



Missing Links: In Search of Human Origins

John Reader

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This is the story of the search for humanity's origins--from the Middle Ages, when questions of the earth's antiquity first began to arise, through to the latest genetic discoveries that show the interrelatedness of all living creatures.

Central to the story is the part played by fossils--first, in establishing the age of the Earth; then, following Darwin, in the pursuit of possible "Missing Links" that would establish whether or not humans and chimpanzees share a common ancestor. John Reader's lifelong passion for this quest--palaeoanthropology--began when he reported on the celebrated "Lucy" finds in Ethiopia, for *Life Magazine*. Drawing on both historic and recent research, he tells the fascinating story of the science as it has developed from the activities of a few dedicated individuals, into the rigorous multidisciplinary work of today. His arresting photographs give a unique insight into the fossils, the discoverers, and the settings. His vivid narrative reveals both the context in which our ancestors evolved, and also the realities confronting the modern scientist. The story he tells is peopled by eccentrics and enthusiasts, and punctuated by controversy and even fraud. It is a celebration of discoveries--*Neanderthal Man* in the 1850s, *Java Man* (1891), *Australopithecus* (1925), *Peking Man* (1926), *Homo habilis* (1964) and beyond. It is a story of fragmentary shards of evidence, and the competing interpretations built upon them. And it is a tale of scientific breakthroughs--dating technology, genetics and molecular biology--that have enabled us to set the fossil evidence in the context of human evolution.

Boasting seventy-five original color photographs--taken by the author, specifically for this book--*Missing Links* offers a wealth of scientific insight.

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