

Genetics

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ADDISON-WESLEY PUBLISHING COMPANY

Reading, Massachusetts / Menlo Park, California / London
Amsterdam / Don Mills, Ontario / Sydney

Genetics

Sponsoring Editor: Nancy J. Kralowetz
Developmental Editors: Katharine Gregg and Nancy Shapiro
Production Manager: Martha K. Morong
Production Editor: Laura R. Skinger
Designer: Rita Naughton
Cover Designer: Patricia O'Hare Williams
Art Coordinator: Kristin Belanger
Illustrator: Oxford Illustrators

HT323 .G3
1984

ELSETH, G. D.
GENETICS

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Elseth, G. D. (Gerald D.), 1936-
Genetics

Includes index.

I. Genetics. I. Baumgardner, Kandy D., 1946-

II. Title.

QH430.E38 1984 575.1 83-9293
ISBN 0-201-03953-2

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ABCDEFGHIJ-DO-8987654

Preface

Genetics, the science of heredity, deals with the factors responsible for the similarities and differences between generations. These factors affect form and function at many different levels, from the molecules of cells to populations of organisms. The concepts of genetics are thus fundamental to all the biological sciences and play a central role in the study of modern biology.

The purpose of this book is to provide an introduction to genetics that is readable and challenging to students and broad enough in scope to serve as the textbook in a one-quarter, one-semester, or two-quarter general genetics course. In this text, we are giving what we feel is a balanced coverage of the major areas of genetics: cytogenetics, molecular genetics, population genetics, quantitative genetics, and transmission genetics, but in a fashion such that the component parts can be dissected out for individual course needs. The concepts and techniques of these areas are presented along with sufficient historical background to show how many of the important principles have evolved. Introductory topics, such as basic Mendelism, probability, and mitosis and meiosis, are explained in full, and many practical applications to fields such as agriculture and medicine are given. The book is thus suited for use in courses where students have varied backgrounds and interests.

The book consists of seventeen chapters, which are arranged into seven discrete sections to provide flexibility in the order of their use. The chapters start with a description of Mendel's experiments and the application of Mendel's rules of inheritance. This historical introduction is followed by a consideration of the rules of counting and probability and their application in the analysis of genetic crosses. Probability is introduced early in the book to maximize its use in problem solving. Five chapters (Chapters 5 through 8 and Chapter 12) deal with the concepts of cytogenetics and transmission genetics. The emphasis throughout these chapters is on the chromosomal basis of inheritance. Six chapters (Chapters 3 and 4, Chapters 9 through 11, and Chapter 17) cover topics related to the molecular basis of inheritance, and are more chemically oriented than the others. Although DNA, RNA, and proteins are considered at length, chemical notation and jargon are kept to a minimum since the text does not presuppose a course in organic chemistry. The remaining four chapters (Chapters 13 through 16) discuss population and quantitative genetics. Quantitative inheritance, selection, and breeding principles are covered in greater depth in these chapters than in most introductory texts, and thus serve as a useful source of information for students specializing in

animal and plant breeding. Other useful features of the book include an extensive glossary of terms and frequent internal summaries within each chapter, which help the student in reviewing important terms and concepts.

Although genetics is a comparatively young science, having developed primarily in the twentieth century, the growth of knowledge in this field has been phenomenal. Progress has been particularly impressive at the molecular level. As more discoveries are made, more techniques are developed that enable geneticists to probe even deeper into the molecular basis of inheritance. Research in modern genetics has therefore become a mushrooming industry that continues to open up exciting new areas of inquiry. The area of genetic engineering is a well-publicized example, in which recent technological advances have served to broaden our understanding of genetics at the molecular level and have provided new approaches to the synthesis of drugs and other chemicals and to pollution control. These new technologies also promise to have a major impact on the agricultural and medical sciences by providing tools for crop and livestock improvement and cures for genetic diseases. Since these new technologies have potential applications in all areas of genetics, we have included a detailed account of the current accomplishments and future prospects of genetic engineering in the last chapter, after the more traditional topics have been discussed.

