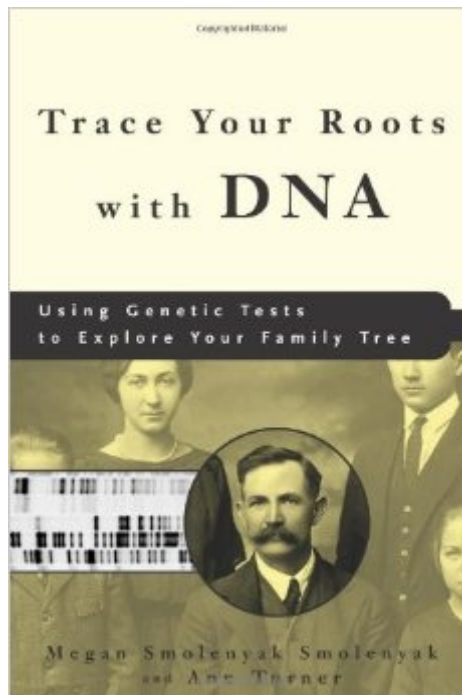


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Trace Your Roots With DNA: Using Genetic Tests To Explore Your Family Tree



Synopsis

Written by two of the country's top genealogists, *Trace Your Roots with DNA* is the first book to explain how new and groundbreaking genetic testing can help you research your ancestry. According to American Demographics, 113 million Americans have begun to trace their roots, making genealogy the second most popular hobby in the country (after gardening). Enthusiasts clamor for new information from dozens of subscription-based websites, email newsletters, and magazines devoted to the subject. For these eager roots-seekers looking to take their searches to the next level, DNA testing is the answer. After a brief introduction to genealogy and genetics fundamentals, the authors explain the types of available testing, what kind of information the tests can provide, how to interpret the results, and how the tests work (it doesn't involve digging up your dead relatives). It's inexpensive, easy to do, and the results are accurate: It's as simple as swabbing the inside of your cheek and popping a sample in the mail. Family lore has it that a branch of our family emigrated to Argentina and now I've found some people there with our name. Can testing tell us whether we're from the same family? My mother was adopted and doesn't know her ethnicity. Are there any tests available to help her learn about her heritage? I just discovered someone else with my highly unusual surname. How can we find out if we have a common ancestor? These are just a few of the types of genealogical scenarios readers can pursue. The authors reveal exactly what is possible-and what is not possible-with genetic testing. They include case studies of both famous historical mysteries and examples of ordinary folks whose exploration of genetic genealogy has enabled them to trace their roots.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Millions of Americans have become hooked on genealogy, the science or study of family descent. The popularity of pursuing one's ancestors through tracing one's roots backward generation by generation has soared since the advent of the Internet, which made it possible to rapidly search the world for even remote family members and set up family websites, and the creation of special computer software which enables anyone to use the power of the computer to trace his or her domestic roots. Now it is possible to go to the next level of searching one's family tree through the availability of DNA testing. And that is what this book, "Trace Your Roots with DNA," is all about. Co-author Megan Smolenyak Smolenyak (no, that's not a typo!) has been an eager genealogist for more than thirty years, is an authority on family history research, and was the lead researcher for the Ancestors series on PBS. She is also a contributing editor for "Heritage Quest" and the author of a number of books related to genealogy and ancestor historiography. The other co-author, Ann Turner, became interested in genealogy when she learned that her parents' ancestors had arrived in the United States on the same ship, yet went their separate ways until her parents met 300 years later. That sort of coincidence would also have piqued my interest in my family history if I knew something like that about my parents. Sometimes facts are really stranger than fiction. "Trace Your Roots with DNA" is not really for leisure reading, but it does contain very valuable information for those who want to use the new DNA tests for help in tracing their family ancestry.

This book explores the convergence of genetic research and genealogy, and provides its own convergence of the academic with the practical. Some people make a life's work of tracing their family roots. I'm not one of those people. But a few years ago, my sister researched our family's immigration on the paternal side and found the account we'd been told our whole lives simply wasn't true. So when I saw this book, I thought it might be interesting. That's exactly what it turned out to be--in spades. The authors took care to make the book readable to both novices and experienced genealogical researchers. As I have no experience in genealogy, I very much appreciated Part I. It gave me a good background, so I could understand and enjoy the rest of the book. Folks who already knew the basics could skip over Part I, without missing out on something of value to them. This modular organization of Trace Your Roots is something I want to explain a bit more, by looking for a moment at a different genre. One of my pet peeves with computer books is most of them are either extremely basic throughout so you get bogged down in boring detail, or they are so advanced you just can't move forward. The correct approach is to include a primer on the basics for

those who need it, and then write the book as though everyone knows the basics. I was pleased that Trace Your Roots took this approach. Moving beyond the primer (which addresses genealogy and then genetics), the book takes one subject at a time and explains it in a clear and interesting way with examples and anecdotes. In Part II, we start with tracing roots along the paternal path. There are two basic reasons for taking this path. The first is biological--the Y chromosome.

Genetic genealogy is a blossoming market and the number of books in this space is rapidly growing. Major books include: Seven Daughters of Eve, Adam's Curse, Trace your Roots with DNA, and DNA and Family History. Professor Bryan Sykes' book The Seven Daughters of Eve was a seminal work. This book focuses on mtDNA (Mitochondrial DNA) that is passed down the maternal line. This book is written in an easy to read style that creates the tone and tenor of a mystery novel. The punch line of this book is that all maternal lines can be traced back to seven theoretic women who lived at different places in the worlds at different times. This book is very light reading and similar to picking up a pop culture magazine. This book is not recommended other than as the most basic introduction to genetic genealogy. It also suffers from it's minimal discussion of paternal DNA testing (Y-chromosome) which is the most popular form of DNA testing today. Sykes second book "Adam's Curse" discusses the long term de-evolution of the male chromosome. It's a shame that Sykes has stooped to pandering to sensationalistic popular culture instead in more serious genetic research. Sykes made a name for himself in this space, but it seems that this segment of science has passed him by. Two excellent introductory books were published in 2004 -- "Trace Your Roots with DNA : Using Genetic Tests to Explore Your Family Tree" by Megan Smolenyak and Ann Turner and "DNA and Family History: How Genetic Testing Can Advance Your Genealogical Research" by Chris Pomery. In Trace your Roots, Smolenyak, who makes her living as a professional genealogist, branches out into genetics and DNA testing.

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