



Seven Skeletons: The Evolution of the World's Most Famous Human Fossils

Lydia Pyne

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An irresistible journey of discovery, science, history, and myth making, told through the lives and afterlives of seven famous human ancestors

Over the last century, the search for human ancestors has spanned four continents and resulted in the discovery of hundreds of fossils. While most of these discoveries live quietly in museum collections, there are a few that have become world-renowned celebrity personas—ambassadors of science that speak to public audiences. In *Seven Skeletons*, historian of science Lydia Pyne explores how seven such famous fossils of our ancestors have the social cachet they enjoy today.

Drawing from archives, museums, and interviews, Pyne builds a cultural history for each celebrity fossil—from its discovery to its afterlife in museum exhibits to its legacy in popular culture. These seven include the three-foot tall “hobbit” from Flores, the Neanderthal of La Chapelle, the Taung Child, the Piltdown Man hoax, Peking Man, *Australopithecus sediba*, and Lucy—each embraced and celebrated by generations, and vivid examples of how discoveries of how our ancestors have been received, remembered, and immortalized.

With wit and insight, Pyne brings to life each fossil, and how it is described, put on display, and shared among scientific communities and the broader public. This fascinating, endlessly entertaining book puts the impact of paleoanthropology into new context, a reminder of how our past as a species continues to affect, in astounding ways, our present culture and imagination.

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