Genetics is an analytical branch of science in which principles are expressed in quantitative terms. A certain amount of mathematics is therefore unavoidable. Despite the quantitative nature of the subject, the mathematical operations used in elementary genetics are not difficult, but require only the elements of algebra and a basic understanding of probability. A problem approach is used in this book to help the student develop the needed analytic skills and to provide the student with an opportunity to apply these skills to the analysis of genetic experiments. Graded sets of supplementary problems and review questions are included at the end of each chapter with answers given at the end of the text. The problems vary in character and degree of difficulty, and range from exercises that provide necessary repetition of basic skills to questions that are designed to challenge the student and test his or her comprehension of the subject material. Great care has been taken in the development of the problems to provide a useful teaching aid and to illustrate the wide range of applications of this area of study. Since students entering a beginning genetics course usually have little experience with problem solving, the book includes several numerical examples in the body of the text and number of solved example problems that are set off from the text proper. The solved example problems extend and amplify basic principles and help to familiarize the student with the logical sequence of steps that can be used in finding solutions to problem situations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project could not have been completed without the assistance of many people. We wish to thank our reviewers, Glenn Bewley, North Carolina State University; L. Herbert Bruneau, Oklahoma State University; Ronald P. Cantrell, Purdue University; David P. Campbell, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona; Thomas C. Gray,

University of Kentucky; Robert E. Goodwill, University of Kentucky; Nancy Z. Hartung, College of St. Thomas; Barbara Hollar, Mercy College; Becky B. Johnson, Oklahoma State University; Clifford Johnson, University of Florida; J. Spencer Johnston, Texas A & M University; David Knauff, University of Florida; Larry Leamy, California State University at Long Beach; Margaret Y. Menzel, Florida State University; and Henry Schaffer, North Carolina State University for their critical reading of the manuscript. Their valuable comments and suggestions helped to shape the text into its final form. Any errors that remain are the authors' responsibility. We also gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Ms. Connie Huber, who took responsibility for obtaining permissions and artwork and helped in many other ways. Credits for illustrations and tables from individuals or publications are given as these materials appear in the text. We especially wish to thank those people who provided photographs and other illustrative material. Finally, we are grateful to the talented staff of Addison-Wesley for their enthusiasm, competence, and support, particularly to Ms. Nancy Kralowetz, editor, Mr. Dick Morton and Ms. Kristin Belanger and staff, art, and Ms. Laura Skinger and staff, production department.

Abridged Contents

Part I	<i>Basic Mendelian Inheritance</i>	1
1	Mendelian Principles	3
2	Chance and Mendelian Ratios	43
	Suggested Readings/Part I	66
Part II	<i>Nucleic Acids and Chromosomes</i>	67
3	Nature of the Genetic Material	69
4	Structure and Replication of Chromosomes	113
	Suggested Readings/Part II	150
Part III	<i>The Chromosomal Basis of Gene Transmission</i>	151
5	Chromosomes and Sexual Reproduction	153
6	Allelic Genes on Autosomes and Sex Chromosomes	195
7	Linked Genes and Chromosome Mapping in Eukaryotes	235
8	Extensions of Gene Transmission Analysis	289
	Suggested Readings/Part III	328
Part IV	<i>The Molecular Basis of Gene Expression</i>	331
9	The Transfer of Genetic Information	333
10	Organization and Regulation of Genes in Chromosomes	383
	Suggested Readings/Part IV	423
Part V	<i>Mutation</i>	425
11	Mechanisms of Mutation and Repair	427
12	Chromosome Abnormalities	481
	Suggested Readings/Part V	525
Part VI	<i>Population and Quantitative Genetics</i>	527
13	Genetics of Populations	529
14	Genetic Processes of Evolution	561
15	Quantitative Inheritance	607
16	Mating Systems and Selective Breeding	645
	Suggested Readings/Part VI	683
Part VII	<i>Genetic Engineering</i>	685
17	Approaches to Genetic Engineering	687
	Suggested Readings/Part VII	731
	GLOSSARY	733
	ANSWERS TO PROBLEMS	747
	INDEX	755

