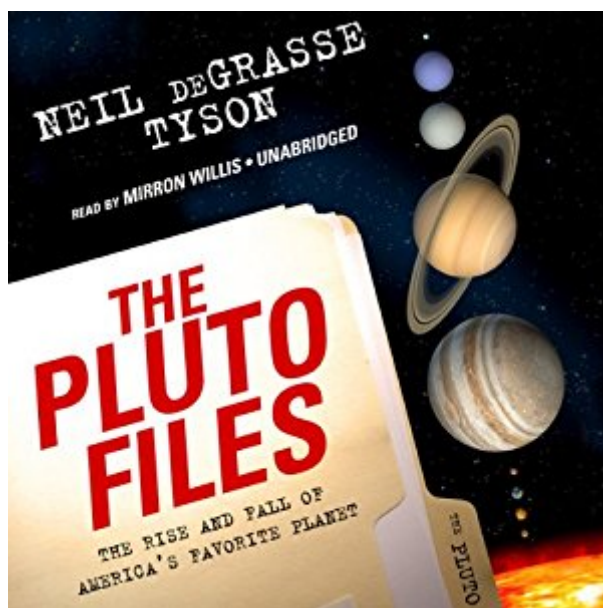


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The Pluto Files: The Rise And Fall Of America's Favorite Planet



Synopsis

When the International Astronomical Union voted Pluto out of planethood, Americans rallied behind this extraterrestrial underdog. Pluto is entrenched in our cultural, patriotic view of the cosmos, and Tyson is on a quest to discover why. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I usually enjoy Tyson's writing, but this book really needs a strong editor. There was a great deal of fluff and a lot of repetition, and it took quite a bit of work to extract the basic story. Tyson has recently expressed the essence of his down grading position with a better compromise: Tyson now proposes to classify "rocky" planets and gas giants separately, creating three separate categories of objects that revolve around the sun: inner "terrestrial" planets, middle "gas giant" planets, and the outer "dwarf" planets. Pluto would then be a representative object for its category. The extraordinary pictures we are just now receiving show that Pluto is much more complex than we had thought, and those pictures may cause Tyson and others to reconsider. The forthcoming "New Horizons: Rediscovering Pluto" by The Associated Press and Marcia Dunn may provide strong support for that reconsideration: "Mankind's first close-up look at Pluto did not disappoint: The pictures showed ice mountains about as high as the Rockies and chasms on its big moon Charon that appear six times deeper than the Grand Canyon. Especially astonishing to scientists was the total absence of impact craters in a zoom-in shot of one otherwise rugged slice of Pluto. That suggests that Pluto is not the dead ice ball many people think, but is instead geologically active even now, its surface sculpted not

by collisions with cosmic debris but by its internal heat. Breathtaking in their clarity, the long-awaited images were obtained by NASA's New Horizons, the unmanned spacecraft that paid a history-making flyby visit to the dwarf planet on July 14, 2015 after a journey of 9½ years and 3 billion miles. Experience the voyage to Pluto and rediscover our solar system through the photographs and reporting of The Associated Press."Frankly, I didn't understand what the big hoopla was based on Tyson's recital of the history of Pluto. A better choice for understanding the science of Pluto is Pluto: Sentinel of the Outer Solar System by Barrie W. Jones. A much better choice for understanding the human responses to Pluto is Pluto: New Horizons for a Lost Horizon: Astronomy, Astrology, and Mythology by Richard Grossinger and others. Check out the table of contents; it's a bit of a hodge podge but it's amazing how various the human reactions have been to this "dwarf planet":

Dana Wilde: Pluto on the Borderlands
Richard Grossinger: Pluto and The Kuiper Belt
Richard C. Hoagland: New Horizon for a Lost Horizon
J. F. Martel: Pluto and the Death of God
James Hillman: Hades
Fritz Bruhubner: The Mythology and Astrology of Pluto
Thomas Frick: Old Horizons
John D. Shershin: The Inquisition of Pluto
Stephan David Hewitt: Pluto and the Restoration of Soul
Jim Tibbetts: Our Lady of Pluto, the Planet of Purification
Shelli Jankowski-Smith: Love Song for Pluto
Robert Kelly: Pluto
Dinesh Raghavendra: Falling in Love with a Plutonian
Steve Luttrell: Dostoevsky's Pluto
Philip Wohlstetter: Ten Things I'd Like to Find on Pluto
Jonathan Lethem: Ten Things I'd Like to Find on Pluto
Robert Sardello: Ten Things I'd Like to Find on Pluto
Ross Hamilton: Ten Things I'd Like to Find on Pluto
College of the Atlantic Students: Ten Things I'd Like to Find on Pluto
Jeffrey A. Hoffman: What the Probe Will Find, What I'd Like It to Find
Nathan Schwartz-Salant: Ten Things I'd Like to Find on Pluto
Charley B. Murphy: The Ten Worlds of Pluto
Timothy Morton: Ten Things I'd Like to Find on Pluto & The End of the World
Robert Phoenix: My Father Pluto
Ellias Lonsdale: Pluto is the Reason We Have a Chance
Rob Brezsny: Pluto: Planet of Wealth
A bit uneven, but much more informative than Tyson's effort.
Robert C. Ross
December 2015

This was a really interesting read. Although you might find that Tyson deals more with personal mail he has received and some of the discussions with other astronomers takes a large chunk of the book. But with that said the book is very informative. The main controversy came when a new Planetarium that Tyson was working with decided to not include Pluto in their displays of the "planets" of our solar system. The main reason was because they were not convinced that Pluto can hold planetary status. Our solar system has four Terrestrial planets, Mercury, Venus, Earth and Mars. Then it has what are classified as Jovian (gas giants) planets, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and

Neptune. That left Pluto out on it's own as an Ice Ball in space, not fitting with either of the two main classifications of planets. There is a good discussion about how Pluto was originally discovered and then excellent material describing how with increasing sophistication of equipment that Pluto was downgraded in size several times, taking it from a large planet to a small "ice rock" in space. Then the discovery of the Kuiper belt of asteroids sent another frenzy through the astronomy community. There were items out there as big as Pluto that also had a somewhat regular orbit around the sun. So what to do? The answer is very interesting and I am particularly interested in their diagram of figure 4.9 on page 91 which shows 8 "dwarf" planets (including Pluto). One is larger than Pluto and six are smaller. But they are all past Neptune and have orbits. So, I was left with do we have 8 planets in our solar system or do we have 16 planets? That is an interesting question. You'll need to read to find out the answer. Taken all together this was a very fascinating book.

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