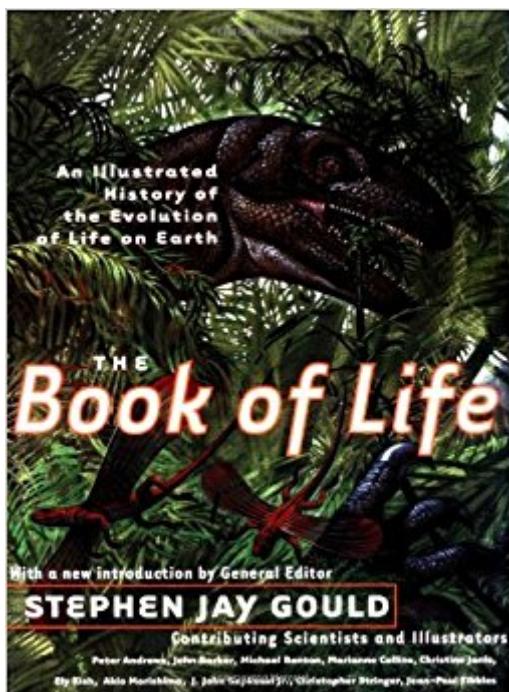


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# The Book Of Life: An Illustrated History Of The Evolution Of Life On Earth



## Synopsis

A new edition of the beautifully illustrated depiction of the dramatic story of survival and extinction. The Book of Life uses an exemplary fusion of art and science to tell the story of life on earth. The text, under the editorship of Stephen Jay Gould, provides a thorough understanding of the latest research and is accompanied by paintings prepared especially for this book. Never before has our planet's evolution been so clearly, so ingeniously explained. History is marked by disaster. The Book of Life explains how mammals, having survived at least one of these disasters—<sup>the impact of a massive comet</sup>—luckily inherited the earth. Next came the rise of modern humans, who would shape the world as no creature has. As this fascinating history unfolds, gorgeous illustrations allow us to observe climate changes, tectonic plate movement, the spread of plant life, and the death of the dinosaurs. We discover the chains of animal survival, the causes and consequences of adaptation, and finally the environmental impact of human life. Color illustrations throughout.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

An unusual scientific reference work by any measure, The Book of Life opens with an unusual protest from its editor, Stephen Jay Gould, who worries that it may have left out much of importance discovered between the present and the book's original publication in 1993. Gould's worry is well placed--in the last few years, many advances have been made in taxonomy and genetics, to name just two areas. Still, the book is a lucid, readily comprehensible, and largely up-to-date overview of

the origins and evolution of life on earth, from the emergence of bacteria 4 billion years ago to that of *Homo sapiens* in recent geological time. Written by distinguished scientists, the text proceeds chronologically, giving an in-depth account of the fossil record. It is matched by hundreds of paintings, drawings, charts, and graphs that reinforce the authors' discussions. More than all that, *The Book of Life* is a manifesto proclaiming the essential correctness of evolutionary theory, which has come under fire in places like Afghanistan and Kansas. "Life has changed through time," paleontologist Michael Benton observes. "No other explanation will account for the sequence and variety of the life forms preserved as fossils, or the history recorded since humankind began to draw, paint, and carve, about 30,000 years ago." The book's careful documentation of those changes makes it a highly useful reference for high school and university students, and it's a book that rewards casual browsing as well. --Gregory McNamee

It is hard to know just what to make of this book. On one hand, the inclusion of dozens of striking color paintings and an introductory essay by Stephen Jay Gould on the history of iconography in the life sciences suggest a coffee-table book on biological illustration. On the other hand, the bulk of the illustrations, along with the organization of the text, suggest a textbook or encyclopedia aimed at high school students and general readers. Each of the six chapters--beginning with the origin of life in the seas, continuing through the age of dinosaurs, and ending with the evolution of the primates and hominids--is written by an expert in the field and addresses the latest research. Unfortunately, there are no bibliographies pointing readers to primary sources. This book will probably see the most use in the reference collection of public and school libraries.- Eric Hinsdale, Trinity Univ. Lib., San AntonioCopyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc.

An update of a classic text. It is a popular account of the history of life from the formation of the earth to current day. While this, sadly, is the most recent edition is at least 14 years old--it is still the best comprehensive, popular account. The writing is excellent and even from the multi-authors. The graphics very helpful in keeping straight what happened when. More recent books give refinements and confirmations but essentially all of this account is still valid. Highly recommended as an initial and reference orientation to the history of life.

This is a great book for someone high school or college level. I'd been looking for something to learn more about evolution (I went to a high school where it wasn't allowed to be taught, and in college it was assumed we already knew, so I had only very basic knowledge of it) and this is the

perfect book for it. Shows how life started from the simplest forms, all the eras, and periods. It is nice to have some basic science knowledge to grasp what you are reading. But I understood fine with only into biology classes from college and basically nothing from before that. Great book for anyone interested in the subject.

Came in in great condition. Great price.

I bought this book after previewing it at a local book store, I check online and had a significantly lower price. The book is great. Big, color paintings, and some insightful reading on evolution. I had read reviews about partial or incomplete information in this book, but I bought it simply because I thought it looked like fun and interesting information, with beautiful renderings of prehistoric animals. Which is what it is. If you are studying evolution for school, I'm sure by now you've been recommended the newest edition for your studies.

...a little behind the times and anthropocentric. These failings are admitted in the book, however, and do not much detract from its being a useful work. Recommended.

You would have expected more time and detail to the emergence of the nervous system and the Cambrian Explosion. A more up-to-date section on human evolution (no mention of *Ardipithecus Ramidus*) but on the whole the book is a good synthesis of the state of the knowledge in this field.

I found the book both interesting and informative. A couple of features I especially liked was the easy to follow way that it presented the time periods in Earth history. I also liked the family trees connecting the various life forms. They were complete and easy to follow. If you strung them all together you would have a long chart showing the evolutionary history and relationships of all of the forms of life on earth. A fairly short book that gives a complete story of Life on Earth that is fun and easy to read.

Great many references for NOS and illustrations that I can use in my biology classroom. Book can be a little wordy and take a long time to read, but good information and graphics.

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