



Chaos: Making a New Science

By James Gleick

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Chaos: Making a New Science By James Gleick

The “highly entertaining” *New York Times* bestseller, which explains chaos theory and the butterfly effect, from the author of *The Information* (*Chicago Tribune*).

For centuries, scientific thought was focused on bringing order to the natural world. But even as relativity and quantum mechanics undermined that rigid certainty in the first half of the twentieth century, the scientific community clung to the idea that any system, no matter how complex, could be reduced to a simple pattern. In the 1960s, a small group of radical thinkers began to take that notion apart, placing new importance on the tiny experimental irregularities that scientists had long learned to ignore. Minuscule differences in data, they said, would eventually produce massive ones—and complex systems like the weather, economics, and human behavior suddenly became clearer and more beautiful than they had ever been before.

In this seminal work of scientific writing, James Gleick lays out a cutting edge field of science with enough grace and precision that any reader will be able to grasp the science behind the beautiful complexity of the world around us. With more than a million copies sold, *Chaos* is “a groundbreaking book about what seems to be the future of physics” by a writer who has been a finalist for both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award, the author of *Time Travel: A History* and *Genius: The Life and Science of Richard Feynman* (*Publishers Weekly*).

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Few writers distinguish themselves by their ability to write about complicated, even obscure topics clearly and engagingly. James Gleick, a former science writer for the *New York Times*, resides in this exclusive category. In *Chaos*, he takes on the job of depicting the first years of the study of chaos--the seemingly random patterns that characterize many natural phenomena.

This is not a purely technical book. Instead, it focuses as much on the scientists studying chaos as on the chaos itself. In the pages of Gleick's book, the reader meets dozens of extraordinary and eccentric people. For instance, Mitchell Feigenbaum, who constructed and regulated his life by a 26-hour clock and watched his waking hours come in and out of phase with those of his coworkers at Los Alamos National Laboratory.

As for chaos itself, Gleick does an outstanding job of explaining the thought processes and investigative techniques that researchers bring to bear on chaos problems. Rather than attempt to explain Julia sets, Lorenz attractors, and the Mandelbrot Set with gigantically complicated equations, *Chaos* relies on sketches, photographs, and Gleick's wonderful descriptive prose.

From Publishers Weekly

Gleick here adventurously attempts to describe the revolutionary science of "chaos," a challengingly abstract new look at nature in terms of nonlinear dynamics. "A ground-breaking book about what seems to be the future of physics," praised PW. Illustrated. 100,000 first printing; author tour.

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From Library Journal

Chaos-theory, touted as the third revolution in 20th-century science after relativity and quantum mechanics, uses traditional mathematics to understand complex natural systems with too many variables to study. Philosophically, it counters the Second Law of Thermodynamics by demonstrating the "spontaneous emergence of self-organization." In this new science apparent disorder is meaningful; the structure of chaos can be mapped by plotting graphically the calculations of nonlinear mathematics using "fractal" geometry, a brainchild of Benoit Mandelbrot in which symmetrical patterns repeat across different scales. With jocular descriptions of eccentric characters such as the "Dynamical Systems collective," (a.k.a. Chaos Cabal) of the University of CaliforniaSanta Cruz, Chaos offers an absorbing look at trailblazers on a new scientific frontier. Laurie Tynan, Montgomery Cty.

Norristown P.L., Pa.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Marilyn Apperson:

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Kirk Nutter:

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