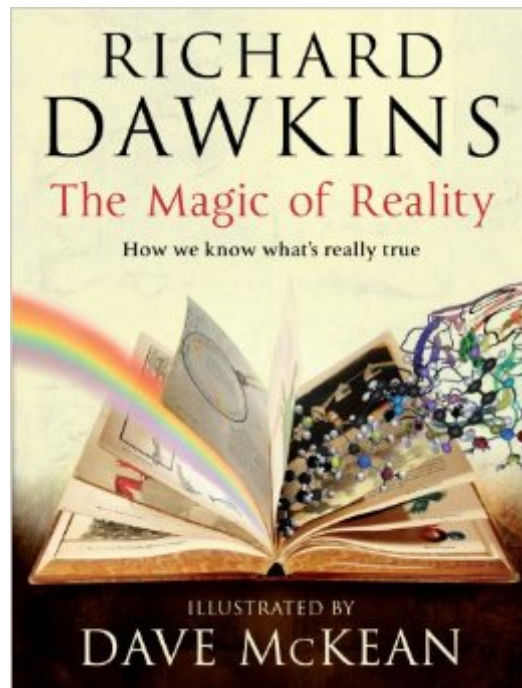


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# Magic Of Reality: How We Know What's Really True



## Synopsis

What are things made of? What is the sun? Why is there night and day, winter and summer? Why do bad things happen? Are we alone? Throughout history people all over the world have invented stories to answer profound questions such as these. Have you heard the tale of how the sun hatched out of an emu's egg? Or what about the great catfish that carries the world on its back? Has anyone ever told you that earthquakes are caused by a sneezing giant? These fantastical myths are fun - but what is the real answer to such questions? "The Magic of Reality", with its explanations of space, time, evolution and more, will inspire and amaze readers of all ages - young adults, adults, children, octogenarians. Teaming up with the renowned illustrator Dave McKean, Richard Dawkins answers all these questions and many more. In stunning words and pictures this book presents the real story of the world around us, taking us on an enthralling journey through scientific reality, and showing that it has an awe-inspiring beauty and thrilling magic which far exceed those of the ancient myths. We encounter rainbows, our genetic ancestors, tsunamis, shooting stars, plants, animals, and an intriguing cast of characters in this extraordinary scientific voyage of discovery. Richard Dawkins and Dave McKean have created a dazzling celebration of our planet that will entertain and inform for years to come.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In 1984's film "Ghostbusters," there's a comical scene in which a man is being interviewed for the role of the newest member of the "ghost busting" team, and his interviewer asks him the question,

"Do you believe in UFOs, astral projections, mental telepathy, ESP, clairvoyance, spirit photography, telekinetic movement, full trance mediums, the Loch Ness monster and the theory of Atlantis?" He answers, humorously, "If there's a steady paycheck in it, I'll believe anything you say." If you'd asked me the same question at the age of 12 or 13, I would have said "yes" without any hesitation. In fact, I probably would have added some things. Like most children, I was very curious about how the universe worked and how things had come to be the way they were, and, also like most children, by the time I was in middle school I had outgrown the cute educational kids' shows and picture books about dinosaurs and space. School texts were heavier on bare bones facts than on explaining how scientists knew what they did, and books for adults were dry and simply too difficult to keep up with. (I tried, and abandoned, "The Origin of Species" and "Cosmos" around this time.) Worse yet, I still had the childish tendency to believe most of what adults told me - and to believe virtually all of what I read. In this perfect storm of inquiry and innocence, I was ripe for the plucking for charlatans and pseudo-scientists. And pluck they did! I wasted much of my time during these formative years reading (and believing) that an alien spacecraft crashed in New Mexico in 1947, that populations of plesiosaurs survived in a few scattered lakes around the world (including, of course, Loch Ness), that it was possible to communicate telepathically, that aliens built the pyramids, and so on, and so on... If only there existed some book that could not only explain science at my level, but give me the mental tools to have some sense of what was really science, and what wasn't. Fortunately for inquiring young minds of today, Richard Dawkins has written that book. "The Magic of Reality" has been written in such a clear, simple manner as to be both understood and enjoyed by boys and girls of middle school age, "caught in the middle" as I was, but it's not at all written in a manner as simple as to "talk down to" them. Dawkins explains lucidly and eloquently (and often humorously) such concepts as evolution, the rotation of the planets, prisms, rainbows, the light spectrum, and a few other things that tend to confuse. A typical chapter begins by posing a question (such as "Why are there so many types of animals?"), summarizing a couple of ancient myths about the subject (a deity vomited them up for some reason), and then explaining what science actually says about it (variation and natural selection cause life forms to diverge over time). And not only does Dawkins "set the record straight," so to speak, but he also explains both the nature and importance of skeptical inquiry and how to use critical thinking to interpret a strange event. He gives a few examples along the lines of "X [an extraordinary event] happened. There are three possible explanations for X: 1.) It was a miracle; 2.) It was a coincidence; and 3.) It was a hoax. 3 is more likely than 2, and 2 is more likely than 1. So it probably wasn't a miracle." As I imagine you are fully aware, Dawkins is not one to shy away from controversy. This book is bound

