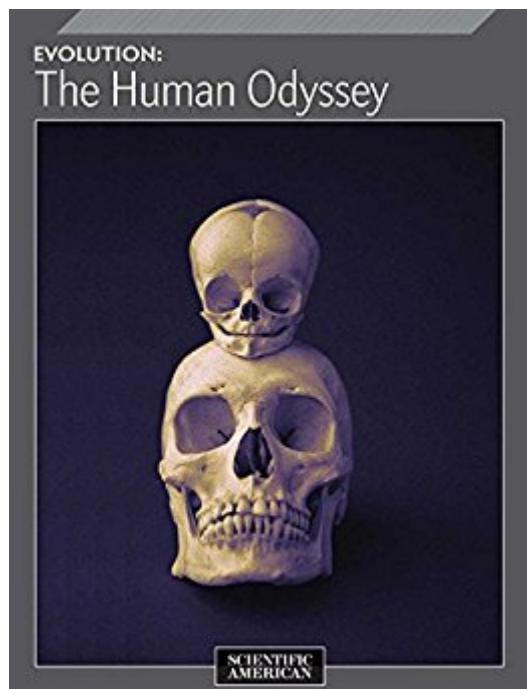


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Evolution: The Human Odyssey



Synopsis

The complex story of human evolution is a tale seven million years in the making. Each new discovery adds to or revises our story and our understanding of how we came to be the way we are. In this eBook, *The Human Odyssey*, we explore the evolution of those characteristics that make us human. The first section, “Where We Came From” looks at our family tree and why some branches survived and not others. Swings in climate are emerging as a factor in what traits succeeded and failed, as we see in “Climate Shocks”; meanwhile in “Human Hybrids,” DNA analyses show that *Homo sapiens* interbred with other human species, which played a key role in our survival. Section Two, “What Makes Us Special,” examines those traits that separate us from other primates. Recent data indicate that our hairless skin was important to the rise of other human features, and other research is getting closer to illuminating how humans became monogamous, as shown in “The Naked Truth” and “Powers of Two,” respectively. In the final section, “Where We Are Going,” we speculate on the future of human evolution in a world where advances in technology, medicine and other areas protect us from harmful factors like disease, causing some scientists to claim that humans are no longer subject to natural selection and our evolution has ceased. Far from that, in “Still Evolving,” author John Hawks discusses how humans have evolved rapidly over the past 30,000 years, as seen in relatively recent traits like blue eyes or lactose tolerance, why such rapid evolution has been possible and what future generations might look like. Like us, our story will continue to evolve.

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