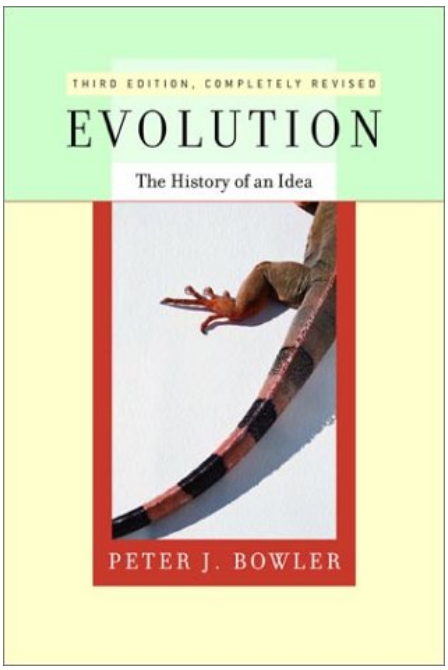

Evolution: The History of an Idea

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Since its original publication in 1983, *Evolution: The History of an Idea* has been recognized as a comprehensive and authoritative source on the development and impact of this most controversial of scientific theories. This new edition has been entirely rewritten to take account of the latest work of historians and scientists. The sequence of chapters has been reconstructed in a way that will help students and general readers to understand the key phases in the development of modern evolutionism. The book's substantial bibliography has been updated to serve as a valuable introduction to the immense literature on this topic.

Evolution: The History of an Idea Details

Date	:	Published July 1st 2003 by University of California Press (first published January 1st 1984)
ISBN	:	9780520236936
Author	:	Peter J. Bowler
Format	:	Paperback 464 pages
Genre	:	Science, History, Biology, Evolution, Nonfiction, History Of Science, Academic

From Reader Review Evolution: The History of an Idea for online ebook

Patrick says

A fascinating, fairly well-written, only periodically-dense historical account (by a guy who obviously can't stand Creationists).

Shonda Wilson says

This is a survey-style text book on the history of evolution with what I would call a twist. The text looks at the current historiography of the field and suggests ways to improve it, pushing the reader to look into each subject covered more and asking deep questions as to how to improve upon what the book states. While comprehensive, the text does not go deeply into particular topics, but this is what one would expect from a textbook. That being said, I found it easy to read and graspable, something really useful for an intro to the history of science.

Wendelle So says

Read 1/2... This book is written with all the detail and nuance a scholar would necessitate. The content most invaluable to me were all the insights that contradicted popular impressions about the history of evolution (TH Huxley held private reservations about Darwinism especially the aspect of gradualism; he didn't win in the popular court or make galvanic impact in his legendary debate with the wily archbishop; Mendel wasn't looking to establish a revolutionary model of heredity so much as to continue the idea of the origin of species by hybridization; the period following Darwin's publication was characterized by the rebloom of Neo-Lamarckism; etc. and etc.) This book is a scholarly treasure to revisit and meditate upon.

Jessica says

Class text for History of Biology, fall 09

Verdict: Quite good for a textbook.

Brett says

I loved this book in that it is a combination of science history with the most despised topic in American education. It is a great work on the development of an idea and supporting researching. I was surprised to find statistician Karl Pearson was a Darwinist. I knew that Fischer (ANOVA) was involved in evolutionary theory but not that he was the person to integrate population genetics. I can see this text used in conceptual change and epistemology research.

Rick Wayne says

Peter Bowler is an Irish historian of science who is known for his studies of evolution as an "-ism". This is undoubtedly his magnum opus and is one of the best introductory texts on this subject available.

But, a word of caution - this book is not for everyone. With notes and index, it comes to 432 pages, and, as Bowler himself notes in the preface, it is intended for undergraduate students or as a survey text for the specialist. That having been said, his prose is approachable and one does not need to have a background in history or science to follow the argument.

Also, unlike many other texts on this subject, Bowler does not descend into triumphalist or other such ideologies that remove science from its own social context. In the words of the author:

"Finally, we must look more closely at the problems the historian faces as he tries to chart the rise of scientific evolutionism. In particular, these problems arise from the normal view of science as an objective search for knowledge and the suspicions of many critics that scientific theories are themselves value-laden contributions to philosophical and ideological debates" (Bowler, pg.4).

He does an excellent job of explaining not only the theories and their evidence but does so by relating them to their own social and historical context. His analysis is also distinguished from many of its predecessors (and descendants, unfortunately) by its breadth and scope. Bowler does not confine his study to the merely biological, but begins with geology and early modern ideas of nature and change, or more appropriately, the lack thereof. Furthermore, he brings the reader up to the date of publication with a healthy discussion of the current debates, which once again stresses the idea of "evolution" as an "evolving" concept.

This is a history text. Thus, this book is for the novice, whether initially hostile to the concept of common descent through natural selection or not, who wants a comprehensive and scholarly introduction to the material, as well as for the biologist who finds herself caught in the throes of "biology as ideology," and wishes to read a scholarly text testing science's absolute claim to truth.