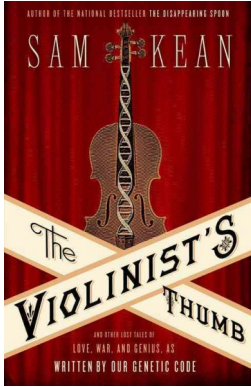


The Violinist's Thumb

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OK, I selected this book based solely on its title, but boy did I luck out. What an incredibly gifted writer Sam Kean is. In *The Violinist's Thumb: and Other Lost Tales of Love, War, and Genius as Written by Our Genetic Code*, he translates dense scientific concepts into lucid, beautiful prose. He also knows how to tell stories. The first chapter contrasts the biographies of two of DNA's discoverers, Mendel and the less well-known, Johannes Friedrich Miescher, who because he studied fish slime had to work in very cold conditions so that his material would not deteriorate before he could examine it. And who knew that Mendel joined a monastery so he could secure a university education? His passion for raising peas taught us so much about human inheritance. This book tackles and at least partially answers many of life's great questions including: Why did it take eons for life to become complex? What is our most ancient DNA? Why do humans have no more DNA than so many smaller, less complex creatures? Why did we almost become extinct? Why did we break away from monkeys? Is the impulse for art conveyed by our DNA? Why are identical twins not identical? **[Read more »](#)**

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