

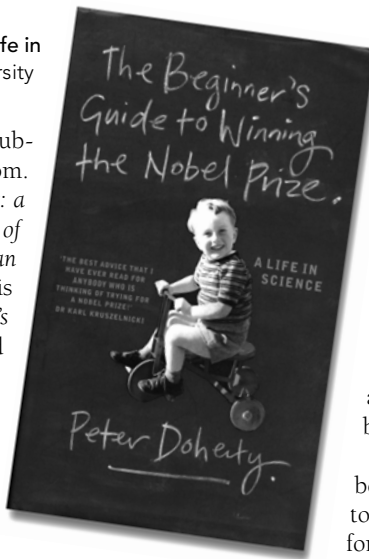
## A primer for the Nobel Prize

**The beginner's guide to winning the Nobel Prize. A life in science.** Peter Doherty. Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2005 (304 pp, \$34.95). ISBN 0 522 85120 7.

**NOBEL LAUREATES** are particularly prone to publishing their memoirs and sharing their wisdom. Examples include James Watson's *The double helix: a personal account of the discovery of the structure of DNA* and Macfarlane Burnet's *Changing patterns: an atypical autobiography*. The latest addition to this passing parade is Peter Doherty's *The beginner's guide to winning the Nobel Prize*. The title stimulated me, but it may deter other readers.

Doherty and Rolf Zinkernagel won the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1996.

The book has many themes: selected autobiographical details; forays into the history of the science of medicine; the story of the progress of immunology in the 20th century and the many Nobel Prizes gained along the way; the immunological research that won Doherty and Zinkernagel the Nobel Prize; the human aspects of the modern research enterprise and its



culture; and the people and areas of research that are contenders for future Nobel Prizes. More accessible topics are Doherty's views on science and religion, politics and the media, and the importance for a nation's economy of supporting the research enterprise. All these topics are embellished with Doherty's wisdom and wit.

The book's encyclopaedic coverage is both its strength and its weakness. Its continuity is broken at times by poorly placed and unnecessary diversions. Despite this, I persisted, in pursuit of the advice promised in the book's title. Ultimately, the answer was revealed, but you will have to read the book yourself for the revelation.

It is difficult to know to whom to recommend the book. It could be for anyone, from the curious citizen to the young scientist wanting to become street-smart for his or her journey to Stockholm and the Nobel Prize.

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