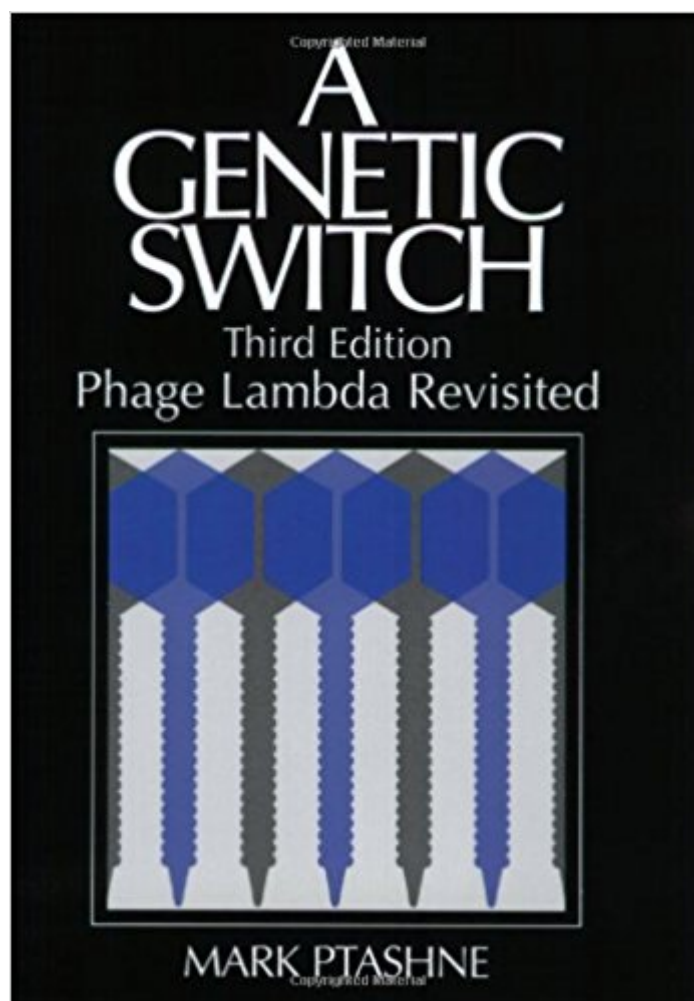


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# A Genetic Switch, Third Edition: Phage Lambda Revisited



## Synopsis

The first edition of Mark Ptashne's 1986 book describing the principles of gene regulation in phage lambda became a classic in both content and form, setting a standard of clarity and precise prose that has rarely been bettered. This edition is a reprint of the original text, together with a new chapter updating the story to 2004. Among the striking new developments are recent findings on long-range interactions between proteins bound to widely separated sites on the phage genome, and a detailed description of how gene activation works.

## Book Information

Paperback: 164 pages

Publisher: Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press; 3rd edition (April 8, 2004)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0879697164

ISBN-13: 978-0879697167

Product Dimensions: 9 x 0.4 x 6.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 7 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #544,233 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #155 in [Books > Textbooks > Medicine & Health Sciences > Medicine > Basic Sciences > Genetics](#) #499 in [Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Biology > Molecular Biology](#) #663 in [Books > Medical Books > Basic Sciences > Microbiology](#)

## Customer Reviews

This classic text explains the structure and function of an epigenetic switch employed by the incredibly simple genome of a common virus. It reads like a code review of an ingenious piece of software. It starts with a high level overview and iterates to reveal more detail. Every detail is then traced back to an actual reproducible experiment. So at the end we don't only know how the phage works, but also how we know it. The Kindle version does have a few typesetting problems that interfere mildly with comprehension of the material.

dr. ptashne is one of the most lucid science writers on the molecular underpinnings of genetic control of transcription -- i have never read a more clearly presented work without any attempt to puff it up, or become obscure. the primary focus of the text is the genetic switches that determine whether in phage becomes dormant within the bacterial cell it has invaded or instead becomes, well,

viral. and dr. ptashne walks us through the issues, the controlling genes, and the pathways that trigger its awakening within a dormant host. if you care about this level of molecular control, and it is not your profession, but just a passion, you could not ask for a better guide ....

"A Genetic Switch" by Mark Ptashne is a modern classic of science writing. This book details the mechanism and presents the supporting data for the paradigm of bacterial gene regulation, the bacteriophage lambda repressor. What sets this book apart is not just the subject matter, but the clarity of Ptashne's writing and the superb illustrations that accompany his text. The combination of the two make the book useful for graduate students but also accessible for the general reader with an interest in science. Whenever new people join my laboratory, I have them read this book. Highly recommended.

From an undergraduate 4th year bio major, this book was an excellent, bad@\$\$ book that set me up for success on a lambda phage specific test. Its also, in general, a beautiful example of gene regulation-a perfect heist story of a cell.

Excellent title that sheds some light on how life, or not-life like viruses, works. You can read this book even if you are not a biologist, or if you have almost no scientific background. True, you might need to resort sometimes to Wikipedia in the later case, but you will likely gain something.

I found out about this unassuming little book in Sean Carroll's "Endless forms most beautiful" and was delighted. When I first started reading it, a stranger who saw me with it smiled and I soon found out why. It can be read by anyone with a modest scientific education (little more than high school) but it takes you up to the frontiers of research on gene regulation. Readers who remember the way "Scientific American" used to cover molecular biology in 1960's through the '80's (or have read reprints from that era) will appreciate the highly visual style and the clear prose. The genetic switchin question determines whether the genes of a virus that infects a bacterial cell will quietly integrate themselves into the bacterial genome and be copied along with the bacteria's genes each time the cell divides or use the cell's machinery to make many copies of itself, quickly destroying the cell in the process. If you are like me you'll be fascinated to learn how this switch works and about the experiments that revealed its secrets.

Quick read, very thorough and very interesting.

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