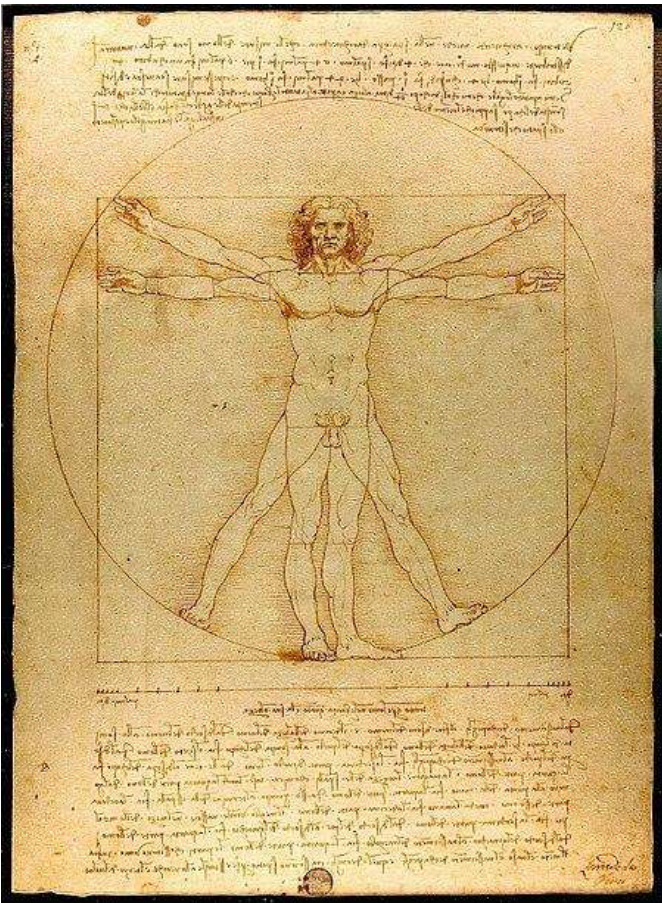


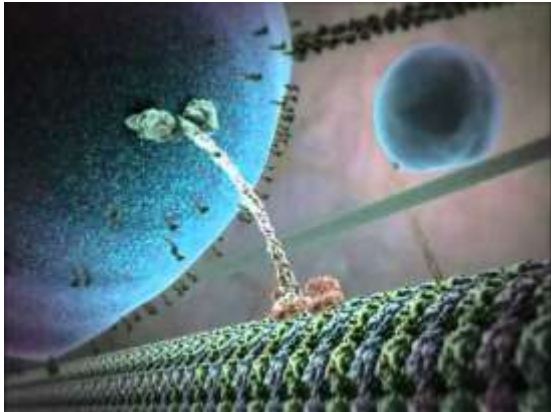
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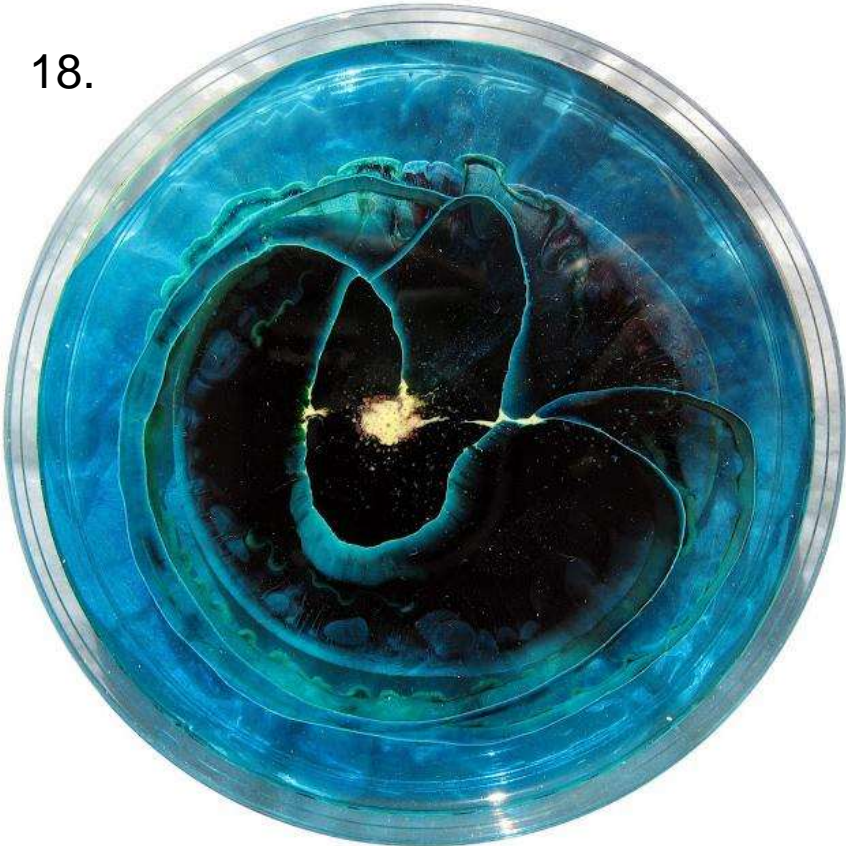
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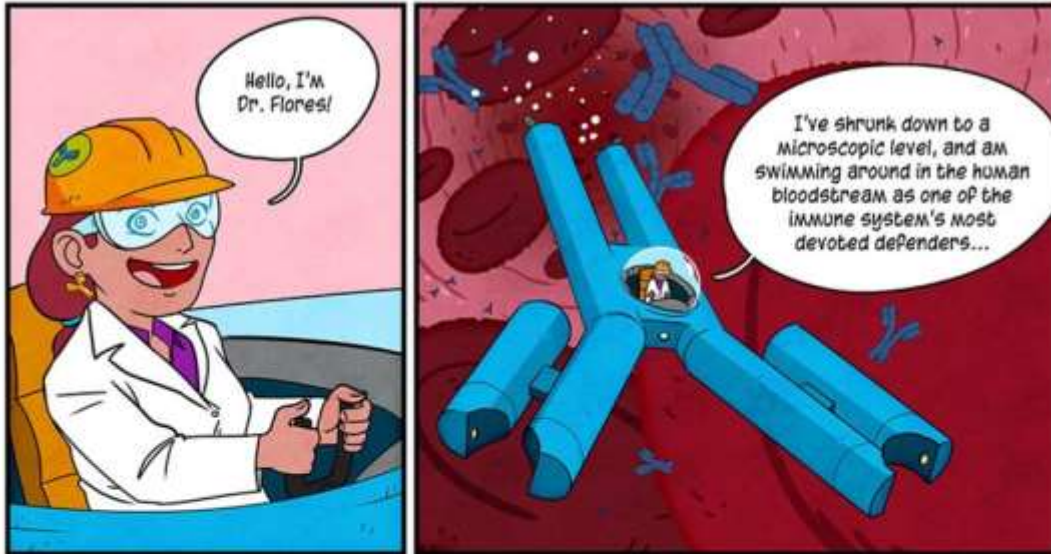
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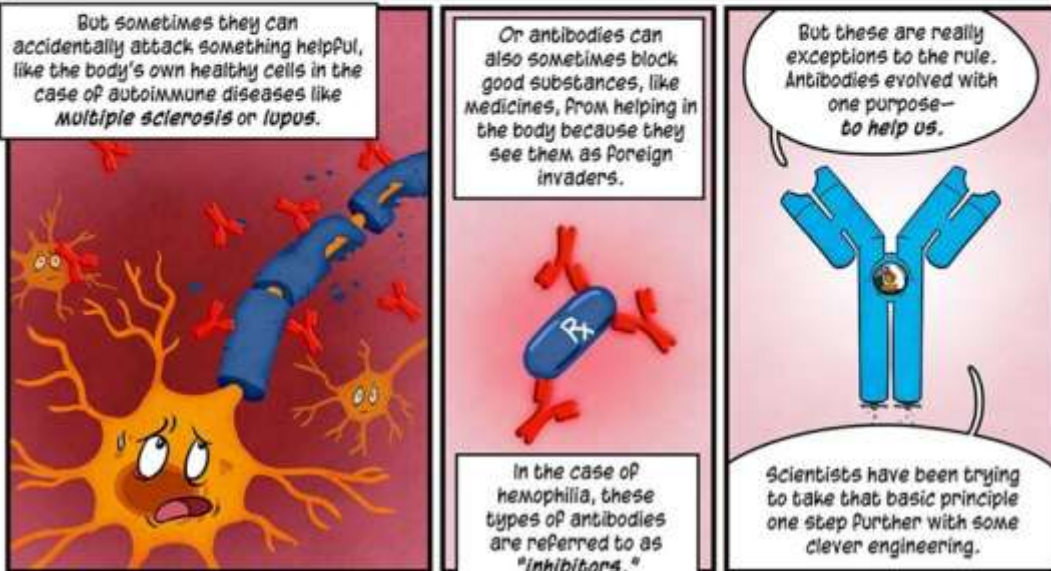
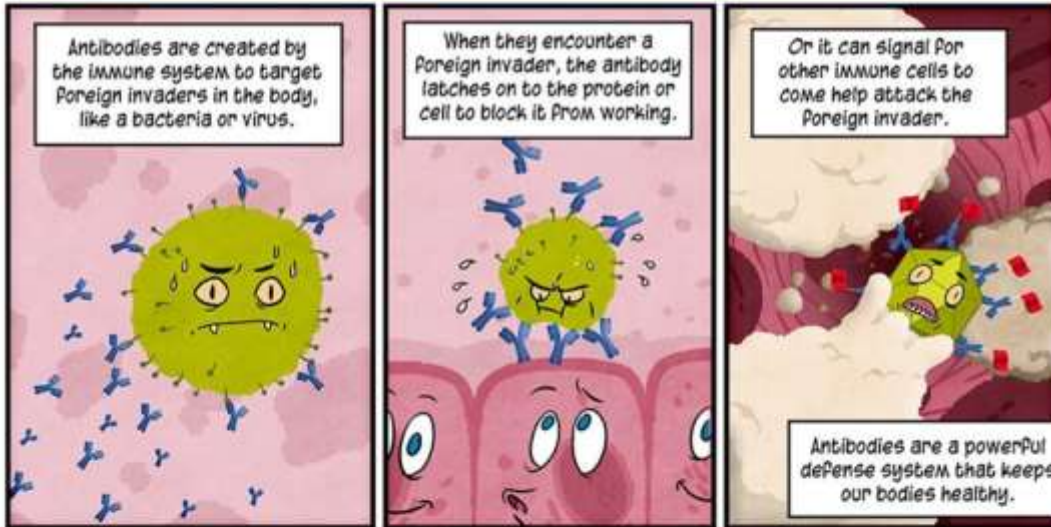
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THE ANTIBODY



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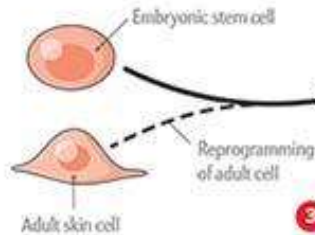


MANUFACTURING BRAIN PARTS

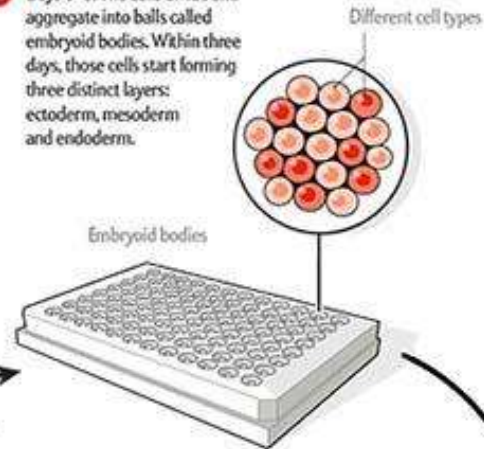
Grow Your Own

The technology that coaxes stem cells to develop into different types of biological tissue has now been used to grow a part of the brain that contains the cortex and other structures and is responsible for such higher mental functions as processing information from the outside world, forming memories and making decisions. To create such a mini brain, researchers give a tiny ball of cells nutrients and a bed on which to grow; then the cells recapitulate much of the developmental process that occurs in the early embryo.

