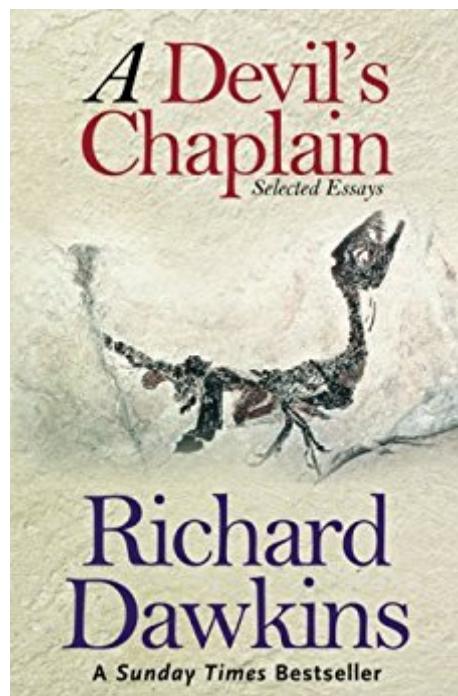


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A Devil's Chaplain: Selected Writings



Synopsis

Richard Dawkins is one of the finest minds in science, and in this superb collection of essays and letters, he demonstrates the depth of his knowledge and the rich variety of his interests. Whether he is examining postmodernism or the Human Genome Project, penning a letter to his daughter, or writing a moving eulogy to Douglas Adams and e-mailing Stephen Jay Gould, Dawkins writes with an intellectual vigour and grace that is second to none. This is a very human collection that shows not only the acuity of Dawkins' scientific mind, but also his sense of humour and the warmth of his relationships with friends and family.

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Customer Reviews

If you don't know Dawkins yet and want to familiarize yourself with his opinions and attitudes, this is the best place to start. It is a broad collection of his usual subjects, treated here in shorter texts. You will meet a convinced neo-Darwinist, an aggressive atheist, a clear, witty and sometimes arrogant writer on mostly scientific issues, a lot of them leaking into general society matters, ethical questions, political assessments, and starting bases for anti-religious tirades (which are usually completely to the point and right). If you know him from his longer books, read this collection of

essays anyway, it doesn't do any damage. I found nothing really new in it (after reading the God Delusion, the Selfish Gene, the Blind Watchmaker, and Climbing Mount Improbable before), but I was happy to find this principal statement: he is a scientific Darwinist, but politically an anti-Darwinist. That needed to be clarified, although it should also be obvious (and although in this short version it looks like a slight on Darwin, which is not intended). He uses the good analogy of the medical researcher who as a scientist understands cancer, and as a practitioner fights it. Or in other words: things are not becoming right by wanting them to be so, or in reverse, they don't become wrong because you don't like them. I can not follow him everywhere though. His comments on "speciecism", as an equivalent of racism, go too far for me. Maybe once the Jurassic Park Authority has reconstructed Lucy, I may change my mind on this, but I am not sure that I will live long enough to witness that.

more like memoirs. you have to know all the literature Dawkins is reviewing to understand what he is talking about!

Richard Dawkins is one of the most influential and controversial essayists of today. A renowned evolutionary biologist, he currently holds the Charles Simonyi Chair at Oxford University. In his book A Devil's Chaplain he brings together 25 years and some of his best and most polemic essays (some previously unpublished) with subjects dealing with everything from love to evolution. He employs his analytical passion to raise some mind-blowing questions and does not back down from challenging what many people consider as fundamental truths. He analyzes very intricate topics and situations through a scientific lens and is able to do it with clarity and simplicity. Although he has been criticized for some strong anti-religious standpoints and instances where his bias affects his writing; I believe that his work, even if you don't agree with it, is worth reading for he definitely makes some very valid points. I believe Richard Dawkins is one of the elite essayist because of his ability to take on such complex beliefs, break it down systematically and with the use of some philosophy prove his point; all while keeping a clear and simple style. He displays mastery in several subjects including, but not restricted to physics, biology and philosophy. This book is divided into seven sections, each with a preamble. These sections are themselves made up of short and varied articles enabling reader is also able to jump from section to section and read different pieces since the order is not overly central. This complemented by his concise style making for a very easy read. This book is not only a great read but it could change the way you think about some of the most basic things in your life and will force you to re-analyze several aspects of today's society. I

trust that this book made me a more knowledgeable person and taught me to question everything, extending to the things society considers self evident. My favorite article titled "Trial by Jury" scientifically analyzes the system of trial by jury. This is a system in which the vast majority of the world ardently believes in, and is regarded as the closest humanly possible method of reaching justice. Growing up in America I was a firm believer that it was the ultimate system but after having read the article, in which Dawkins makes some undeniable points against it, I have come to question this system. However, this is the same reaction I had to many of his other articles where he questions things such as truth, religion, and the existence of god. It is definitely a great introduction to anyone that is interested in Richard Dawkins work. It is one of his more concise pieces in which he reaches concert solutions, and a great prologue to his more intricate and ideological works.

A collection of essays on a variety of subjects, some of which I found interesting, others not so much. Best part of the book is the chapter devoted to his daughter, whom he advises to maintain her sense of wonder when learning new things. A lesson that can apply to all of us.

Excellent read, much, much to learn from here. Please keep an open mind, the information in this book is highly thought out and delivered by one of our smartest individuals on our planet today. Will elevate your intellect.

Usually Dawkins is too scholarly for me, but this one is full of short takes on many subjects. I love his aggressive stance on evolution and what his experience has been through his lifetime with organized religion. I was especially drawn to the letter he writes to his (at that time) 10-year old daughter about how to tell the difference between myth and fact. I wish very, very much someone would have written me that letter when I was a young girl.

The book is a series of essays collected from various previous publications. Some are fairly lengthy, which is good, if you have a lot say. As usual I find Dawkins to be a very good writer and that his material is not filled with superfluous words and ideas. One reason I love to read his books is that he more often than not has ideas that I would never have come up with on my own. I find that I almost always agree with him, probably because I view him as a smart and extremely well educated professor.

Dawkins' writing touches upon so many subjects in this volume. There's plenty here for the

scientists, but also something for the humanities and the philosophers. Lucid as ever, often moving, each piece will make you think.

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