

NOTEWORTHY

HONORABLE MENTION

11.11.2025

I had been at previous HUGO meetings where just by alphabetic order WJST followed WAT-SON. But I had never been happy about that ... Here are two obituaries on Jim Watson, the first is [Titan of science with tragic flaws](#) in Science

Nathaniel Comfort, a science historian at Johns Hopkins University who early in his career worked as a writer at CSHL, is completing a biography of Watson, which he has been researching for more than a decade. The working title is American Icarus, a reference to hubris. “Watson was the most important and most famous scientist of the 20th century, and the most infamous of the 21st, and in both cases, the reason is due to his genetic determinism,” says Comfort, who says his subject was guilty of “over believing in the power of DNA.”

And another from one of my favorite blogs [Lionel Pachter](#). The official CSHL release is crossed out here

~~As an author, Watson wrote two books at Harvard that were and remain best sellers. The textbook Molecular Biology of the Gene, published in 1965 (7th edition, 2020), changed the nature of science textbooks, and its style was widely emulated.~~

In this textbook Watson got the central dogma wrong, presenting it in a profoundly misleading way. (source: Matthew Cobb, 2024).

~~The Double Helix (1968) was a sensation at the time of publication. Watson's account of the events that resulted in the elucidation of the structure of DNA remains controversial, but still widely read.~~

Prior to the publication of The Double Helix, Francis Crick wrote that “If you publish your book now, in the teeth of my opposition, history will condemn you”. Watson published the book anyway (source: letter by Francis Crick, 1967) .

Nevertheless last week I had an honorable encounter with the esteemed colleague Peter Wilmshurst commenting also at PubPeer [on a trial that went wrong](#).

Wilmshurst is one of the real heroes in an era where an entire generation of scientists is in [danger of sinking into the mud](#).

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