



Creations Of Fire: Chemistry's Lively History From Alchemy To The Atomic Age

Cathy Cobb , Harold Goldwhite

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In this fascinating history, Cathy Cobb and Harold Goldwhite celebrate not only chemistry's theories and breakthroughs but also the provocative times and personalities that shaped this amazing science and brought it to life. Throughout the book, the reader will meet the hedonists and swindlers, monks and heretics, and men and women laboring in garages and over kitchen sinks who expanded our understanding of the elements and discovered such new substances as plastic, rubber, and aspirin. Creations of Fire expands our vision of the meaning of chemistry and reveals the oddballs and academics who have helped shape our world.

Creations Of Fire: Chemistry's Lively History From Alchemy To The Atomic Age Details

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Yazeed AlMogren says

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Mike says

Good book. Has places that the depth is really outstanding. The development of chemistry was really a transformation of "magick" and the desires of men for life, strength, fortune into a desire to understand the natural world and how it behaves.

It was not an easy path. Along the way some very clever people took some very interesting, and at times, understandable wrong turns as they attempted to capture the hidden nature of compounds, elements, and their structure and interactions.

The greats you learned of in high school chemistry are here, as well as the near-greats that often get left out of such cursory histories. There were places where I personally hope for more details, but overall I liked how the author assembled the facts and personalities. She did a great job researching this book and in most places took concepts that are difficult to explain and made them clear, if not easier to comprehend.

Joshua says

Interesting and easy to read overview of the history of chemistry. Found it after seeing a reference to the role of alchemists in the Scientific Revolution in junior high history textbook. The early sections on alchemy were really spot on to what I was wondering about. The middle portion about the early 1700s and the beginning of chemistry proper was a little hard to follow because I kept wondering about the actual science that was being glossed over. The final section about more modern chemistry was easier to read mostly because of my familiarity with the subjects being discussed from chemistry classes I have taken. The bits of word play and humor are nice if not really necessary. The authors pay specific attention to the role of women throughout chemical history.

Sam Anderson says

This thick book, thankfully broken down into snack-size sections and subsections, thoroughly explores the state of scientific knowledge and thought all of history, across the world. I wouldn't encourage reading it cover to cover, but I had a blast reading the early history -- European alchemy, sure, but also medicinal science in Africa and South America, metalworking in Asia, and more. It's definitely eurocentric, but it does try to push beyond it. The short sections make it easy to flip through pages until you see a header you like and start there, but there's enough connectivity between the passages that I found myself joyfully down a rabbit whole more often than not.

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Sienna says

Part 1 only. Really quite helpful as my background in chemistry is limited to a whirlwind summer class for high school credit just over a decade ago. The writing is nothing special, but it's clear and compelling and even offered a couple of decent leads. Not bad, local library.

So Hakim says

A 'nuggety' history of chemistry with barebone socio-political context. Why 'nuggety?' Because this book is - in a way -- "A Book of Sections". You read a chapter, get the overarching theme, and right after that: sketches of characters/events/relevant historical stuff.

Now I don't mean to say the book is bad: it's actually **very** good. Indeed there are refreshing stories of quirky characters including alchemists, scribes, and even translators (!).

The advancement of science wasn't just done by scientists in their labs. It was also done by people copying, translating, and sheltering the valuable manuscripts.

Plenty of direct quotes really helps to illuminate what the (al)chemists actually thought and believed.

All in all a satisfying book. Presentation could have been smoother, though.

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Heather says

This was a great, easy to understand, relatable introduction to the history of chemistry. As a novice, I found it the perfect way to get myself excited about this summer's intensive chemistry courses, and I felt like it was a great introduction to some of the basic principles of chemistry without being the sort of heavy-handed literature that is often found in textbooks. Creations of Fire should be on the reading list for anyone with a casual interest in chemistry, and now that I am finished with it I will be passing it on to my husband so that he can read it as well. It made science exciting, made the journey of chemistry-related developments easy to

follow in logical sequence, and made it easier to understand where the basic building blocks of chemistry are happening in every person's life, every day. I'm so glad I picked this up (by chance) at the local library, and now I'm waiting for the copy I bought. It's not the most recent book in the world, perhaps, since it only covers chemistry research through the early 1900s, but it's still a great introduction and a wonderfully easy read.

Marshall Hiatt says

An informative non-fiction that reads like a novel. If you want to understand human history, read this book. If you want to understand chemicals, drugs or technology, read this book.

Don't write religious notes over the text and on the margins please, though. That's what the previous owner of my copy did.

John Anthony Smith says

Very well paced book covering chemistry from metallurgy, discover and use of dyes, organic and inorganic chemistry, discovery of elements, quantum physics to nuclear fission and fusion to the current chemistry development. It was a very interesting book and well worth reading.

J.ruzhyo says

A wonderful tale about the advancement of chemistry and the primary players involved. Great for those that are interested more in chemical history and have some background knowledge of chemical processes. On an editorial note the book has a white-space issue that makes difficult to read. Content was excellent and the references can help guide budding chemistry to further inquiries.

Torleif Villmones says

Excellent book!! It described the history of chemistry in a fascinating way :P!

Alex says

If you love chemistry, or history, or both, then I would highly recommend this book. While it took a while to read, it was the most intensive book I have read on the history of chemistry. Although it only covers up to the 1950s, it makes it quite clear how chemistry has changed over time and how it has influenced society, politics, industry, and technology. I highly recommend reading this book for those who love science or history. It might be a bit dry or "too much" for the casual reader.

Smellsofbikes says

Enormous amounts of information, filled with dry wit and subtle puns, discussing the entire history and development of chemistry. Filled with funny asides and details and an interesting view of history and politics.
