



## Science Tales

*Darryl Cunningham*

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A graphic milestone of investigative reporting, Science Tales takes on controversies surrounding climate change, electro-convulsive therapy, the moon landing, the MMR vaccine, homeopathy, chiropractic, evolution and science denialism.

Thoroughly researched and sourced, Cunningham's clear narrative, graphic lines and photographic illustration explain complicated and controversial issues with deceptive ease and wit. Science Tales decodes the myths and lies that have shaped some of the most fiercely-debated issues of the past fifty years.

## Science Tales Details

Date : Published April 26th 2012 by Myriad Editions (first published January 1st 2012)

ISBN : 9780956792686

Author : Darryl Cunningham

Format : Paperback 160 pages

Genre : Sequential Art, Graphic Novels, Nonfiction, Comics, Science, Bande Dessinée

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## From Reader Review Science Tales for online ebook

### Luis says

Diversas posiciones con el denominador común de enfrentarse a la ciencia, tales como que la evolución es sólo una teoría, la homeopatía o la inocuidad del fracking, se dan cita a modo de cómic. Son asuntos en los que se profundiza de la mano de Darryl Cunningham, que en la mayoría de los casos rebate con argumentos y evidencia a las opiniones más escépticas. Tono ello en un tono que, como dice el autor del prólogo, "disfrutaría mi propia abuela".

Salvo en el capítulo de la TEC, donde la evidencia se ofrece de forma ambigua, en todos se dan opiniones que respaldan el método y los descubrimientos científicos. Es muy importante una obra de este calibre, que explique y defienda el rigor científico frente a las opiniones o creencias de una minoría que, como muy bien se dice en muchos casos, están financiados con importantes intereses detrás de ellos. El énfasis en aportar estudios, testimonios y datos tiene que resultar clave para esclarecer las cuestiones que, sin saber muy bien por qué, no son aún asimiladas por gran parte de la población. Hay capítulos especialmente intensos, como el del fracking, el cambio climático o el del Apolo XI, en relación a la defensa magistral que realiza. Quizás le encuentre de malo que en algunos capítulos se basa mucho en aportar testimonios individuales cuando debería cargar con el peso de la acumulación de datos.

El tono es didáctico, sin entrar en muchos tecnicismos y sin saturar con demasiado texto un formato invariable de viñeta agradable a la vista. Los dibujos son sencillos y efectivos, en ocasiones con fotografías modificadas. En la parte final podemos encontrar una bibliografía extensa para seguir indagando sobre los temas.

El resultado me ha gustado mucho, y he echado de menos que no continuara con más temas.

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### Theo Kokonas says

A quick but generally excellent read. What could be explained in a few pages, the author is able to project in just one illustration - utter brilliance.

I'm recommending this to most of my friends as this explains plenty of current events in a very engaging and entertaining fashion. I particularly liked the chapter on Homeopathy.

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### Cat Tobin says

Very clear and concise overview of the main arguments made against the scientific theories and facts that science haters hate on the most, such as climate change, MMR vaccines, evolution, and the moon landings. I now feel pretty ignorant for not knowing that chiropractors are in a similar scientific category to homeopaths - I always thought they were, like, specialised physiotherapists for the back. Oh well! Luckily the main take-away is that constant education and revaluation of your beliefs is a good thing.

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### **Molly says**

I liked this quite a bit, though it didn't provide me with a \*ton\* of new information. Short chapters on a variety of subjects (fracking, evolution, vaccines, science denial) with clear explanations on the science behind them and how so many people have come to doubt that science. (Thanks, 24 hour news cycle!)

There is a very clear explanation of peer review in the academic/scientific world in the last chapter, which I might use in future English 101/102 classes to explain the concept to my students.

The first chapter has a proofreading problem in which the narrator should be saying "nothing to do with X" but instead says "nothing to with X." (This is a new project where I am keeping track of typos and proofreading problems in stuff I read. No, I don't know why yet.)

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### **Shacoria says**

This book wasn't bad, but it definitely wasn't as good as Darryl Cunningham's other book, *Psychiatric Tales*. I enjoyed learning about different scientific areas talked about in this book and it was interesting reading about some of the outlandish arguments that people come up with to deny facts that are backed up by research. Even though, I generally agreed with what the author had to say, I still found his way of talking about things to be condescending and judgmental. It was annoying. I like reading books in this format because I feel it's an easy and quick way to learn about topics that I probably wouldn't bother to read about otherwise. Overall, this book was just okay.

