

The Impact of the Gene: From Mendel's Peas to Designer Babies

Colin Tudge



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In the mid-nineteenth century, a Moravian friar made a discovery that was to shape not only the future of science but also that of the human race. With his deceptively simple experiments on peas in a monastery garden in Brno, Gregor Mendel was the first to establish the basic laws of heredity, laws from which the principles of modern genetics can be drawn. In this fascinating account, acclaimed science writer Colin Tudge traces the influence on science of Mendel's extraordinary ideas, from the 1850s to the present day, and goes on to ask what might happen in this century and beyond.

The science of genetics holds the key to an enhanced understanding of the human makeup and allows for new ways of approaching such issues as the prevention of hereditary diseases and the effective conservation of endangered species. But genetic technologies are also instruments of tremendous power, and with this constantly expanding knowledge comes the responsibility of using it wisely. Cloning, genetically engineered crops, the research and results of the Human Genome Project, and the possibility of "designer babies" continue to force challenging choices on society. In *The Impact of the Gene* Colin Tudge provides new and vital insights into the ethics of modern genetics and raises the question of what criteria we must use with regard to this extraordinary and unprecedented power.

A comprehensive and entertaining work that combines scientific history with a compelling discussion of the future trends of genetic technologies, *The Impact of the Gene* examines how the ideas that underpin the spectrum of all genetic issues are interrelated, and proposes that with a basic understanding of Gregor Mendel's theories and discoveries, all modern genetics falls easily into place. From a monastery garden in Brno to the laboratories of the twenty-first century and beyond, *The Impact of the Gene* provides a vital overview of the science of genetics.

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