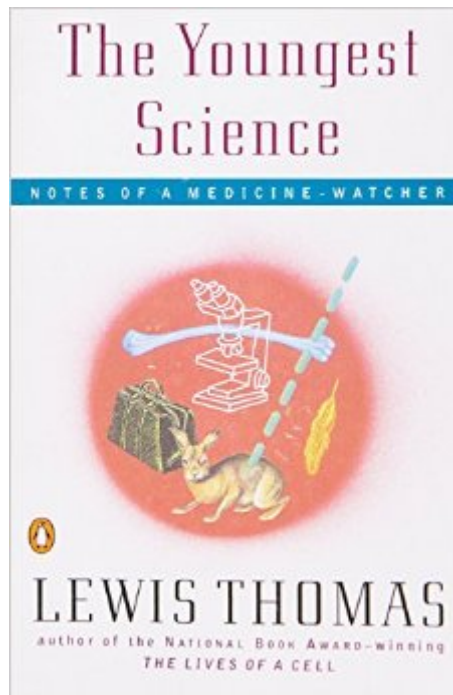


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# The Youngest Science: Notes Of A Medicine-Watcher (Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Series)



## Synopsis

From the 1920s when he watched his father, a general practitioner who made housecalls and wrote his prescriptions in Latin, to his days in medical school and beyond, Lewis Thomas saw medicine evolve from an art into a sophisticated science. *The Youngest Science* is Dr. Thomas's account of his life in the medical profession and an inquiry into what medicine is all about--the youngest science, but one rich in possibility and promise. He chronicles his training in Boston and New York, his war career in the South Pacific, his most impassioned research projects, his work as an administrator in hospitals and medical schools, and even his experiences as a patient. Along the way, Thomas explores the complex relationships between research and practice, between words and meanings, between human error and human accomplishment. More than a magnificent autobiography, *The Youngest Science* is also a celebration and a warning--about the nature of medicine and about the future life of our planet.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is an enjoyable book of a lifetime spent in the field of medicine. My favorite chapters were the early ones as Thomas looked back at what medicine was like early in this century, including what he remembers from his father's medical practice. This medical reminiscence differs from most other physician's writings in that Thomas has spent the majority of his career in research rather than in the clinical practice of medicine. But if research is often thought of as dull drudgery, Thomas certainly does not reflect that in the book. His genuine enthusiasm (and important finds along the

way) have shown how necessary research is to progress in health care. As a clinical physician myself, I gained a new appreciation for this side of medicine. Lewis's enthusiasm is infectious, his comments candid, and his medical poetry quite entertaining. I enjoyed reading this.

My favorite Lewis Thomas, so far. There are many good science popularizers around, the late Carl Sagan being better known because of his TV series - Cosmos. Dr. Thomas' books stand-out as being comfy because of his "fireside chat" way of explaining and telling stories. Why do I call him a "good man"? Because his love shines through in his writing.

What a fabulous, incisive and humorous intellect this man has brought to us in his six or seven books as a doctor/scientist. Everyone on earth needs to have all of his books where he has shared the miracles of medicine and just about all the sciences in a beautifully readable prose. I read them over and over each decade to measure how much smarter and compassionate and entertaining I've become. It's hard to rate which one is best because they all are. (He even has a chapter on philology that deals with this impossibility being possible). You might start with his LIVES OF A CELL and then go on to this one. Wow, what a gift the Creator has given us all to better understand his magic.

I picked up this book because of my enjoyment of Thomas' earlier books, Lives of a Cell, and Medusa and the Snail. This happened about 20 years ago. I've read The Youngest Science: Notes of a Medicine-Watcher two times since then. The Youngest Science focuses not on specific "adventures" within medicine, microbiology, and evolution, but more on the evolution of Dr. Thomas himself, from watching his father (a physician), to going through medical school, to becoming a medical researcher, to reaching the positions of authority within various colleges of medicine. Thomas was in the early part of his career when there came about profound changes in the understanding and treatment of disease processes. This makes his observations particularly interesting. The book suffers from being so far behind the times in terms of modern medicine. Nevertheless, as the historical documentation of the evolution of a medical career, it remains fascinating.

Lewis Thomas one of the best writers about Medicine of his time here tells his own personal story. It parallels the development of modern medicine, and covers the period in which Thomas suggests Medicine moved from being largely a hit- and- miss operation to being a Science. Thomas writes

with admiration and affection of his father, a family physician whose dedication to his patients and to his profession he bequeathed to his son. Thomas tells of his medical education and the various steps in his medical career. He does this with modesty and insight, and provides a kind of miniature history of medical practice in his lifetime. This work is admirable as Thomas himself was.

I bought this book as a tool to use to study medicine during the 1930's and 1940's. Other than those few chapters, I found myself struggling to finish this book. I understand that it is essentially a memoir of Dr. Thomas, and he was an interesting man, yet I was hoping for more information of medical techniques during WWII years. It is well-written and does give one the sense that medicine did in fact evolve from an art to a science. Overall, I finished the book with many of the questions I was hoping it would answer. I think the reader's expectations prior to opening the book will dictate her opinion of the work when done.

I love to give any/all books of Lewis Thomas' essays as gifts to aspiring physicians (great graduation gifts). Unfortunately, they are no longer available in hardback which would be so much better for a significant item in one's library.

Dr L. Thomas was one of the most influential men in American medicine in the mid twentieth century, and judging by his literary output, one of its most self-effacing. His engaging literate memoir/essay collection is a brief and worthwhile read. His life in medicine began at the dawn of the antibiotic era in 1937 and over his fifty year active career he participated in the advances in science that he describes and their applications to the clinical care of patients. The history of twentieth century American medicine is a thrilling story of progress shared among hundreds of collaborators and this little book, sharing as it does some of the excitement of that era, is a fine example of that history.

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