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Light: A Radiant History from Creation to the Quantum Age

By Bruce Watson



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Light: A Radiant History from Creation to the Quantum Age By Bruce Watson

Light begins at Stonehenge, where crowds cheer a solstice sunrise. After sampling myths explaining First Light, the story moves on to early philosophers' queries, then through the centuries, from Buddhist temples to Biblical scripture, when light was the soul of the divine.

Battling darkness and despair, Gothic architects crafted radiant cathedrals while Dante dreamed a "heaven of pure light." Later, following Leonardo's advice, Renaissance artists learned to capture light on canvas. During the Scientific Revolution, Galileo gathered light in his telescope, Descartes measured the rainbow, and Newton used prisms to solidify the science of optics. But even after Newton, light was an enigma. Particle or wave? Did it flow through an invisible "ether"? Through the age of Edison and into the age of lasers, *Light* reveals how light sparked new wonders--relativity, quantum electrodynamics, fiber optics, and more.

Although lasers now perform everyday miracles, light retains its eternal allure. "For the rest of my life," Einstein said, "I will reflect on what light is." *Light* explores and celebrates such curiosity.



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Review

"Masterful... important" - Christian Century "A delightful journey" - Washington Post "Lyrical and Deft" - Nature "Endlessly fascination... a delight" - Book Browse "A dazzling book..." - ALA Booklist

About the Author

Bruce Watson is a frequent contributor to *Smithsonian* magazine, writing on topics ranging from eels to pi to profiles of artists and writers. His work has also appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, and other publications. Watson is the author of four books, including *Bread and Roses*, *Sacco and Vanzetti* (nominated for an Edgar Award), and *Freedom Summer*. He lives in western Massachusetts.

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