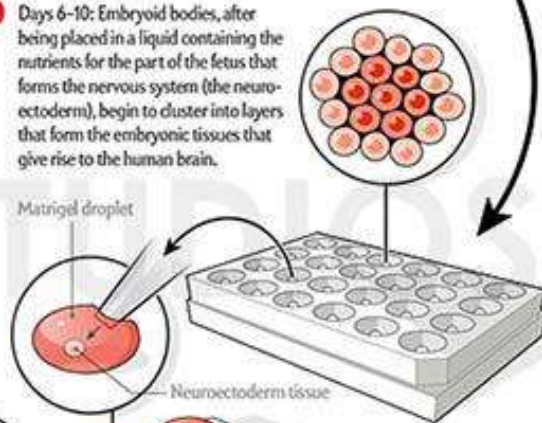
- 1** The procedure begins with embryonic stem cells or induced pluripotent stem cells capable of turning into any cell type in the body. The latter cells can be derived from adult skin or blood cells that have been genetically altered.



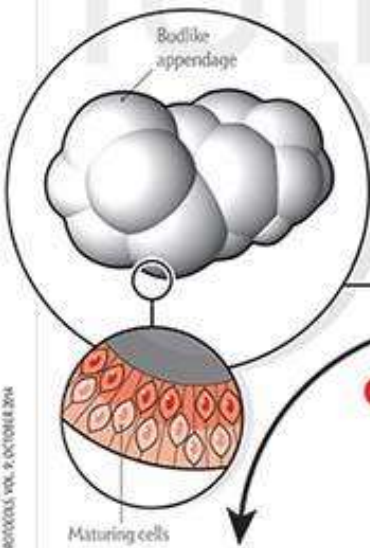
- 2** Days 0-5: The cells divide and aggregate into balls called embryoid bodies. Within three days, those cells start forming three distinct layers: ectoderm, mesoderm and endoderm.



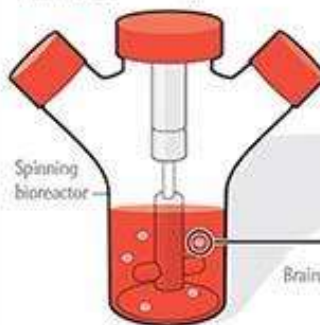
- 3** Days 6-10: Embryoid bodies, after being placed in a liquid containing the nutrients for the part of the fetus that forms the nervous system (the neuroectoderm), begin to cluster into layers that form the embryonic tissues that give rise to the human brain.



- 4** Days 11-15: Tiny balls of neuroectoderm are embedded in Matrigel—a medium rich in chemicals that stimulate cells to divide, prevent them from dying and provide an environment that supports growth of budlike appendages, a prelude to development of fully formed brain structures.



- 5** Days 15-30: Matrigel droplets are transferred to a spinning bioreactor or a device known as an orbital shaker. In the gel, the embryoid bodies grow into brain organoids—three-dimensional, white balls of tissue that resemble the forebrain of a growing human fetus. The organoids can be used to study brain development and disorders that occur early in life.

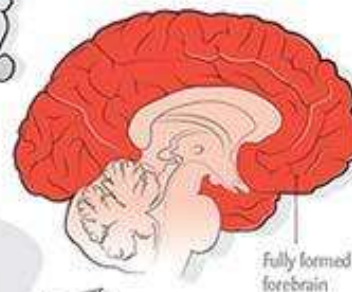


10-week-old embryo forebrain

Analogue

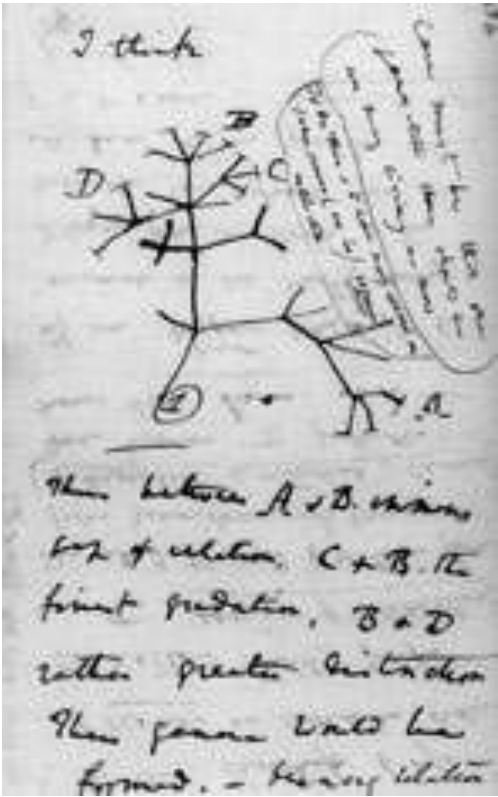


Outcome: After a month of nurturing the stem cell concoction, the cultures are strikingly similar to the forebrain of a 10-week-old embryo. This brain region includes the cortex (the large, folded outer structure) and the choroid plexus (the region that generates cerebrospinal fluid).