Contents

I Basic Mendelian Inheritance

Chapter 1 Mendelian Principles 3

The Mendelian Approach to Genetic Analysis	4
PRINCIPLE OF GENETIC SEGREGATION	7
Segregation Ratios with Dominance	7
<i>The basic model: Interpretation of results</i>	8
<i>Progeny testing: Detecting heterozygotes</i>	11
<i>Dominant/recessive inheritance in humans</i>	15
Modifications of Monohybrid Ratios	16
<i>Dominance relationships</i>	17
<i>Lethal genes</i>	19
To Sum Up	
PRINCIPLE OF INDEPENDENT ASSORTMENT	23
Two Gene Pairs: Segregation Ratios with Dominance	23
<i>Testcross results</i>	27
Ratios without Complete Dominance	27
Two or More Genes Affecting the Same Character	29
<i>Inheritance of coat color</i>	30
Interaction between Nonallelic Genes	32
<i>Complementary gene interaction</i>	32
<i>Modifier gene interaction</i>	35
<i>Duplicate gene interaction</i>	36
To Sum Up	37
QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS	38

Chapter 2 Chance and Mendelian Ratios 43

BASICS OF GENETIC ALGEBRA	44
<i>Counting the Ways That Events Can Occur</i>	44
<i>Permutations and combinations</i>	46
Applications to the Analysis of Genetic Crosses	49
To Sum Up	51
PROBABILITY AND GENETICS	51
Fundamental Rules of Probability	52

Calculating Mendelian Ratios	55
Binomial Probability	56
To Sum Up	59
TESTS OF SIGNIFICANCE: DETERMINING "GOODNESS-OF-FIT"	59
The Chi-Square Test	61
QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS	64
<i>Suggested Readings/Part I</i>	66

II Nucleic Acids and Chromosomes

Chapter 3 Nature of the Genetic Material 69

PROKARYOTES AND EUKARYOTES	70
The Prokaryotic Cell	71
Bacterial growth	71
Eukaryotic Cells	71
DNA AS THE GENETIC MATERIAL	73
Genetic Transformation	74
Discovery of the transforming agent	74
Replication of Bacterial Viruses	77
The Hershey-Chase experiment	79
To Sum Up	81
STRUCTURE OF DNA AND RNA	81
Primary Structure of Nucleic Acids	81
Structure of the nucleotides	81
Organization of nucleotides into polynucleotide chains	83
Secondary Structure of DNA	85
Nature of the double helix	85
Physicochemical properties of the double helix	91
DNA hybridization	92
To Sum Up	94
FUNCTIONS OF DNA	94
DNA Replication	95
The Meselson-Stahl experiment	95
Enzymatic synthesis of DNA: The DNA polymerases	97
Discontinuous replication of DNA	101
Mutation of DNA	104
Mutation as an error in base pairing	105
To Sum Up	108
QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS	109

Chapter 4 Structure and Replication of Chromosomes 113

CHROMOSOMES OF VIRUSES AND BACTERIA	114
Chromosomes of Viruses	114
The virion	114
The vegetative virus	115
Provirus	121

Chromosomes of Bacteria	122
<i>Plasmids</i>	125
<i>Replication of bacterial chromosomes</i>	127
To Sum Up	129
CHROMOSOMES OF EUKARYOTES	129
The Cell Cycle	130
<i>DNA replication</i>	132
Mitosis	132
<i>Prophase</i>	132
<i>Metaphase</i>	136
<i>Anaphase</i>	137
<i>Telophase</i>	137
Molecular Organization of Nuclear Chromosomes	138
<i>Nucleosomes</i>	139
<i>Nonhistone proteins</i>	144
Organelles and Their Chromosomes	144
<i>Chromosomes of mitochondria and chloroplasts</i>	145
To Sum Up	147
QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS	148
<i>Suggested Readings/Part II</i>	150

