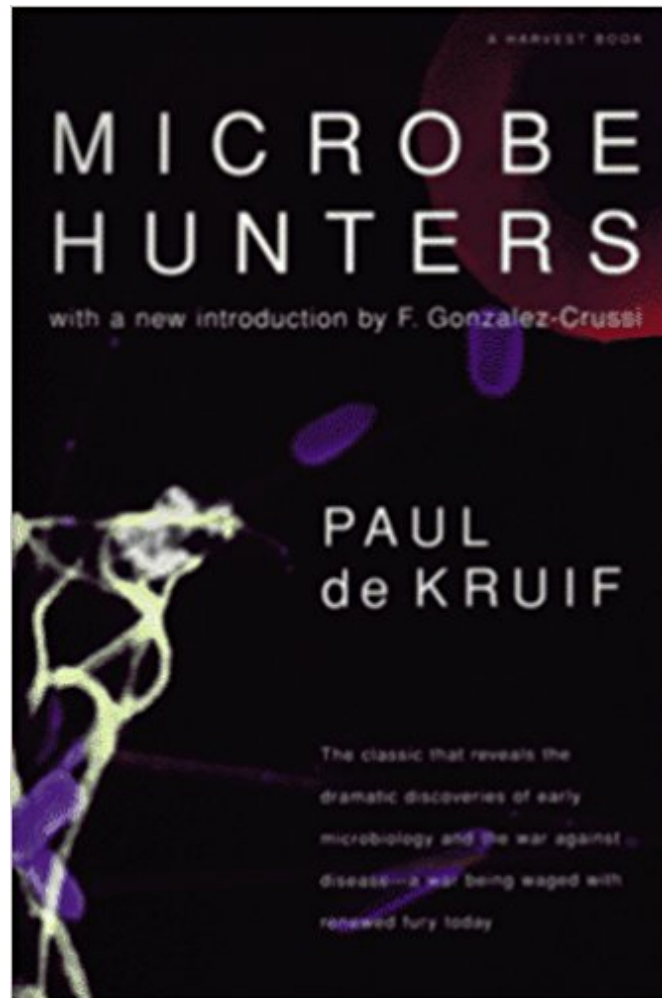




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Microbe Hunters



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Synopsis

In this classic bestseller, Paul de Kruif dramatizes the pioneering bacteriological work of such scientists as Leeuwenhoek, Spallanzani, Koch, Pasteur, Reed, and Ehrlich. This seventieth anniversary edition features a new introduction by F. Gonzalez-Crussi. Index.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Paul de Kruif (1890-1971), a bacteriologist and pathologist, was a prolific author on the subject of medical science. He lived in Michigan and taught for many years at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

The subject is interesting, although the writing is done in a rather florid, old-fashioned style. (It was written in the 1920's, I believe.) So there is the use of some objectionable stereotypes about people from other countries, etc. It was also a bit long-winded in some parts, which is why I deducted 1 star.

I first read this book 56 years ago and I have reread it twice since. This one was a gift for a friend, shipped direct. He says that it arrived quickly and was an uncirculated library copy in perfect condition. My friend is looking forward to reading it too. He will become one of those rare people at a party who knows who invented the microscope, why Pasteur is important yet unfulfilled and what Walter Reed did to get a hospital named after him.

the most interesting book I've read.

Excellent book for all times

Thought it was going to be horribly boring, actually written well, stayed interesting.

I read this book perhaps 50 years ago and found it astounding. I bought this book twice for friends of mine as a gift.

Amazing book. I wish I had read it as a child. It probably romanticizes microbiology a bit, but in the process it makes it quite an enjoyable read. You'll probably want to go out and buy a little microscope and see what got these guys so hooked!

Microbe Hunters Paul De Kruif had a Ph. D. and worked in the bacteriology lab at the University of Michigan medical school. He fell in love and married, leaving the Rockefeller Institute to write articles and books in a new approach to writing about science. He exposed medical hoaxes and frauds, then wrote dramatic biographies of scientific pioneers in a series of best sellers. He collaborated with Sinclair Lewis on the novel *Arrowsmith*. De Kruif writes in an upbeat style, like an advertisement. This 1926 book of 363 pages has a *Contents*, *List of Illustrations*, twelve chapters, and *Index*. Each chapter is a short biography about a pioneer in medicine. There is no chapter on Edward Jenner whose vaccinations prevented smallpox. Chapter I tells about Antony Leeuwenhoek who built the first microscope in 17th century Holland. He discovered the tiny creatures that could not be seen with the naked eye and communicated with the Royal Society in England about his many discoveries. Chapter II tells about Lazzaro Spallanzani in northern Italy who chose to be a scientist rather than a lawyer in the 18th century. His tests disproved Spontaneous Generation. He noted how animalcules divided. Chapter III has the history of Louis Pasteur, the greatest of these 19th century pioneers. There was a problem in making alcohol from sugar beets by fermentation; Pasteur identified yeasts. They made alcohol and came from the air. Heating wine after fermentation kept it from going bad (*pasteurization*). Pasteur investigated the silkworm disease in France and the manufacturing of beer. The English surgeon Lister thanked Pasteur for his work on the germ theory of disease. Robert Koch was a country doctor in Prussia (Chapter IV). Anthrax was a problem for

farmers. Koch identified the bacteria and how they changed into spores to survive. Then he searched for the microbe that caused tuberculosis and killed one-seventh of the population each year. Next he found the microbe that caused cholera. It was caused by infected water or from the soiled linen of victims. Pasteur discovered that an animal that survived anthrax became immune to it (Chapter V). Old microbes did not have the virulence of the originals. This worked with the anthrax microbes. Next they searched for the cause of hydrophobia (a virus not a microbe) and developed an anti-vaccine. Roux and Behring worked to develop an antitoxin against diphtheria (Chapter VI). Elie Metchnikoff wrote about phagocytes, the white blood cells that devoured germs (Chapter VII). Metchnikoff invented calomel ointment to prevent syphilis. Cattle from the north sickened and died when sent to the south (Chapter VIII). Theobald Smith confirmed what farmers knew: ticks caused Texas fever. Dipping cattle in a solution to kill ticks ended Texas fever. David Bruce joined the British Army Medical Service and investigated the causes of disease (Chapter IX). Trypanosomes caused a fatal disease; it was spread by tse-tse flies that bit horses and cattle after biting wild animals. African sleeping sickness killed people in Central Africa. Ronald Ross and Battista Grassi proved that one kind of mosquito spread malaria (Chapter X). Mosquitoes fed on birds and spread malaria by biting. Grassi identified the anopheles as the carrier of malaria. Quinine treated malaria. Fine-meshed screens kept mosquitoes out of houses. Chapter XI tells about Walter Reed's work on Yellow Fever, also spread by mosquitoes. It killed more soldiers than enemy bullets in the Spanish-American War. Human volunteers proved it was caused by mosquitoes. Paul Ehrlich developed a cure for syphilis from an arsenic compound (Chapter XII). He first tried chemical dyes to kill trypanosomes in mice. After many attempts he found a compound that would kill pale spirochetes; and sometimes patients. De Kruif predicts other cures will be found in the future (like "Bayer 205"). Some of the language is dated; it is often too wordy yet lacks details. But is there any book that is better?

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