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2017

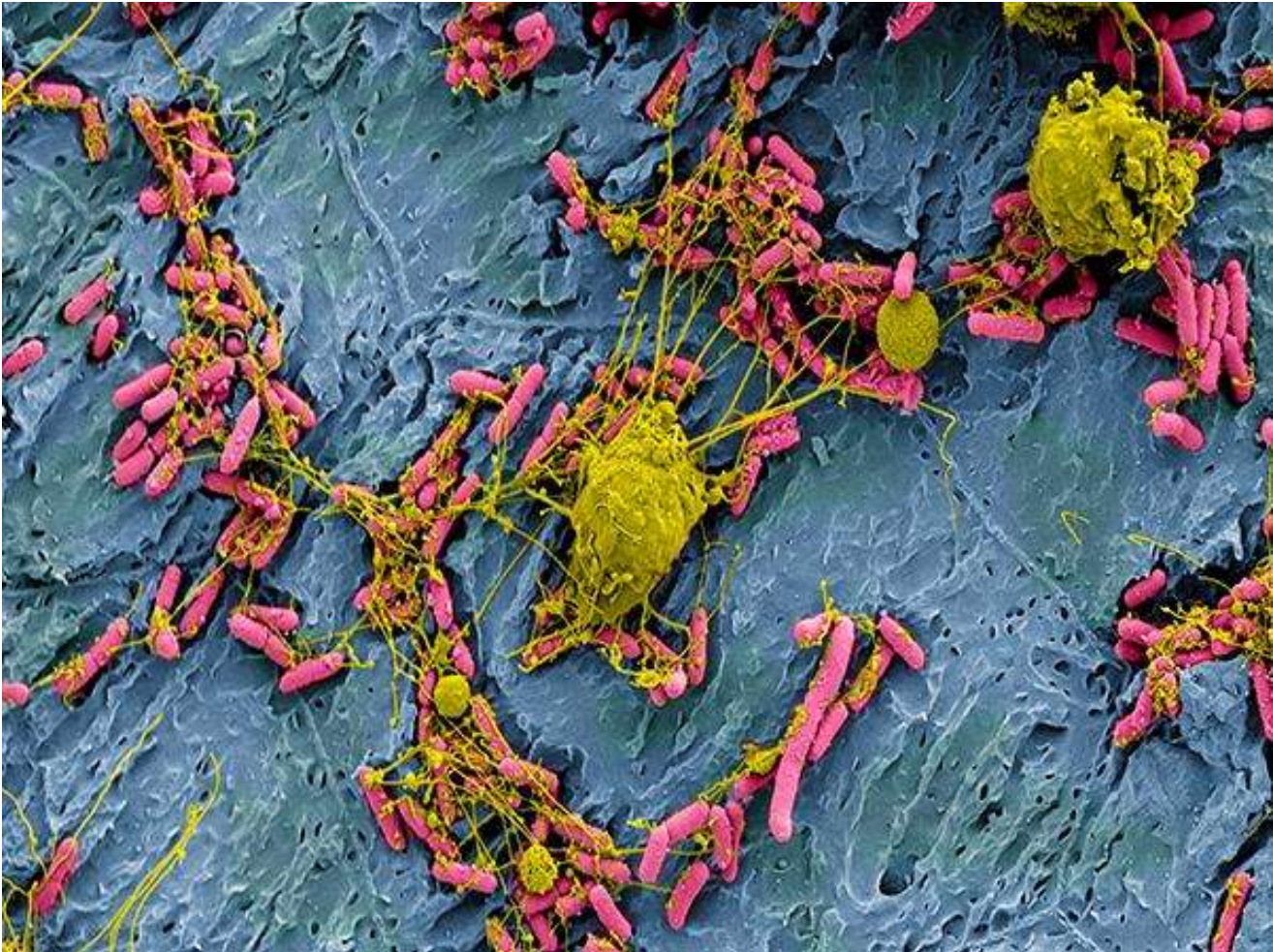
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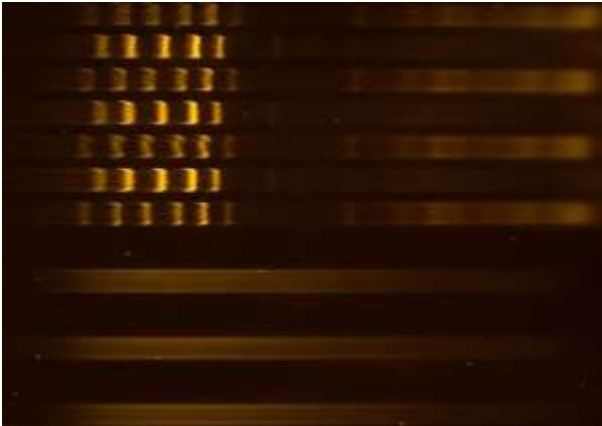
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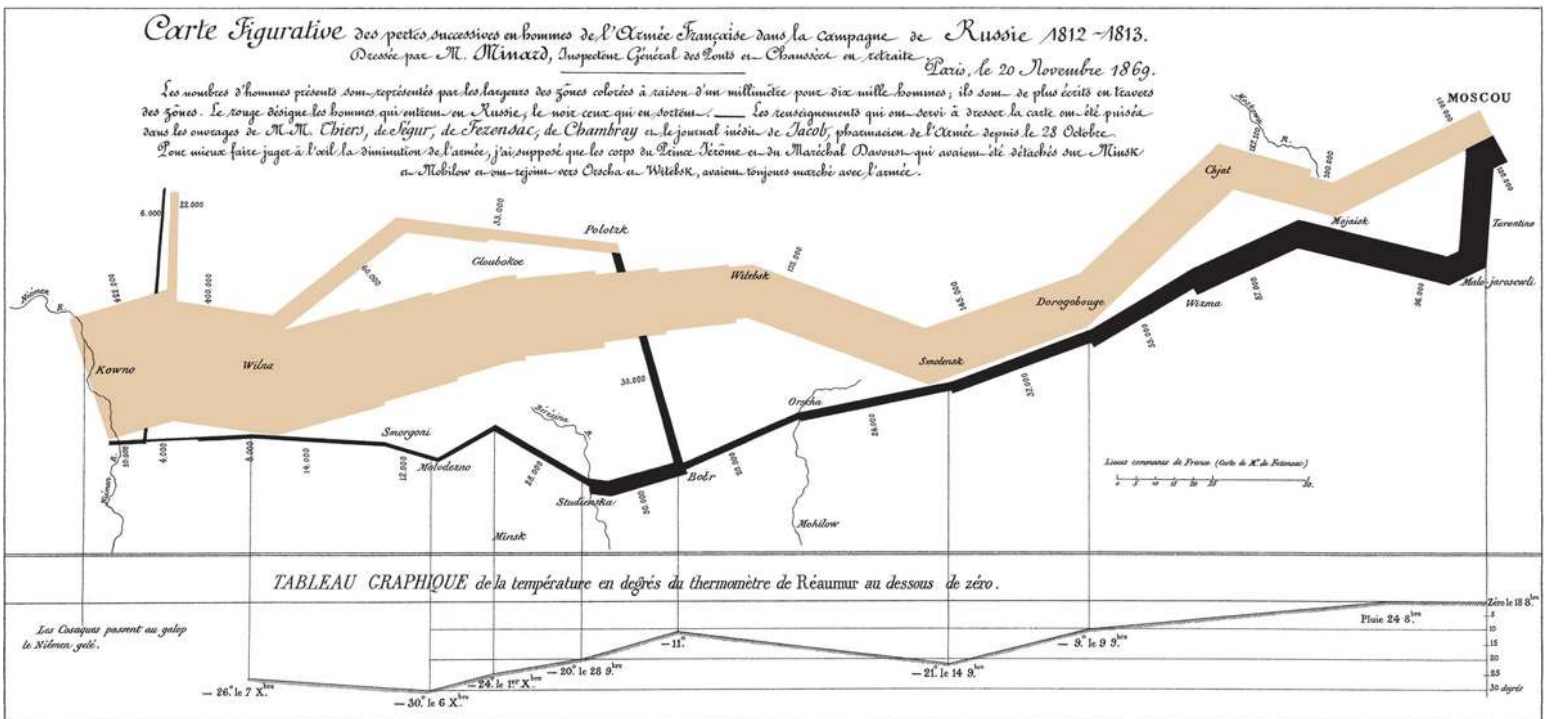