to be controversial, for Dawkins doesn't just debunk those silly old myths of every religion that isn't yours. Adam and Eve and the Tree of Knowledge are in there, as is the story of Noah's Ark (though in its original "Epic of Gilgamesh" form), and one of the extraordinary events broken down into possibilities is the story of Jesus allegedly turning water into wine. But while Dawkins may refute claims of the supernatural, he's actually a proponent of magic - that is, the "magic" of what is real and what can be studied using real science. This is perhaps the most important thing about the book; it instills (even in myself, a "grown up" studying science at the university level) a renewed appreciation for science and a sense of wonder about nature. The universe is fascinating and beautiful all by itself, without any help from fairy tales. In this sense, reality truly is magical. And so is "The Magic of Reality."

The Magic of Reality: How We Know What's Really True by Richard Dawkins

"The Magic of Reality" is the latest contribution by evolutionary-biologist icon Richard Dawkins. Professor Dawkins is on a mission of education and in this enlightening book he reaches a younger audience by introducing science like only he can. In one of the most beautifully illustrated science books, he takes the reader on a ride on a wide-range of topics of interest that masterfully navigates between myth and what is real. This mesmerizing 272-page book is composed of the following twelve chapters: 1. What is reality? What is magic? , 2. Who was the first person? , 3. Why are there so many different kinds of animals? , 4. What are things made of? , 5. Why do we have night and day, winter and summer? , 6. What is the sun? , 7. What is a rainbow? , 8. When and how did everything begin? , 9. Are we alone? , 10. What is an earthquake? , 11. Why do bad things happen? ,and 12. What is a miracle?

Positives:1. A wonderful book on science that is accessible to a younger audience without compromising the science lovers in all of us. Bravo!2. It's a book written by the great Richard Dawkins, so you know the quality goes in before the product goes out.3. A true labor of love. The educator in Professor Dawkins comes out and now even our children will benefit from his prodigious knowledge.4. One of the most beautifully illustrated books you will ever find. Great quality binding only matched by its substance.5. Science knowledge conveyed in a brilliant, lucid manner.6. Great format. In each chapter, Professor Dawkins illustrates clearly the difference between the wishful and what is "really" real.7. What a wonderful way to learn about science. Great practical examples throughout this beautiful book. A ride of knowledge, hop on! Readers of all ages will enjoy this great book.8. Even-handed and pleasant tone throughout.9. A wide range of fascinating science topics in the hands of the master.10. Great wisdom throughout, "We should always be open-minded, but the only good reason to believe that something exists is if there is real evidence that it does".11. The

