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Microbiology Today: Book Reviews:

ROSALIND FRANKLIN. THE DARK LADY OF DNA

Brenda Maddox

Harper Collins (2002)

Brenda Maddox' new biography aims to defend Rosalind Franklin, as much from the caricature-like presentation in Watson's book *The Double Helix*, as from her subsequent appropriation as feminist icon and to recover the full story of her life, from her up-bringing in a large, tightly-knit Jewish family in London to her premature death from cancer, at the time when she was heading a successful virus structure research group at Birkbeck College. A strong feature of Maddox' skilful narration are abstracts from Franklin's own vivid letters sent from an early age to family and friends. The nitty-gritty of science, although a central part of Franklin's daily life in the laboratory, finds less space in these letters and in Maddox' account, which clearly addresses a non-scientific readership. But this is hardly a drawback of the book as conceived. To the contested events surrounding Watson and Crick's presentation of the double-helical model of DNA Maddox brings an even-handed approach, although she leaves no doubt that Franklin was denied the credit she deserved. Fascinating to read, the book is destined to open rather than to close discussions on one of the most celebrated scientific events of the twentieth century.

Soraya de Chadarevian, Cambridge University

£20.00

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In 1962, Maurice Wilkins, Francis Crick, and James Watson received the Nobel Prize, but it was Rosalind Franklin's data and photographs of DNA that led to their discovery. Brenda Maddox tells a powerful story of a remarkably single-minded, forthright, and tempestuous young woman who, at the age of fifteen, decided she was going to be a scientist, but who was airbrushed out of the greatest scientific discovery of the twentieth century. What people are saying - Write a review. Franklin was a renowned scientist in her own right, she established her reputation in X-ray photography starting with coal and moving onto viruses and DNA. She was a feisty character, and in her Read full review. Includes bibliographical references (p. 353-367) and index. Once in Royal David's City -- 'Alarmingly clever' -- Once a Paulina -- Never surrender -- Holes in coal -- Woman of the Left Bank -- Seine v. Strand -- What is life? -. - Joining the circus -- Such a funny lab -- Undeclared race -- Eureka and goodbye -- Escaping notice -- Acid next door -- O my America -- New friends, new enemies -- Postponed departure -- Private health, public health -- Clarity and perfection -- Epilogue; life after death. In March 1953, Maurice Wilkins of King's College, London, announced the dep Rosalind Franklin was best known for pioneering the use of X-ray diffraction and her major role in the discovery of the structure of DNA. According to author Brenda Maddox in her 2002 book titled Rosalind Franklin: The Dark Lady of DNA, James was amazed by what he saw. When Watson saw the photo, he apparently said: "My jaw fell open and my pulse began to race.". From this groundbreaking photograph, he and Crick would quickly realize it must have a double helix structure. Pipped at the post. Both Crick and Watson would go on to base their famous model on the photo that Rosalind Franklin captured. They published their findings in March of 1953 much to the acclaim of the scientific community. The two would later win the N