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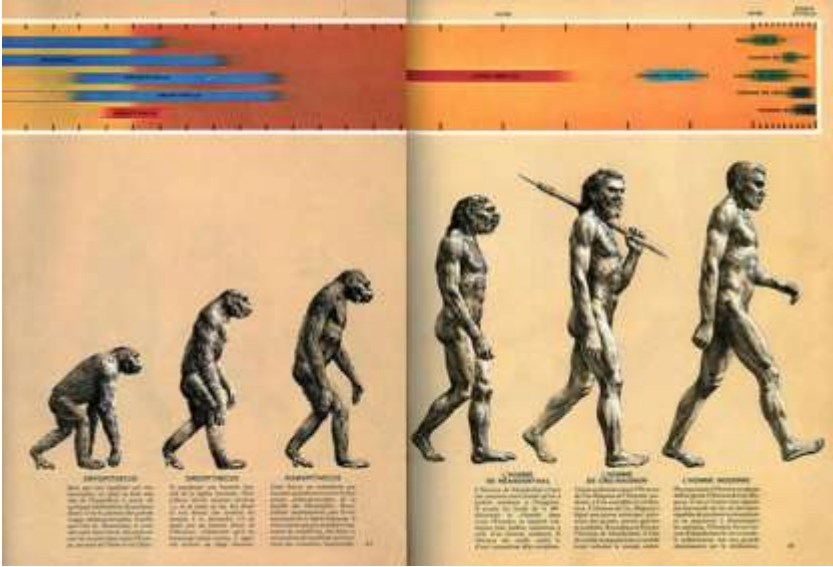
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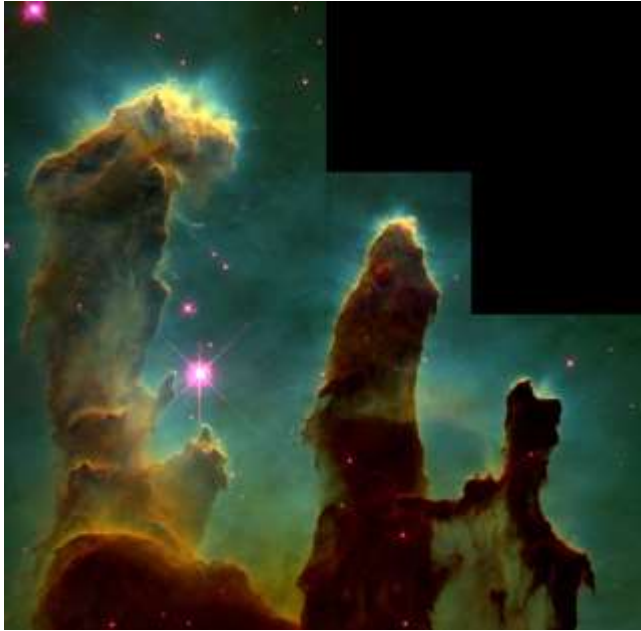
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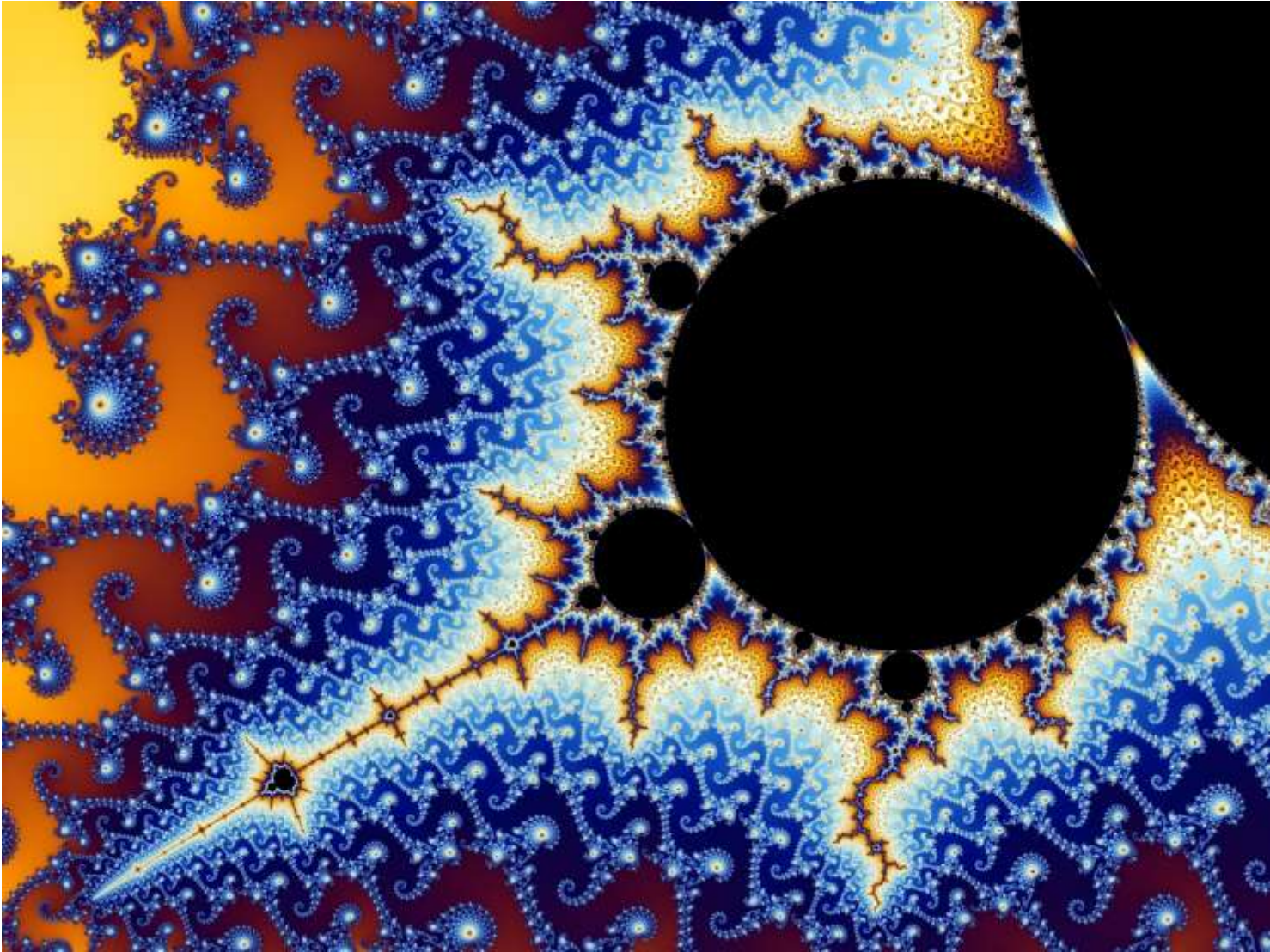
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Briefings

