



The Best American Science Writing 2004

Dava Sobel (Editor) , Jesse Cohen (Series Editor)

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Jennifer Kahn's "Stripped for Parts" was selected as the lead story of this year's *Best American Science Writing* because, as Dava Sobel, best-selling author of *Longitude* and *Galileo's Daughter*, reveals, "it begins with one of the most arresting openings I have ever read." In "Columbia's Last Flight," William Langewiesche recounts the February 1, 2003, space shuttle tragedy, along with the investigation into the nationwide complacency that brought the ship down. K. C. Cole's "Fun with Physics" is a profile of astrophysicist Janet Conrad that blends her personal life with professional activity. In "Desperate Measures," the doctor and writer Atul Gawande profiles the surgeon Francis Daniels Moore, whose experiments in the 1940s and '50s pushed medicine harder and farther than almost anyone had contemplated. Also included is a poem by the legendary John Updike, "Mars as Bright as Venus." The collection ends with Diane Ackerman's "ebullient" essay "We Are All a Part of Nature."

Together these twenty-three articles on a wide range of today's most current topics in science -- from biology, physics, biotechnology, and astronomy, to anthropology, genetics, evolutionary theory, and cognition, represent the full spectrum of scientific writing from America's most prominent science authors, proving once again that "good science writing is evidently plentiful" (*Scientific American*).

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Doug says

Yeah, I know it's almost 10 years old...great collection of writing, though. Most impressed with a few articles, one on near-Earth asteroids and extinction, and the following, from Mother Jones, about the Space Shuttle Columbia's Last flight. Outstanding reporting and writing:

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/a...>

Lindee says

I had to read this for my 400 level philosophy capstone seminar because the topic for the class was philosophy of science. It did not explicitly deal with the philosophy of science, but it does shed light on how the non-science folk look at science. It is organized in short essay format and I found all of the essays extremely interesting and fun to read. It's like the reader's digest of Nature!

Adam says

An OK anthology. The two long pieces on astronomy (Tom Bissell on asteroid impacts and William Langewiesche on the Columbia disaster) are by far the best in this collection; everything else is merely good.

Zenpvnk says

Just finished this one yesterday, so now I'm on to the current one...2007... that I just got in the mail... good timing!

I like this series so much I also just ordered the 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2005 editions, used, for 3 bucks each. So, if any of my friends want to try this series, I'm your man, just ask. This one, the 2004 one, is excellent... the story about the Columbia space shuttle disaster was fascinating. It's a shame, it really shouldn't have happened.. it seems it's just that NASA is actually run like your average large corporation, which is to say, it's fucked up, with upper managers with their heads in their asses.

Anyway, yeah... the Best American Science Writing series is for people who like science writing that is actually written well... very little numbers or formulas here, just good writing about interesting topics. I can't wait to start the 2007 ed. on the subway tomorrow morning. :)
