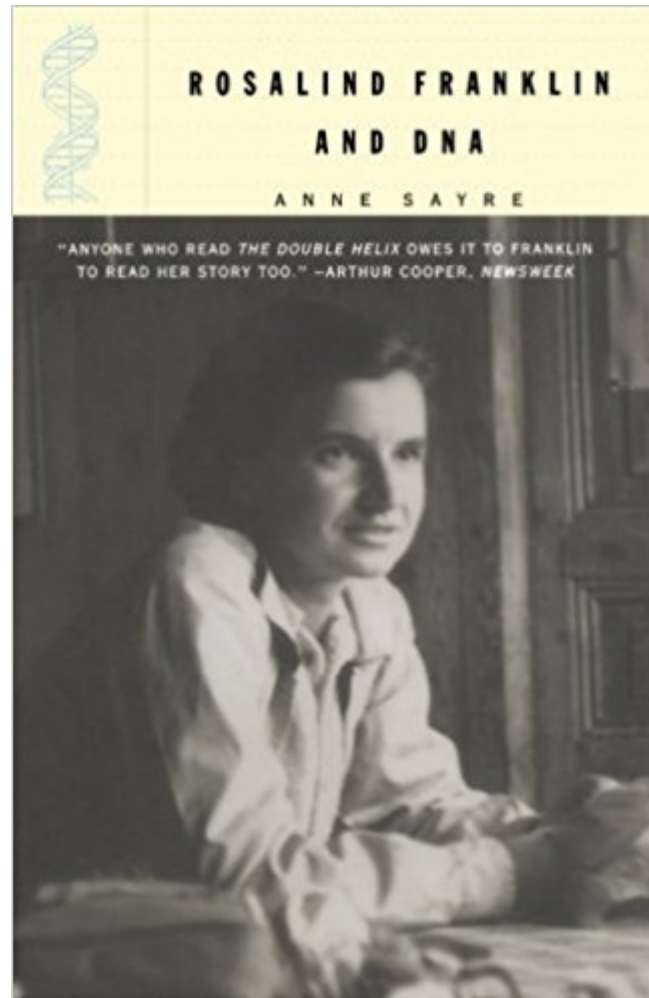




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# Rosalind Franklin And DNA



## Synopsis

Rosalind Franklin's research was central to the discovery of the double-helix structure of DNA. She never received the credit she was due during her lifetime. In this classic work Anne Sayre, a journalist and close friend of Franklin, puts the record straight. Photographs

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Anyone who read The Double Helix owes it to Franklin to read her story too. -- Newsweek

Anne Sayre was a well-known journalist and a close friend of Rosalind Franklin's.

Dear Readers I really like this book for a number of reasons. But it is a story that makes me feel quite sorry and kind of sad or disappointed. I believe the facts as reported in the book are fairly accurate and that's not really the problem of course but what concerns me most is the nature of the tragedy this story describes. The disappointment here is that we didn't know the facts earlier. And there's no way to go back and right the wrong or "fix the thing". I am probably a hopeless romantic. But that is how I feel about this case. This person Rosalind Franklin was as described in this book as someone who I would have liked to have known. I used to often chat with a female crystallographer when I was in undergraduate physics and quite often I shared with her my observations about people in physics and she often shared with me what it was like for her working as a Post Doc in crystallography. She later moved away and some years after that I read the