SNIP VS. SHRED

While CRISPR-Cas9 genome editing gets all the headlines, its cousin may revolutionize the fight against bad bacteria.

THE POWERFUL GENOME-EDITING TECHNOLOGY known as CRISPR-Cas made headlines this year—partly because many leading biologists called for a moratorium last March against using it to modify the genomes of human embryos, only to discover in April that Chinese scientists had already done just that.

But CRISPR-Cas is more than a genetic engineering tool with profound ethical implications. In fact, the tool itself is a modified version of one of several types of naturally occurring bacterial immune systems that fight bacteriophages (viruses that infect bacteria). The particular system that researchers have adapted for gene-editing is a relatively rare and simple one called CRISPR-Cas9. Scott Barris, PhD, associate professor in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, recently described the atomic structure of a far more complex, and far more complicated, CRISPR-Cas system called CRISPR-Cas10—one with profound implications of its own.

Bacteria use CRISPR-Cas systems to store the genetic signatures of phages that have previously infected them. These viral DNA shreds appear in host DNA as stretches of viral DNA separated by short, repetitive sequences. (CRISPR stands for “clustered, regularly interspaced, short palindromic repeats.”) When a phage invades, CRISPR-Cas compares stage DNA to its archive of previous invaders. If a match is found, Cas9 cuts the invading DNA like a pair of molecular scissors, while Cascade enlists Cas3 to shred the viral DNA.

Using synthetic RNA, scientists can program CRISPR-Cas9 to target specific genes, allowing them to disrupt, delete or replace DNA more quickly, easily and cheaply than ever before. And whereas making changes to multiple genes at the same time was once

The infographic illustrates the CRISPR-Cas9 mechanism in six steps: 1. Virus DNA enters bacterial cell system. 2. Viral DNA enters bacterial cell system. 3. Cascade system recognizes viral DNA with Cas9. 4. CRISPR-Cas9 system integrates viral DNA. 5. Cas9 cuts viral DNA. 6. DNA shredder (Cas3) shreds viral DNA. The diagram also shows the Cas9 protein with its guide RNA and target DNA, and the Cascade complex. It includes illustrations of a cow and a dog, and a small inset of a bacteriophage.

ORIGINS
The CRISPR-Cas system was discovered by many scientists (researchers who worked to help phages fight against the bacteria and vice versa) one by one in the 1980s and 1990s.

APPLICATION
CRISPR-Cas9 has been used to gene edit numerous organisms (it can edit nearly any animal and plant to improve crop yield, in addition to helping fight diseases in livestock, including the ability to produce HIV-free milk). A further problem and its fix is a bacterium that causes cattle disease.

INSIGHTS
Understanding how CRISPR-Cas10 works could help the development of tools, which may eventually revolutionize the field and lead to a number of other applications. CRISPR-Cas10's large, complex structure may be a common feature of many CRISPR-Cas systems. It may also be a key to understanding the evolution of CRISPR-Cas systems and their role in the immune system of bacteria.

CAS9
Cas9 acts as both an antibody and an enzyme, giving bacteria the power to recognize viral DNA.

CAS3
Cas3 has endonuclease properties that cut and shred viral DNA.

DNA SHREDDER
Cas3, powered by the CRISPR-Cas9, shreds viral DNA on the fly.

PRECISE CUTS
CRISPR-Cas9 can be used to precisely edit DNA. It can be used to delete, insert, or replace DNA. It can be used to create a library of genetic variants. It can be used to study the function of genes. It can be used to create a library of genetic variants. It can be used to study the function of genes.

