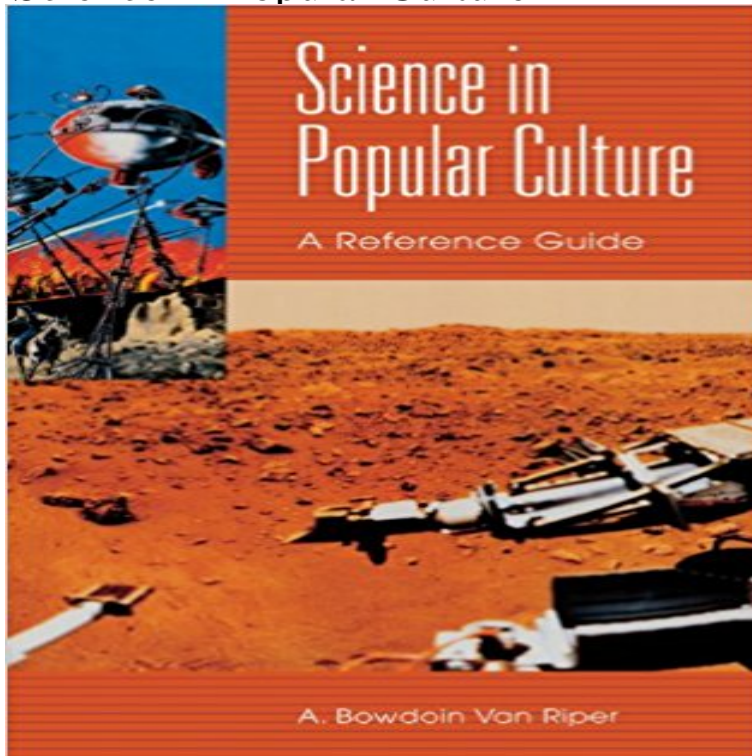


Science in Popular Culture



Spaceships travel through time at lightspeed, piloted by human clones and talking animals. Serious injuries are healed with the wave of a medical gizmo. The media makes it all look easy. Can scientists hope to accomplish such amazing feats in the real world, or are they merely flights of fancy? This book is a fun look at what can, and cant, be achieved with current technology in todays laboratory experiments. This collection of eighty-one short essays is an attempt to separate reality from dramatic license in popular cultures treatment of science and some of the technologies most deeply influenced by it. Each entry deals with a science-related object, idea, person, process, or concept. Each briefly summarizes the current understanding of the topic and then discusses its portrayal in popular culture and, where possible, the roots of that portrayal. Each entry concludes with a list of related entries and a brief list of suggested readings specific to that topic. Fans of The Jetsons, Star Trek, and Star Wars will learn the facts behind the fiction through entries that describe the scientific inventions and procedures on the screen, and how they differ from the reality. Van Riper shows us who innovators like Charles Darwin, Benjamin Franklin, and Isaac Newton really were before they were mythologized. He discusses how animals such as chimpanzees, dolphins, and elephants are portrayed in books and films, and what we really know about animal intelligence. This book lifts the curtain on science fiction, revealing how and where scientific laws have been discarded for the sake of a good plot.

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