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### **Mlle. Gis says**

Cambio climático, terapia electroconvulsiva, homeopatía, vacunas, fracking o negacionismo científico, todo explicado ágilmente y en viñetas. Para abrir boca sobre el tema.

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### **Amit Patil says**

Its a brilliant quick read, all young students should read it first. The comic format helps in easy read and understandability. Darryl also makes sure he has proofs and references behind every case that he describes.

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### **Jax says**

Incredibly informative yet easy to understand due to it being set out like a graphic novel

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## Philip says

This book discusses a number of science-related issues, following in the footsteps of Ben Goldacre, Simon Singh *et al.* Cunningham touches upon topics such as climate change, evolution, the moon landings, the whole MMR hooplah and homeopathy - to name but a few. Unlike Goldacre, Singh etc, he does so through the medium of comics.

First: the science content. The first thing to mention is that there isn't much of it. You could probably glean more information from a cursory skim of the relevant Wikipedia pages than from this book - but maybe that's missing the point.

Cunningham keeps things simple and concise, focusing on the key points of each topic. What he does explain, he explains well. However, none of the topics are discussed with any thoroughness: he'll rebut some, but not all of the anti-science brigade's objections to whichever topic he's discussing, for example. When I finished reading each chapter, I felt like it gave me the jist of each topic: enough to explain it to someone with no knowledge of the subject, but not enough to be able to properly engage with, for example, someone from the anti-MMR camp.

Again, I may be entirely missing the point of this book/comic/thing. Maybe it's intended as a first stepping stone for someone interested in science's Grand Quest of Stopping People Saying Silly Things. However, at the back of my mind, I was just nagged by the fact that this could just have easily been done by skimming Wikipedia...

...which leads me on to the second main discussion point. What does Wikipedia lack which this book doesn't? Comics. Lots and lots of comic-y stuff. This isn't the first book to try the science-meets-comics thing - I read and enjoyed McEvoy's *Introducing quantum theory* a few years ago.

And just like McEvoy, here I don't think the comics really add anything. A large proportion of the panels are just a guy (presumably Cunningham himself) standing against a plain background, discussing the topic at hand in a monologue. Often, the same image is zoomed in or out over the course of a page as an alternative. Occasionally there's a stylised picture of Andrew Wakefield, or a dinosaur, or Jesus, but while the odd graph here and there is helpful, most of it feels like padding. This book is short, and I mean super-short - I read it in an hour - and most of this book feels like a few short blog posts padded out to fill a book using the comic book panel format.

So while the book is certainly well-intentioned, I think I'd struggle to recommend it to anyone. It feels like it's stretched itself too thinly and missed an opportunity to do something genuinely creative with the comic book format. Maybe I would have preferred it if the book discussed fewer topics in more depth... but then, why wouldn't I just recommend *Bad Science* or any number of similar titles instead?

As I've said above, I think this book is intended as a broad introduction to combatting pseudoscience silliness. I could see this type of book being good for kids - it's to-the-point and largely jargon-free - but I rather got the feeling from the book's cold tone that kids weren't the target audience. This is far from "a graphic milestone of investigative reporting".

In short, not an abomination, but a missed opportunity. There are better books out there.

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### **Lucie Tobin says**

Ouvrage à charge sans fondement scientifique qui voit son auteur régler ses comptes personnels sur divers sujets. C'est du complotisme à l'américaine. Aucun intérêt, je n'ai même pas pris le temps de finir de le lire...

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### **Stewart Tame says**

It's easy to underestimate Darryl Cunningham. His drawing style is simple: blocky figures, simple six panel grid (most pages), use of photos where appropriate. His writing style also appears simple: clear, logical presentation of ideas, A leads to B leads to C and so on. It all seems so obvious and inevitable. Of course, if it really were that obvious, there would be no need for books like this because everyone would be in agreement about climate change and fracking and evolution and so forth. Cunningham makes science writing look easy.