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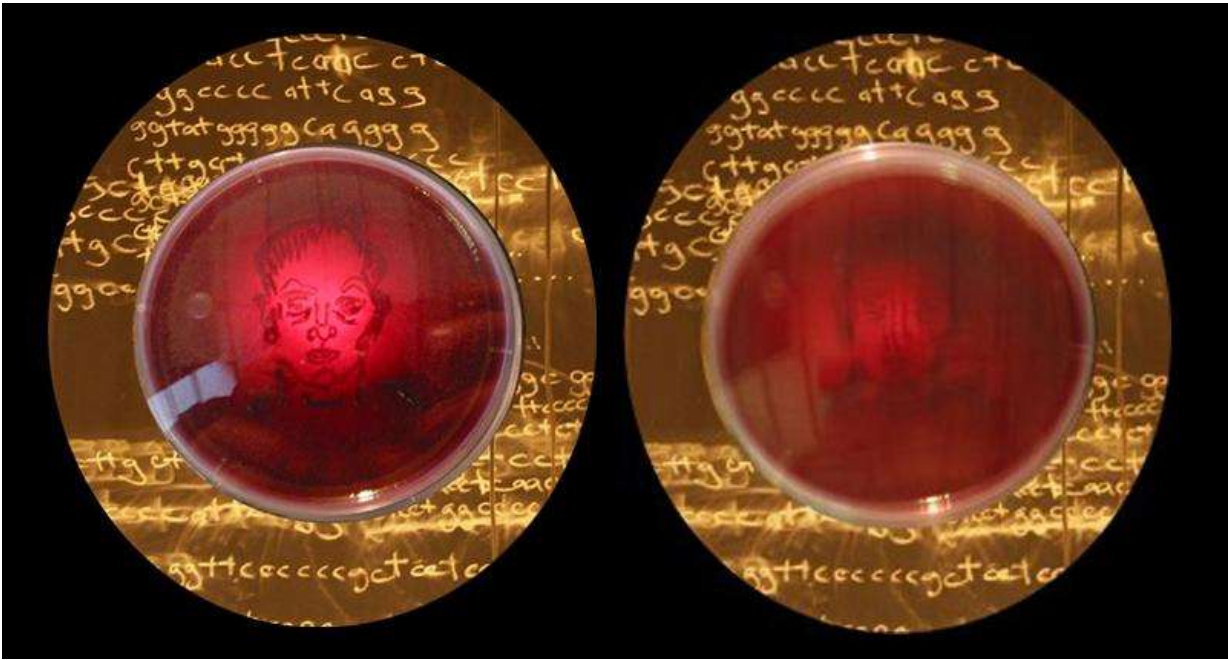
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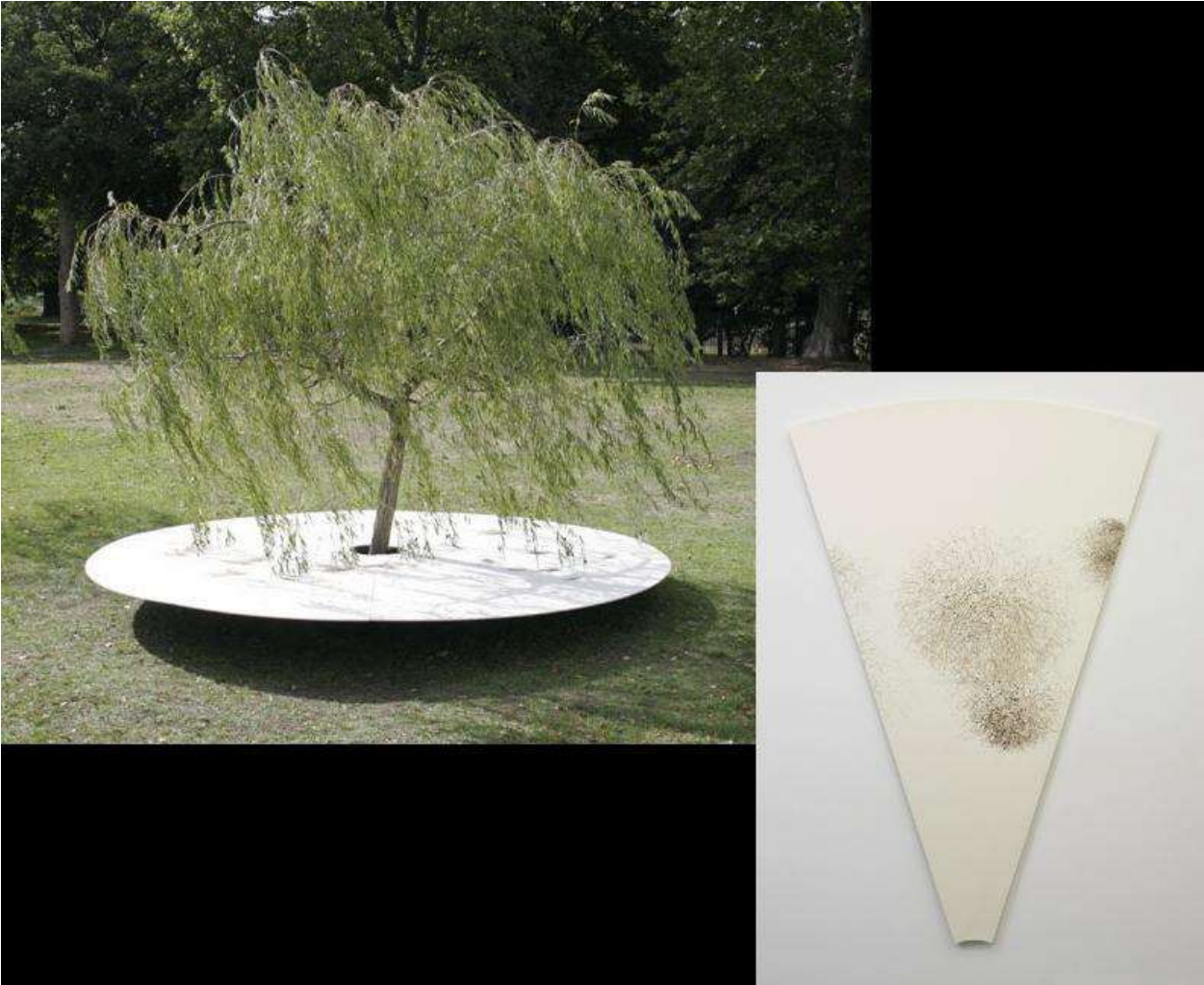
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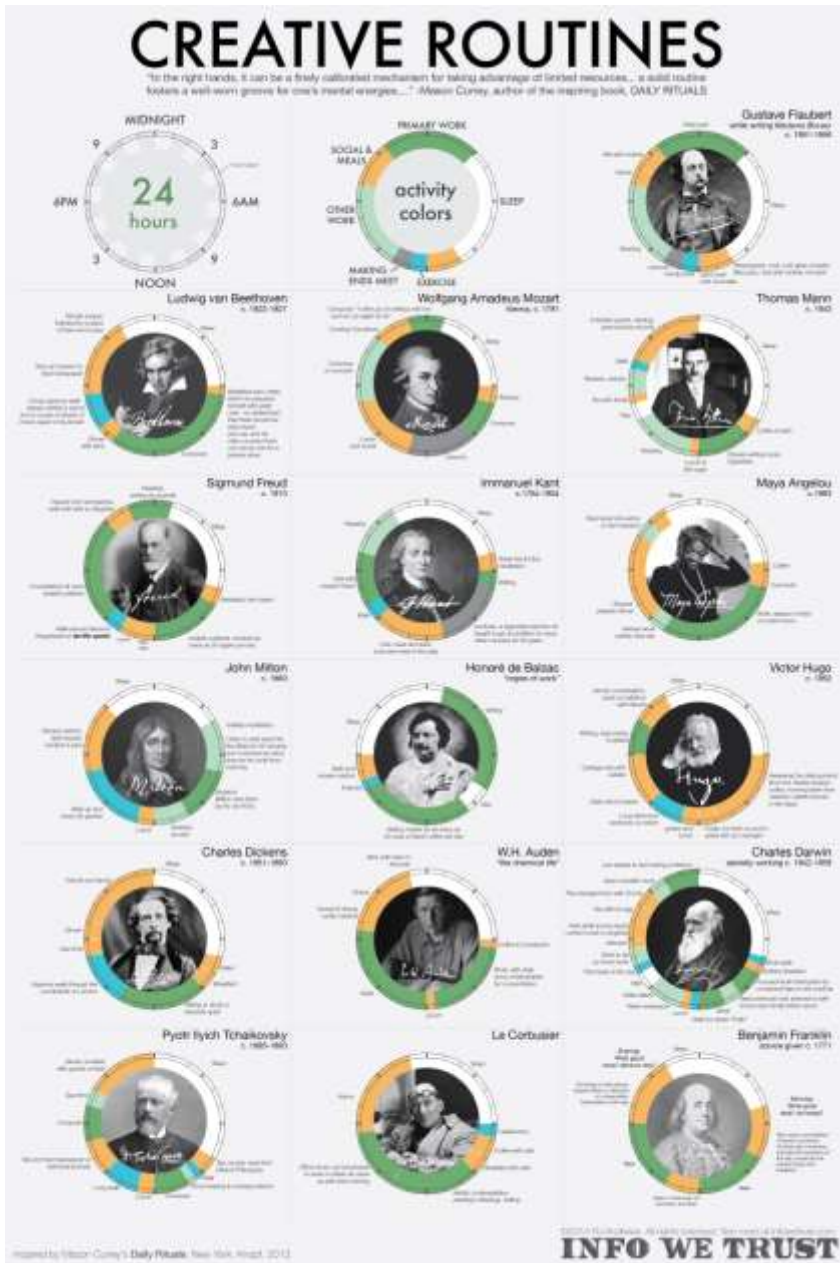
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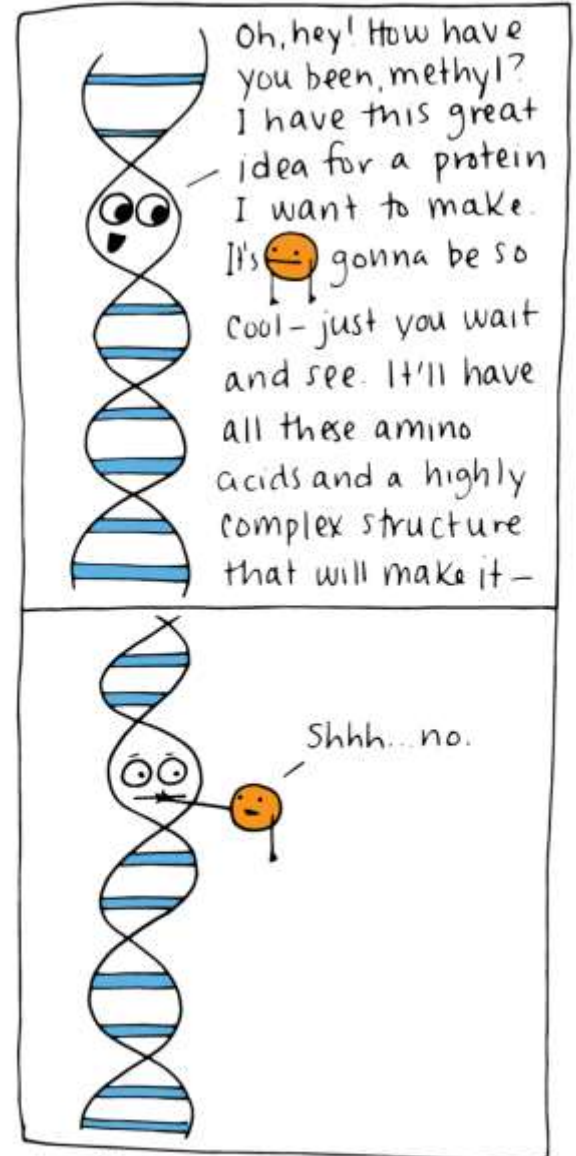
