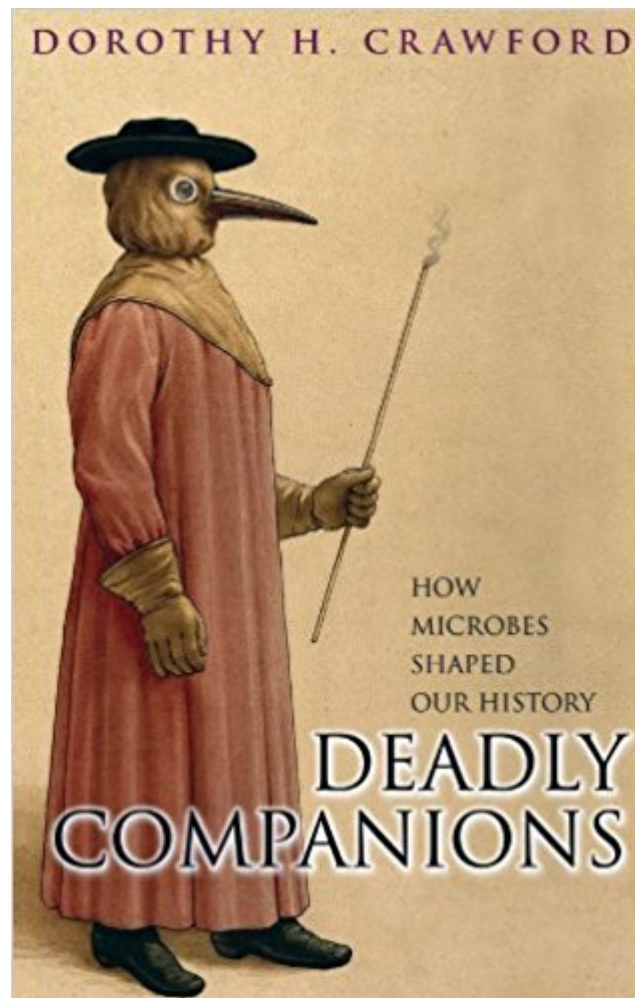




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# Deadly Companions: How Microbes Shaped Our History (Oxford Landmark Science)



## Synopsis

Ever since we started huddling together in communities, the story of human history has been inextricably entwined with the story of microbes. They have evolved and spread amongst us, shaping our culture through infection, disease, and pandemic. At the same time, our changing human culture has itself influenced the evolutionary path of microbes. Dorothy H. Crawford here shows that one cannot be truly understood without the other. Beginning with a dramatic account of the SARS pandemic at the start of the 21st century, she takes us back in time to follow the interlinked history of microbes and man, taking an up-to-date look at ancient plagues and epidemics, and identifying key changes in the way humans have lived - such as our move from hunter-gatherer to farmer to city-dweller - which made us vulnerable to microbe attack. Showing how we live our lives today - with increasing crowding and air travel - puts us once again at risk, Crawford asks whether we might ever conquer microbes completely, or whether we need to take a more microbe-centric view of the world. Among the possible answers, one thing becomes clear: that for generations to come, our deadly companions will continue to shape human history. Oxford Landmark Science books are 'must-read' classics of modern science writing which have crystallized big ideas, and shaped the way we think.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Awesome a must read for those who are interested (like me) on the world diseases...

In *Deadly Companions: How Microbes Shaped Our History*, Dr. Dorothy Crawford tells the tale of how microbes have impacted human society throughout the ages. She begins with a basic description of the life cycle of bacteria and viruses and then proceeds to discuss the methods of transmission to the early hunter-gatherer societies. From there, she traces the evolution of microbes in conjunction with the growth of human civilization. Dr. Crawford's main purpose in this investigation is to evaluate mankind's future in relation to the microbes that have plagued us for centuries. While history has shown man fighting desperately to survive, modern technology has given us the tools to alter this war. However, even tools such as antibiotics, antiviral drugs, and vaccines have, on occasion, been rendered ineffective as microbes evolve and mutate far faster than we do. With that in mind, Dr. Crawford proposes that we find a solution in which we live in harmony with, rather than at odds to, the multitude of microbes. Structurally, Dr. Crawford progresses chronologically starting with the infection of hunter-gatherers by malaria and ending with the recent epidemics of SARS and H5N1 Avian Flu. During each era of history, certain microbes were more prevalent and Dr. Crawford highlights these microbes in their historical context. I would highly recommend *Deadly Companions* to all readers. While the subject matter may seem to be quite "academic," Dr. Crawford does an excellent job of formatting the material for the general audience while still remaining objective and factual and captivating the mind through the last page.

This was a required course book for my Microbiology course, what intrigued me was the cover and I immediately thought, this is going to be fun! The author, Dorothy Crawford weaves an such an interesting mystery style story about microbes, you learn microbial event timeline as it equates to historic pandemics. The cover illustration is a factual depiction that you discover the meaning when you read the book. I kept this book because it is a very good read and explains the mysteries of our *Deadly Companions*.

I really found this an interesting read. I read a lot of non fiction, especially popular science and I found it well written, carefully researched, and with adequate level of detail (I hate the really

speculative stuff that is more opinion than fact or that gets the science wrong). Basic understanding of microbes and their interactions with both humans and the wider span of organisms should be an educational goal for all of society. This is a fascinating read that I would recommend to any educated adult or inquisitive teen.

Without doubt, the best book I have read on microbes and viruses. Dorothy H. Crawford is a great author and takes you on a historical tour of the influence that microbes have had on human development and history. The book is a fascinating read and as a result I have bought some of her other works - highly recommended!

Quite a bit over my head. One needs to have some background in microbiology and bacteriology to understand the consequences of those damned microbes. It is definite "proof" of Darwin's theory of evolution and natural selection. I felt that the narrative made a strong case for evolution and totally demolished the case for "creation science." I wish the book was less technical, although I have no idea on how to accomplish that goal. I commend the author for making to attempt to enlighten the unenlightened.

After reading *Deadly Companions* I feel like I should be bathing in that germ killing gel that everybody carries in their pocket or purse. And after I meet somebody new, or who has recently traveled, I have this sudden urge to wash my hands, face, and take more Zicam. Good job telling us how we developed alongside microbes; how they impacted our development in useful and detrimental ways. But she seems to have written hastily. This could have been fleshed out a bit better, reaching a wider audience, if only she had taken her time and added more history and storytelling to the too short chapters. Not a book I would recommend to my college students. Perhaps something high-schoolers should read as part of biology class. A much better book to read is *Influenza!* about the 1918 Spanish Flu.

good book

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