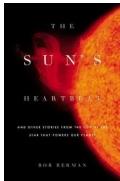


The sun's heartbeat : and other stories from the life of the star that powers our planet

The Sun's Heartbeat



Browsing the new science books, I came across The Sun's Heartbeat. I picked it up expecting a rather dry collection of facts and was immediately engaged by a chapter titled "The Wild Science of the Bearded Men."

Not only can Bob Berman write but he also has that gift shared by all the best science writers: the ability to translate complex scientific terms into language that anyone can understand.

This book provides a compelling overview of several thousand years of sun research including the great sunspot controversy of the 17th century. The invention of the telescope in 1608 spurred a race to discover facts about the sun. Johannes Fabricius and his father discovered little spots on the sun and excitedly watched them for days until they burnt out their retinal cells. An English astronomer who had voyaged to Roanoke with the English explorers also began recording sunspots. And Galileo himself entered the fray. In fact, Galileo engaged in a decades-long fight with the German professor Christoph Scheiner over sunspots. Over who discovered them first--in fact, neither had, over whether the sun has an atmosphere, and many other topics.

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