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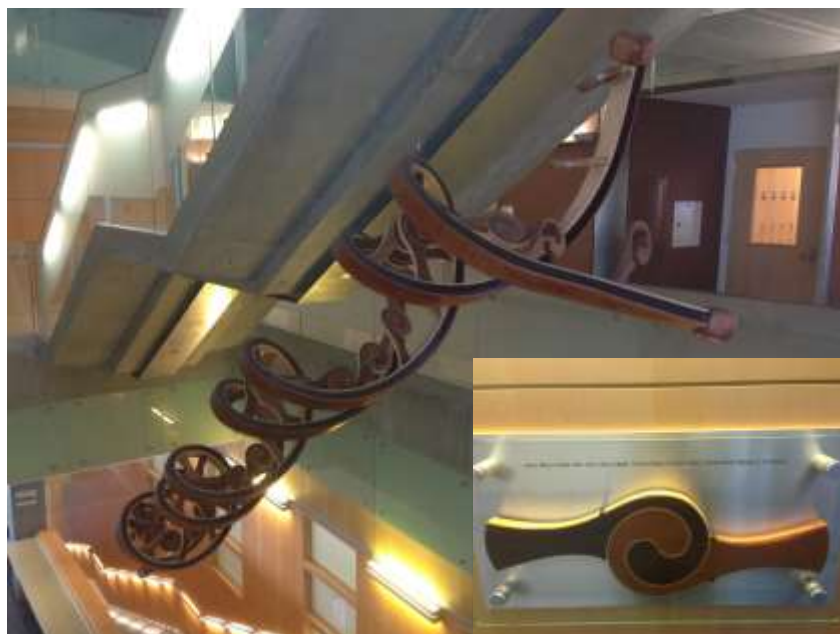
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Another gene silenced.
 •Beatrice the Biologist



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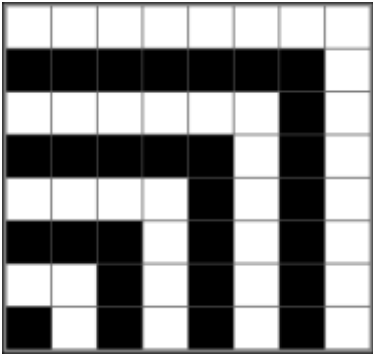
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