

Critical Mass: How One Thing Leads to Another – Philip Ball (William Heinemann)

This thought-provoking book by one of Britain's leading young science writers, Philip Ball, causes us to examine our own behaviour; whether in buying the new Harry Potter book, voting for a particular party or responding to the lure of advertisers. Philip shows how much we can understand about human behaviour when we cease to try to predict and analyse the behaviour of individuals and instead look to the impact of hundreds, thousands or millions of individual human decisions.

The Ancestor's Tale – Richard Dawkins (Weidenfeld & Nicholson)

The Ancestor's Tale is a pilgrimage back through time - a journey that provides the setting for a collection of some 40 tales, each exploring an aspect of evolutionary biology through the stories of characters met along the way. Together they give a deep understanding of the processes which have shaped life on earth; convergent evolution, the isolation of populations, continental drift and even the great extinctions.

Why Life Speeds Up As You Get Older – Douwe Draaisma (Cambridge University Press)

Where do the long, lazy summers of our childhood go? Why is it that as we grow older time seems to condense, speed up, elude us while in old age significant events from our distant past can seem as vivid and real as what happened yesterday? In the book Douwe Draaisma, author of the acclaimed *Metaphors of Memory*, explores the nature of autobiographical memory and extraordinary phenomena such as *déjà-vu*, the memory feats of idiot-savants or the effects of extreme trauma on memory recall.

Matters of Substance: Drugs and Why Everyone's a User – Griffith Edwards (Penguin (Allen Lane))

Matters of Substance presents a radical approach to the question of drug control. Arguing for a consideration of all drugs – licit and illicit – as more than the sum of their chemical structure, Edwards believes that the effect of a drug is just as dependent on the social setting, historical legacy and psychology of the individual as on any inherent quality of the drug itself. Examining the history of our relationship with the vast array of mind-acting drugs since the 14th Century, he explores why drugs are as important to the global youth culture of the 21st Century as they were in the 14th.

The Long Summer: How Climate Changed Civilization – Brian Fagan (Granta)

From the almost unimaginably hostile climate of the last Ice Age, this book tells the remarkable story of how human history has been influenced by the planet's ever-changing climate. Deploying all the resources of new climatology from the past century, Fagan provides us, for the first time, with an historical context in which to understand the unprecedented global warming of today, as we try to anticipate an uncertain climatic future.

Pandora's Breeches: Women, Science & Power in the Enlightenment – Patricia Fara (Pimlico)

An original and highly readable exploration of the role of women in the history of science, this book looks at how women have not been written *out* of the history of science: they have never been written *in*, according to Fara. If mentioned at all, she argues, women appear in subservient roles as helpless admirers or menial assistants. By re-examining the lives of individuals, Pandora's Breeches explores how women of the 17th and 19th century contributed to the rapid growth of science, setting out a new and compelling version of science's past.

The Earth: An Intimate History – Richard Fortey (HarperCollins)

Richard Fortey introduces us to the earth's distinct character, revealing the life that it leads when humans aren't watching. He follows the continual movement of seabeds, valleys, mountain ranges and ice caps and shows how everything – our culture, natural history, even the formation of our cities – has its roots in geology.

Deep Simplicity: Chaos, Complexity and the Emergence of Life – John Gribbin (Penguin (Allen Lane))

In *Deep Simplicity*, John Gribbin synthesizes, for the first time, concepts of chaos and complexity to show that at the root of the most random behaviour are simple laws of cause and effect. Through the study of chaos and the emergence of complexity from simple systems, scientists are on the brink of unravelling the origins of human life itself and gaining an insight into how life may have evolved on worlds beyond our Solar System.

Aspirin: The Story of a Wonder Drug – Diarmuid Jeffreys (Bloomsbury)

The story of aspirin is one rich in dramatic twists and surprising discoveries. Diarmuid Jeffreys follows the story from the drug's origins in ancient Egypt, through to its industrial development at the end of the 19th century. He also covers the drug's key role in the great flu epidemic of 1918, (that killed more people than World War 1), and its subsequent exploitation by today's pharmaceutical conglomerates.

Status Syndrome – Michael Marmot (Bloomsbury)

This eye-opening book is based on more than 25 years of research into how, across society, there appears a clear correlation between an individual's social status and the state of their health. Michael Marmot's work took him around the world as he puzzled this relationship out, finding similar patterns emerging across the globe where control over our lives and opportunities for full social participation were key factors for good health.

Hippocratic Oaths: Medicine and its Discontents – Raymond Tallis (Atlantic Books)

In this book, Professor Raymond Tallis brings together his diverse intellectual interests to address profoundly important questions about our well-being. *Hippocratic Oaths* blends philosophy with public opinion, polemic and personal experience to bridge the disjunction between the health care we believe we are entitled to expect and the difficult realities of what is possible.

Brainwashing: The Science of Thought Control – Kathleen Taylor (Oxford University Press)

Brainwashing is the first book to combine the latest findings in social psychology and neuroscience to try to understand the incredibly complicated workings of the human brain. In elegant and accessible prose, and with abundant use of anecdotes and case-studies, Turner's fascinating book looks at the ethical problems involved in carrying out the required experiments on humans and animals, and the frightening implications of such research.

The Human Mind – Robert Winston (Bantam Press / Transworld Publishers)

In his accessible and entertaining book - which accompanies a major BBC1 television series - Robert Winston tells us how our senses, emotions, personality, feelings and intelligence, are the result of a ballet of genes and environment that shapes the path of our lives. He explains how memories are formed and lost, how the ever-changing brain is responsible for toddler tantrums, teenage angst, the battle of the sexes, the insights gained from Shakespeare, Pirandello and Larkin and the truth behind extra-sensory perception, déjà vu and out-of-body experiences.