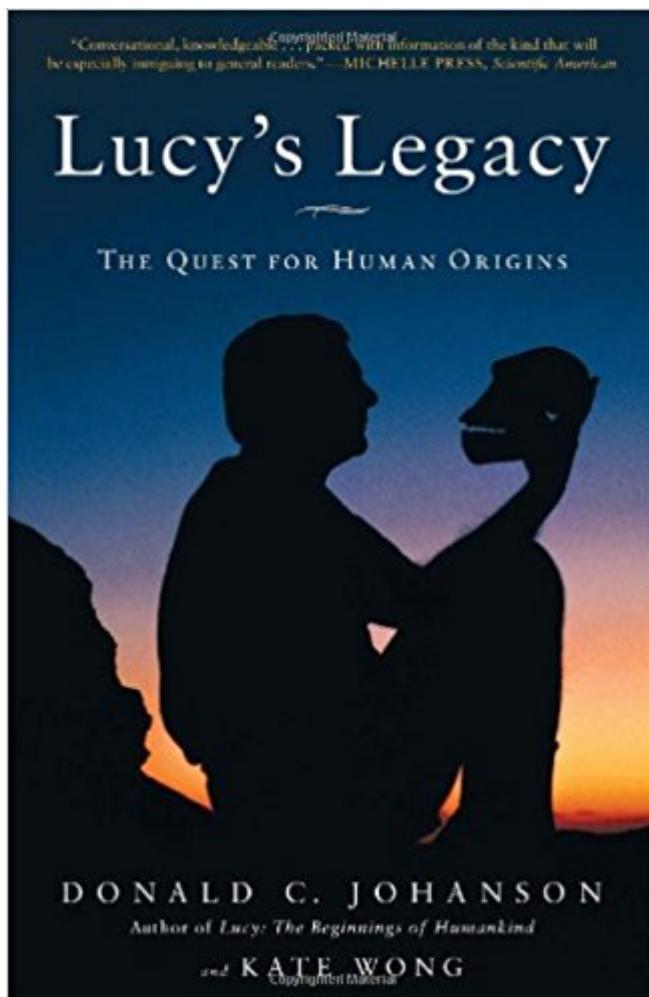


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# Lucy's Legacy: The Quest For Human Origins



## Synopsis

“Lucy is a 3.2-million-year-old skeleton who has become the spokeswoman for human evolution. She is perhaps the best known and most studied fossil hominid of the twentieth century, the benchmark by which other discoveries of human ancestors are judged.” From Lucy’s LegacyIn his New York Times bestseller, *Lucy: The Beginnings of Humankind*, renowned paleoanthropologist Donald Johanson told the incredible story of his discovery of a partial female skeleton that revolutionized the study of human origins. Lucy literally changed our understanding of our world and who we come from. Since that dramatic find in 1974, there has been heated debate and most important more groundbreaking discoveries that have further transformed our understanding of when and how humans evolved. In *Lucy’s Legacy*, Johanson takes readers on a fascinating tour of the last three decades of study—the most exciting period of paleoanthropologic investigation thus far. In that time, Johanson and his colleagues have uncovered a total of 363 specimens of *Australopithecus afarensis* (Lucy’s species, a transitional creature between apes and humans), spanning 400,000 years. As a result, we now have a unique fossil record of one branch of our family tree—that family being humanity—a tree that is believed to date back a staggering 7 million years. Focusing on dramatic new fossil finds and breakthrough advances in DNA research, Johanson provides the latest answers that post-Lucy paleoanthropologists are finding to questions such as: How did *Homo sapiens* evolve? When and where did our species originate? What separates hominids from the apes? What was the nature of Neandertal and modern human encounters? What mysteries about human evolution remain to be solved? Donald Johanson is a passionate guide on an extraordinary journey from the ancient landscape of Hadar, Ethiopia—where Lucy was unearthed and where many other exciting fossil discoveries have since been made—to a seaside cave in South Africa that once sheltered early members of our own species, and many other significant sites. Thirty-five years after Lucy, Johanson continues to enthusiastically probe the origins of our species and what it means to be human. From the Hardcover edition.

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## Customer Reviews

Johanson (Lucy: The Beginnings of Humankind), the paleoanthropologist who in 1974 discovered the famed 3.2-million-year-old hominid named Lucy, and Scientific American editor Wong delve deeply into the significance of Lucy, her probable ancestors and her probable successors, including modern humans. The authors capture the curiosity, passion and excitement that Johanson and his colleagues bring to their research, as well as the mundane, backbreaking aspects of fieldwork. Wong and Johanson are also expert at framing the science that informs judgments about what defines a hominid species, such as brain size, the ability to walk upright and facial structure. They probe the equally important question of what drove human evolution, examining three major approaches: a social model, a dietary model and an environmental model. Johanson is adept at framing the debates within his famously contentious discipline, ranging from fundamental questions about the fossil record to theories of early human migration, the fate of the Neanderthals and the controversy over the highly publicized recent discovery of fossil "hobbits" on the Indonesian archipelago. The writing is accessible, especially considering the challenging nature of the science that shapes our understanding of human evolution. (Mar.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

