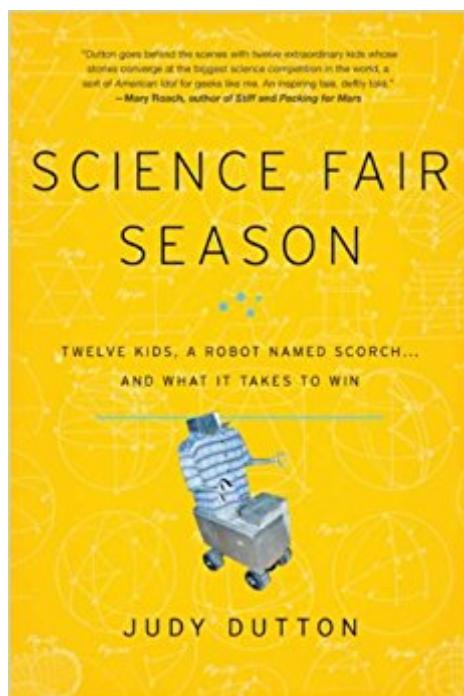


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# Science Fair Season: Twelve Kids, A Robot Named Scorch . . . And What It Takes To Win



## **Synopsis**

This is the engaging true story of kids competing in the high-stakes, high-drama world of international science fairs. Every year the Intel International Science & Engineering Fair brings together 1,500 high schoolers from more than 50 countries to compete for over \$4 million dollars in prizes and scholarships. These amazing kids are doing everything from creating bionic prosthetics to conducting groundbreaking stem cell research, from training drug-sniffing cockroaches to building a nuclear reactor. In Science Fair Season, Judy Dutton follows twelve teens looking for science fair greatness and tells the gripping stories of their road to the big competition. Some will win, some will lose, but all of their lives are changed forever. The Intel International Science & Engineering Fair is the most prominent science fair in the country, and it takes a special blend of drive, heart, and smarts to win there. Dutton goes inside the inner sanctum of science fair competitions and reveals the awe-inspiring projects and the competitors there. Each of the kids--ranging from a young Erin Brokovich who made the FBI watch list for taking on a big corporation, to a quietly driven boy who lives in a run-down trailer on a Navajo reservation, to a wealthy Connecticut girl who dreams of being an actress and finds her calling studying bees, to a troubled teenager in a juvenile detention facility, to the next Bill Gates--take readers on an unforgettable journey. Along the way, Science Fair Season gives readers a glimpse of America's brightest young minds and shows how our country is still a place for inventors and dreamers--the "geeks" our future depends upon.

## **Book Information**

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## Customer Reviews

The twelve teenagers profiled in this book all have compelling stories of not just brains, but determination, creativity, and hard work that deserve to be told. Judy Dutton does a good job of making the stories interesting, but she really needs a better editor or proofreader. I read the book twice--to myself and out loud to my husband while we traveled. I was frequently frustrated by errors. Of the mistakes I remember, at least one was factual--she placed the Manhattan Project in the wrong decade--which makes me wonder what other facts might have been wrong. There were inconsistencies that a good proofreader should have caught: "chili verde" in one paragraph and "chile verde" to describe the same dish two paragraphs later, "Arizona State University" and later "Arizona State College" (a name that has not been used since the 1950s) as the chosen college of one of the students, are just two examples. There were also spelling and grammatical errors. I'm not an English teacher, but a scientist, by training anyway, and I really enjoyed the book; I even plan to put it in my book club to circulate for the year. I'm just very disappointed in the sloppy execution of it. You can spare the comments of "picky, picky, picky." Good communication depends on getting it right.

Judy Dutton's book, *Science Fair Season*, took me by surprise. This truly wonderful book consists of a dozen stories of contestants in a national youth science fair, each chapter a story of some young person's science adventure. Ms. Dutton crisscrossed the country to meet with the young scientists. She did not know if they would be winners or not. She learned about their motivations, fears, aspirations, and life circumstances. Her narratives have an immediacy and a thrill that transcend mere reportage. I could not put this book down once I started reading it. There are a number of subtexts here: Yankee ingenuity, entrepreneurship, American youth, science education, winning the Cold War (if there still was one). But I like the subtext about people (young or not) engaged in engaging projects. Discourse about education tends to emphasize career goals. But how do you succeed at a career if you are not interested in the task itself? In *Science Fair Season*, people become engaged in projects of their own devise. They make things. Useful and interesting things. Because of her friendship with her cousin, one young woman developed a system for helping

autistic children learn to read. Another, who raises horses, developed a horse therapy program. A student who found out she had contracted leprosy created a project to dispel its myths. My favorite part of the ending was the contestant who was "as bubbly as ever" about not winning. "We went for the experience," she said. Science Fair Season inspired me--not because of the students' ages, but because they were absorbed in something meaningful, teaching us that the secret of the art (or science) of living is to do something that engages your interest. Okay, and I have to admit that I had several teary moments.

I really was gripped by the personal stories of the kids in this book, evocatively written by the author, Judy Dutton. There was the Navajo boy who built a solar-powered heater out of junk he'd found around town to heat his home. And the girl who exposed DuPont for dumping cancerous chemicals in the water supply--she's a total Erin Brokovich type. Another pretty, popular girl in Baton Rouge found out she had leprosy (who knew this disease still existed?), then outed herself by doing an award-winning science fair project on her disease. Another boy, dubbed "The Next Bill Gates," did a nanotech project led to five patents and a \$12 million company. Every chapter will amaze you--and keep you wondering who will win big at the end of the book! This is a great summer read. I thought it was funny and heartfelt, and I (a science-tard) learned a lot too.

Even if you don't know anything about science, kids, or haven't been in school for decades, Science Fair Season will suck you in from page one. From a little girl who helps develop a treatment for Autism to a 14 year-old who built a nuclear fission reactor that's now people used by the U.S. government, these children's stories will amaze, challenge, and humble you. Dutton weaves these incredible stories with engaging writing and shows how bright our future looks with these kids who will undoubtedly lead the way.--Elise Nersesian-Sole

This book shows that it doesn't really matter how a parent teaches their kid, as long as they are inspired. Some of these kids were impoverished, and knew that they needed science to get them out of poverty. Other kids were unschooled, but supported tremendously by their parents, and led them to monetize science. Other kids' parents were chasing their brilliance...teaming a elementary kid with an ex-engineer produced a young roboticist destined for recognition. This enfolded dramatically. Yeah Judy. I've got to look at your other books.

I don't think science fairs were around when I was a kid. Labs consisted of doing simple chemical

reactions exactly as instructed. So how come school kids are coming up with research that looks far more interesting than many a doctoral thesis? This book answers this question by taking us on a detailed look at some of the kids involved and how they got there. The journey is exciting, entertaining and a lot more varied than I had imagined. The book takes you deep into their lives and families, it a book about people far more than science. It does not, nor does it aim to, give you detailed description of their actual experimental designs and methodology, so people without any particular interest in science can enjoy the very human stories.

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