"Double Helix"...I don't think I finished it at that time but I do remember "Rosalind" as she was portrayed in that book and I compared that portrayal to my friend who had been doing crystallography and I wondered what was going on. That was about 1977 or thereabouts. And I didn't really care about the whole affair or DNA at the time until much later when I was actually thrown into Biophysics quite by accident. And then my own research in DNA took off. And as I began to learn more about DNA I began to take note of all the many different books which had been coming out talking about the discovery and talking about Rosalind Franklin. Actually a lot of the discoveries of these various books was done browsing .com. I began to get curious about what was going on or what had been going on with regard to the discovery of the structure of DNA. What was the difference between these "official versions" (Watson et al.) and now these "unofficial versions" of the story. I wish that the circumstances had been different for Rosalind. We lost a beautiful person and a great crystallographer.....and I wish she could have had the recognition that she was certainly worthy of. (actually we've lost many great minds in science to cancer.....doesn't that strike you as odd?) The way to resolve the apparent contradiction between this book and say Watson's accounts is to simply realize that the DNA work was under strict government control. There was no "intellectual freedom" that Watson and his guys would like us to believe. Government control is not talked about in Anne Sayre's book. She is trying to look at it in a different way....that there are "rules of conduct" in science and that there is/should be some kind of honor system...I agree with her but that didn't apply to this DNA story....it was a government "setup" from the beginning.sjwp.s. as reported in the book her list of citations for X-ray work in viruses inter alia is quite exceptional

OK, so it's probably a little biased because it's clear that the author was close friends with Ms Franklin, but nonetheless, it painted a very interesting picture of the woman who made many contributions to the scientific field, and who alas, received very little recognition for her work. Certainly James Watson who wrote [The Double Helix] appeared to discredit Ms Franklin almost every time he mentions her, even going so far as giving her a diminutive nickname of 'Rosy'. This book attempts to not just describe Rosalind's drive in challenging herself and others around her, but delves also into her impressive family history, and through that, we start to see how Rosalind's character was shaped. Her confidence and penchant for discussions, even her enjoyment of dissenting opinions, was sometimes perceived by other less confident individuals as arrogance. She unfortunately, lived in a time when women were merely tolerated but hardly respected in her chosen fields in England. It was only during her years in Paris that she appeared to be at her happiest, where the environment of enthusiastic discussions and information sharing was, for her, simply

ideal. If her environment at King's College had been similar to what she experienced in Paris, it is thought she may have broken the DNA code much sooner. Instead, apart from a student, she worked in isolation. If not for the copious and detailed notes she took and which survived her, we would not have known how far she had come in her DNA research. Once Crick and Watson had published their paper on DNA, Rosalind, not only wasn't bitter, but she wrote a supporting paper that displayed her delight in the beauty and perfection of the model.

How did I make it through college and graduate level biology courses without knowing Rosalind Franklin's story? I only remember some small talk by some of my fellow classmates that Watson and Crick couldn't have solved the puzzle of DNA without her data. I knew she used x-ray crystallography, didn't know that she considered herself, first and foremost a physical chemist. I knew she was British, I didn't know she was a Jewess and that her family had connections with some prominent Zionist leaders. Her story is amazing. All girls considering a career in science should read this book, talk about sexism. I love her personality and attitude. She was steady and focussed, she had no idea that Maurice Wilkins, her equal in the lab, took her pictures out of her desk and shared them with Watson and Crick. She had no inkling that there was a contest. This book is written by her friend who no doubt was hurt by some of the things that Watson wrote about her in his much acclaimed *Double Helix*. Anne Sayre refutes Watson's claim, "This is how science is done." Their friend Aaron Klug's comment about Rosalind "What she touched, she adorned," is the more noble way of doing science. I thoroughly enjoyed this book, learned about it from an friend's review. One cannot read *The Double Helix* without reading this side of the story. Rosalind died a decade before the Nobel prize was awarded to Watson and Crick at the age of 37. I love Rosalind's character, what an example to young girls studying science.

This book deals with one of the most significant discoveries of the century, the structure of DNA. In doing so, it captures science, culture, personalities, and interpersonal relations. Anyone who thinks science is objective will learn that it is not. The author gets her science right, and in doing so tells a riveting and often personally tragic story. She is able to look from the viewpoints of many researchers of the time at Rosalyn Franklin's life and at the contribution that she made. I am buying another copy for my laboratory.

Vivid account of how credit was stolen from Ms. Franklin because she was a woman!

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