The book is a collection of short comics stories dealing with science topics about which there is some controversy, at least in the public's eye. Topics range from Electroconvulsive Therapy to Science Denial with many points in between. At least some of these stories previously appeared in Cunningham's book, *How to Fake A Moon Landing*--I'm too lazy to find that book on my shelves and compare the two to say exactly which ones, but trust me: it happened. Still, his work is always interesting to read, even if it's a reread. As always, his research is thorough, and his conclusions sound. Worth reading.

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### **Tulpesh Patel says**

Following up his widely-acclaimed first book, *Psychiatric Tales*, which drew on his experience as a health care assistant on an acute psychiatric ward, Darryl Cunningham's latest graphic novel, *Science Tales*, again takes the form of a series of charming and deceptively simple cartoons. The creative blend of graphic novel and science journalism presents and dissects 'lies, hoaxes and scams' in popular science with great precision and wit.

Several of the graphic stories take the form of a conversation, either with the reader, or in the case of the story on climate change, a talkative penguin. This is a neat device, as it helps drill to the heart of some of the problems in a direct and relatable way.

Each chapter covers a different topic, including homeopathy, chiropractic and the MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine. In addition to alternative medicine, the book also covers climate change, the idea than the moon landing was faked, and evolution.

The central theme of *Science Tales* is an examination of science denialism. A strong thread of skepticism and evidence-based thinking runs through the entire book, which ties the ideas together and makes for a powerful defense of the strength and importance of the scientific method. Giving examples of individuals who have died as a result of being duped into alternative therapies, the book doesn't pull any punches, and powerfully lays bare the arguments of those who say that alternative medicines like homeopathy are harmless.

Cunningham acknowledges some of our frustratingly persistent cognitive biases, that corporations, with (not always) hidden agendas, and quack-peddlers, cleverly take advantage of, but much of the blame for the persistence of alternative medicines and science denialism is laid at the door of the media. The insistence that both sides of a debate be given equal voice, regardless of the fact that it's often the weight of the entire scientific community pitched against a small, but vocal, band of people, is one that is driving anti-science ideas and creating controversy where there often isn't any.

The opening chapter on electro-convulsive therapy feels a little out of place amongst all the contemporary hoaxes and bad science that currently dominate the public conscience, and is perhaps a leftover from *Psychiatric Tales*. That said, the book is no less interesting for its inclusion, and for the seasoned skeptic it's perhaps a welcome addition as it saves *Science Tales* from treading on too much familiar ground.

The detail in some of the chapters is a little patchy, but that's less of a criticism and more of a wish that this excellent book was longer. Cunningham really drills into history and workings of homeopathy, chiropractic and Andrew Wakefield kick-starting the MMR vaccine scare but creationism is regrettably covered a little more superficially

It takes a real talent to pack in so much information and so many ideas and arguments in a book that contains no more than a few hundred words. As a science primer that presents complex ideas in a simple, but never simplistic, way, *Science Tales* cannot be recommended enough.

\*The original version of this book review (sans the links, obviously) appeared in the latest issue of Argument (<http://argument.uio.no/utgaver/argume...>), which was released on Saturday the 27th of October, under the title: A Comic Antidote to Science Denial.

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### **Jeff says**

I enjoyed this book. A lot.

As has been said elsewhere, there's not really a lot to it when all's said and done - I "read" it in a couple of hours and didn't really learn anything new. Others may learn something of course as it pulls no punches in debunking pseudo-science and promoting the scientific method but, then, those who would fit this category would probably not pick it up.

But it made me smile, and that's a good thing. Even if DC can't draw penguins.

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### **Sam says**

This was a fab little read that pokes fun at all those who fall foul of the myth, misinformation and misdirection that surrounds the major scientific issues of today. But it does so in a lighthearted not too offensive way. Yes this does lack in background information and it doesn't give all the science that supports

each of the issues raised but I don't think that is the point. For me this is a way to show those who throw science out the window, how wrong they really are to do so. I'm actually rather fond of this.

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### **I says**

I picked up this book simply because I wanted to see the author's views of the topics discussed in the book. Well, I was not disappointed. It was obvious that the author wanted to get the word out that some of these "myths" and "lies" are just "concepts" created people are too blind to see the truth. While some topics were easy to see the holes behind, others were just left to the reader to decide if it is hoax. I only gave this book three stars because the illustrations may have been well fit to the story, they weren't visually pleasing to me.

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