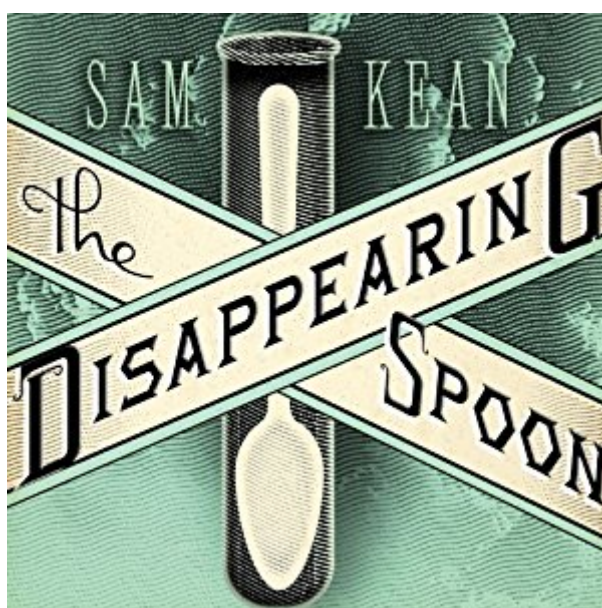


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# The Disappearing Spoon: And Other True Tales Of Madness, Love, And The History Of The World From The Periodic Table Of The Elements



## Synopsis

"The Disappearing Spoon is my favorite kind of science journalism: it reveals a hidden universe in the form of a thrilling tale." Arthur C. Clarke once noted that truly advanced science cannot be distinguished from magic. Kean succeeds in giving us the cold hard facts, both human and chemical, behind the astounding phenomena without sacrificing any of the wonder - a trait vital to any science writer worth his NaCl. Entertainment Weekly Science Magazine reporter Sam Kean reveals the periodic table as it's never been seen before. Not only is it one of man's crowning scientific achievements, it's also a treasure trove of stories of passion, adventure, betrayal, and obsession. The infectious tales and astounding details in The Disappearing Spoon follow carbon, neon, silicon, and gold as they play out their parts in human history, finance, mythology, war, the arts, poison, and the lives of the (frequently) mad scientists who discovered them. We learn that Marie Curie used to provoke jealousy in colleagues' wives when she'd invite them into closets to see her glow-in-the-dark experiments. And that Lewis and Clark swallowed mercury capsules across the country; their campsites are still detectable by the poison in the ground. Why did Gandhi hate iodine? Why did the Japanese kill Godzilla with missiles made of cadmium? And why did tellurium lead to the most bizarre gold rush in history? From the Big Bang to the end of time, it's all in The Disappearing Spoon.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Sam Kean's *The Disappearing Spoon: Other True Tales of Madness, Love, and the History of the World from the Periodic Table of the Elements* presents the history and function of

the periodic table in an interesting, well crafted novel. With a degree in English and physics, Kean is quite qualified to be writing this book. This review's purpose is to let you know how great this book is for students, chemistry fanatics, and people bored out of their minds. The book takes liberties that the overall book benefits from. At the beginning of every chapter, Kean introduces multiple elements that serve as a guide for the chapter. The chapter then goes into detail about how these elements were discovered (in some cases created), benefitted science, or just flat out do nothing. One of the greatest attributes of the book are the lessons woven into the chapters. Anyone with a passing interest in chemistry will appreciate his facts about the protons and electrons and their purpose in an atom. Kean talks about how every atom of an element has shells filled with different amounts of electrons and the stability of octets, shells with eight electrons and no extra electrons. He also explains the natural nuclear reactor in Oklo, Gabon, Africa and how its uranium deposits acted as natural fission reactor for billions of years prior to mankind's inception. As mentioned before, Kean delves into the history of the periodic table and its many contributors like Glenn Seaborg. Seaborg was a well renowned chemist who served as both the lead on the Manhattan Project and advisor to President Ronald Reagan. He was the first to discover transuranic elements which he then would announce on the television show Quiz Kids. Another chemist Kean gives the spotlight to is Marie Curie. The Polish scientist married a French physicist who later began work on uranium. Their discovery that the electron bonds in radioactive elements have no effect on its radioactivity earned both of them the Nobel Prize in physics. Kean gives a great amount of detail for each of the scientists he chooses to focus on. Whether it be details about their backgrounds, discoveries, or tragedies, Kean does a fantastic job of presenting the given information. Anyone with any level of interest in chemistry should read this book. Kean's detailed analysis of the often overlooked history of the periodic table gives readers a new angle in which to view chemistry. The recounting of Oklo's reactor's discovery and Marie Curie's constant stream of tragedies not only educates readers about the stories connected to the periodic table but gives them a sense of the gravity and importance of each individual story.

Jackson Evans  
Mr. Halkyard  
Honors Chem-H10/31/16  
Book Review: The Disappearing Spoon  
The Disappearing Spoon is a book about the periodic table throughout the ages. Sam Kean accomplishes this by relating chemistry to historical events. Throughout the book, he does a good job making chemistry fun and easy to remember and keeps the reader engaged. Sam

Kean's stories make the elements fun and easy to recall. For example, berkelium and californium, during bombing experiments were elements that were hard for me to remember, but after reading the book, I could remember them like the back of my hand. Another example, although unrelated to chemistry, was how he put fun facts throughout the book, such as when he speaks about the longest word. Overall, the book made chemistry fun, and easy to remember. The author, through his stories and fun facts, kept the reader engaged. The book made me want to read his work more. He speaks how chemistry was used throughout time, how it was used in our daily lives, etc. This kept me engaged, and, once again made chemistry fun and easy to remember. In conclusion, disappearing spoon helped me to remember chemistry, made it fun, and kept me engaged, even though it was about chemistry.

The Disappearing Spoon is a collection of stories associated with the Periodic Table. If you like idle gossip, the story telling is similar, it's just laced with knowledge. Honestly, I thoroughly enjoyed it and would recommend it to almost anyone (yes, even the ones who despised high school chem.). The humor of the author is almost as apparent as his intelligence and is quite engaging. It is one of those books where you can read a couple chapters, get a few great tidbits, and skip around to a completely different area and not be lost. For that reason it is a killer road trip/vacation book for those who don't want heavy reading material but don't want to feel as though they've gained nothing from their reading experience. In fact, quit reading my rambling review and just buy the damn thing. If you don't like it then you wasted a few bucks and may have learned something in the process.

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