book cleverly goes from myth to reality.<sup>12</sup> The concept of magic in three tiers: supernatural, stage and poetic.<sup>13</sup> Evolution in the hands of the master. Awesome.<sup>14</sup> Was there ever a first person? Insightful indeed. The best illustrated example I've ever read.<sup>15</sup> Great explanation on DNA.<sup>16</sup> Clever examples throughout, one of the many strengths of this book.<sup>17</sup> A wide range of fascinating science topic in the hands of a master.<sup>18</sup> The three common phases of matter.<sup>19</sup> The importance of the scientific method.<sup>20</sup> The concept of empty space...I finally get it.<sup>21</sup> The importance of carbons, organic chemistry.<sup>22</sup> Telling that there are no myths to describe atoms...<sup>23</sup> So what causes the difference between winter and summer...find out.<sup>24</sup> The illusion of relative movement.<sup>25</sup> The great Isaac Newton. Gravity, lights...we are not worthy.<sup>26</sup> The difference between mass and weight.<sup>27</sup> A great illustration of how far stars are from us.<sup>28</sup> How coal is created.<sup>29</sup> Differences between stars and planets.<sup>30</sup> Energy and the sun.<sup>31</sup> What determines the size of a star? Find out.<sup>32</sup> The epic of Gilgamesh. Interesting.<sup>33</sup> Rainbow as an illusion and how they are formed.<sup>34</sup> Lights as vibrations...I see.<sup>35</sup> Steady state versus the Big Bang theory.<sup>36</sup> How we determine the distance between anything in the universe.<sup>37</sup> How we determine age.<sup>38</sup> Spectral barcoders...neat.<sup>39</sup> Methods for detecting planets.<sup>40</sup> The keys for life on other planets.<sup>41</sup> Plate tectonics illustrated, wonderful.<sup>42</sup> The speed of continents, sea-floor spreading...<sup>43</sup> Myths debunked.<sup>44</sup> Practical explanation for probability.<sup>45</sup> Great examples of evolution...parasites.<sup>46</sup> How the immune system works. Fascinating.<sup>47</sup> Miracles what they are.<sup>48</sup> David Hume's irrefutable logic regarding miracles and many great examples.<sup>49</sup> Absolutely kindles the fire of learning.<sup>50</sup> An excellent gift for all occasions.

Negatives:<sup>1</sup> The book is intended for a younger audience and covers briefly a lot of topics. If you are expecting an in-depth analysis, this is not the book for you.<sup>2</sup> No bibliography.

In summary, a fabulous book for all to enjoy. I usually limit my purchases to Kindle books because of the convenience but I'm glad I was "forced" to buy this book in hardcover binding. It's a beautiful book inside and out. Substance finally matches style and it's a science book for all to enjoy and for years to come. There is a sense of awe, a poetic magic for reality. For all his knowledge, Professor Dawkins is humbled by what little we do know and how much more we need to find out about the world. It's precisely this drive to know more and that hunger for knowledge that I always wanted to convey to my children. Finally, I have a book that expresses my sentiments and I have Richard Dawkins to thank!

This book is excellent and the iPad version is flat out COOL. I've read many remarks in the comments regarding the book being written for older children and being limited; let's please not forget that 40-60 percent of the United States not only rejects evolution, but doesn't possess the

faintest idea of how evolution works. If you have a religious friend that might be curious about science, secular thinking, and even basic reality, or a religious friend that simply can't comprehend how you accept evolution or reject gods and reject myths; then this book might just be the perfect introduction for them. As an ex-religious, quite content atheist parent, this book is an invaluable tool for my children (to understand the world in which we live) and my religious family that struggles with my secular status. As a layperson, I'm not the most qualified candidate to give a dissertation on natural selection, DNA, and breaking down myth versus reality to an audience that is fully entrenched in particular myths. For me, *The Magic Of Reality* is a true gift. Thank you once again, Professor Dawkins.

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