\*Starred Review\* Johanson's fourth book trading on the Beatles-derived name he gave the famous fossil he found in 1974 well complements the second edition of *From Lucy to Language* (2006), in particular. That book was 50 percent different from its 10-years-older original state because of the further revolutionary changes wrought in hominid paleontology by several very recent discoveries that Johanson devotes most of the latter two-thirds of this book to explaining. The first third recounts his return to Ethiopia's Hadar region in 1980 after a hiatus necessitated by political turmoil in the East African nation. Very engaging, thanks perhaps to popular scientific

journalist Wong, it communicates the poignancy of Johanson's occasionally nerve-racking return to the birthplace of his career with something of the verve and suspense of an Indiana Jones movie. Hooked by that adventurous beginning, and introduced to many of the figures whose work preoccupies what follows, many will continue with the book's real meat, which implicatively but not literally argues that far from there being no missing link between apes and humans, there are several, complicatedly related, with more being found and likely to be found in the foreseeable future. --Ray Olson --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A terrific read if you have read Johanson's first book "Lucy." Once again he has found a co-writer (Kate Wong) who helped him construct a highly readable narrative on a subject some might fear is dull. While reading I developed an appreciation for how difficult it is to find specimen in paleoanthropology, and how much work it can be to construct the human family tree from the few shards of bone they locate. I never understood that a good excavation site requires geologists, paleontologist, and possibly archeologists all working as a team to put the story together. I enjoyed these two books so much that I have since decided to subscribe to Scientific American magazine.

Lucy's Legacy was written by the paleoanthropologist Donald Johanson who was involved in the discovery of the Lucy female skeleton. Kate Wong is listed as a co-author. Lucy is of the *Australopithecus afarensis* species. This species is dated to about 3.2 million years ago. Johanson provides an in depth narrative of the events that led up to the discovery of this specimen, and I found this narrative to be quite interesting. The first eight chapters are devoted to this story, but it is more than this. In these chapters, you will learn what it is like first hand to be a paleoanthropologist working in the field. It certainly does not seem to be a bed of roses. There is a lot of hard work, searing temperatures endured in tropical African areas, and many dangers encountered from rival ethnic clans engaged in constant fighting for whatever reasons they fight. While reading this account, you will also learn a bit about the lingo used in the field. The next section covers the dawn of humankind and some of the other early hominids prevalent in this same period such as, *A. anamensis*, the Robust australopithecines, *Kenyanthropus platyops*, and *Australopithecus garhi*. The front and back inside covers of the book display a nice chronological chart of all the hominid species and their relations. I found myself referring time and again to this chart as I read the book - a nice touch. The final section of the book discusses the homo genus including *Homo habilis*, *Homo rudolfensis*, and *Homo ergaster*. We learn about the population at Dmanisi (an area populated by hominids that left Africa), the hobbits of Flores (*H. floresiensis*) and the mysteries surrounding them,

and, of course, no discussion of the subject is complete without talking about the Neandertals (*H. neanderthalensis*). I found the final chapter very interesting. It was about the rise of *Homo sapiens*. Johanson discussed the "big bang" that occurred about 40,000 years ago when we see a sudden rise in sophisticated weapons, art, and music - a general intellectual burst of sorts. Johanson tries to make the point that some believe this may have more of a cultural revolution than a big bang. He provides many examples of advanced tool making and the use of substances such as red ochre used in body painting as evidence that humans displayed advanced skills prior to this. I think more study is needed in this area. Overall I found this book a good read. It gives an interesting insight into what Paleoanthropology is all about and the state of our knowledge base on the subject.

I am an avid reader on human evolution and a die hard evolutionist! This book has been fun to read as well as very informative on aspects of the human fossil record, its finding, the people that did the discoveries and their interpretation on the fossil record. Our evolutionary history is far from a settled subject, and the controversies are still to be resolved, so not all points made in Donald Johanson's book are to be taken as final. But his narrative is not pretentious and points out several of the points still under debate. I recommend it strongly to all interested in our origins and a good book.

A little dated, but some very good information in it.

A great read and a good primer for what has been discovered over the last few years. I just wish that Tim White had published his findings on Ardi before Don wrote this book. I would like to read his take on it. I was in college in the early 70's and I must say that just about every course I ever took could be taught the same way today. Basic Chemistry, Math, English, etc. will never change. However, the course I took in Prehistory turns out to be at least 50% wrong! How delightful. They have discovered so much more since that time and there is so much more to be discovered. I wonder what that course will look like 100 years from now. Maybe 50% is wrong now. But it's fun to watch. My only disappointment was the number of photographs in the book. There was room for many more. Read this book, continue your education, and stay tuned. There is so much more to come.

I loved this book. I read it recently and I knew some of it was wrong but I loved it anyway. So what if we really do have Neanderthal DNA

This book is an amazing journey through time! From where we came from to where we are and how we evolved to be as diverse as we are. This diversity even though we are one in actuality. This has excited my granddaughter to want more books on this area of study, and of course I have always been interested and have read much about this subject.

For anyone who wanted to get some deep knowledge about anthropology this will be disappointment. It covers mostly journeys and behind stories of several expeditions after the first discovery of Lucy.

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