III

The Chromosomal Basis of Gene Transmission

Chapter 5 Chromosomes and Sexual Reproduction 153

THE SEXUAL REPRODUCTIVE PROCESS	154
Reproductive Cycles	154
Meiosis	154
<i>Stages of meiosis</i>	156
<i>The meiotic basis for Mendel's laws</i>	159
<i>Crossing over</i>	161
Gametogenesis	164
<i>Spermatogenesis</i>	164
<i>Oogenesis</i>	165
<i>Gametogenesis in plants</i>	167
Fertilization	170
<i>Mammals</i>	170
<i>Flowering plants</i>	170
To Sum Up	172
SEXUAL REPRODUCTION IN HAPLOID EUKARYOTES	173
Tetrad Analysis	175
<i>First- and second-division segregation</i>	175
<i>Genes on different chromosomes</i>	175
To Sum Up	180
SEX DETERMINATION	181
Chromosomal Basis of Sex Determination	181
<i>Chromosome dimorphism</i>	181
<i>The genic balance mechanism</i>	182
<i>The Y chromosome in sex determination</i>	183
Genes Affecting Sex Determination	185
Environmental Control of Sex Determination	186
<i>Hormones and sex differentiation</i>	186
<i>Sex reversal</i>	189
To Sum Up	190
QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS	190

Chapter 6 Allelic Genes on Autosomes and Sex Chromosomes 195

<i>Gene Symbolism</i>	196
PATTERNS OF TRANSMISSION FOR TWO ALLELES	196
Pedigree Analysis	196
Autosomal Inheritance	198
Autosomal dominant characters	198
Autosomal recessive characters	200
Sex Linkage	202
X-linked recessive characters	205
X-linked dominant characters	208
Z-linked characters	209
Holandric traits	209
Sex-limited and Sex-influenced Traits	210
Penetrance and Expressivity	212
To Sum Up	216
MULTIPLE ALLELES AND GENETIC VARIABILITY	216
Combining Alleles into Genotypes	216
Dominance Relationships and Number of Phenotypes	217
The ABO blood group	219
The Rh blood group	224
Tests for Allelism	228
To Sum Up	229
QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS	230

Chapter 7 Linked Genes and Chromosome Mapping in Eukaryotes 235

RECOMBINATION OF LINKED GENES	236
Identification and Measurement of Linkage	236
Detecting linkage from testcross results	237
Maximum frequency of recombination	242
Detecting linkage from dihybrid cross results	245
Experimental Verification of Crossing Over	247
Recombination at the Molecular Level	248
The hybrid DNA model of breakage and reunion	249
To Sum Up	251
CONSTRUCTION OF GENETIC MAPS	252
Recombination Frequency as a Measure of Map Distance	252
Effects of multiple crossovers	253
The Three-Point Testcross Method for Mapping Genes	255
Determining map distance	259
Determining gene order	261
Interference and coincidence	263
Mapping by Tetrad Analysis	265
Mapping two linked genes by tetrad analysis	265
Determining gene-centromere distance in <i>Neurospora</i>	266
Unordered tetrads	268
Gene conversion	269
To Sum Up	272
SOMATIC CELL GENETICS	273
Somatic Cell Hybridization	273
Formation of hybrid cells	274
Detection of hybrid cells	274

Assigning genes to chromosomes 277

Gene Transfer by Individual Chromosomes and Purified DNA 278

To Sum Up 282

QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS 283

Chapter 8 Extensions of Gene Transmission Analysis 289

GENETIC ANALYSIS OF BACTERIA AND THEIR VIRUSES 289

Mapping Phage Chromosomes 290

A phage cross 290 *Linear map of the lambda chromosome* 294

Circularity of the T2 and T4 linkage maps 294 *Fine structure mapping* 297

Gene Mapping in Bacteria 301

Interrupted conjugation 301 *Circularity of the linkage map* 305

Transduction 305 *Recombination mapping* 310

To Sum Up 312

ANALYSIS OF EXTRANUCLEAR GENES IN EUKARYOTES 313

Cytoplasmic Inheritance 313

Maternal inheritance 314 *Differences in reciprocal cross results* 317 *Non-Mendelian segregation ratios* 318

Nuclear-Cytoplasmic Interactions 320

Mapping Mitochondrial Genes in Yeast 321

To Sum Up 324

QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS 324

Suggested Readings/Part III 328

IV The Molecular Basis of Gene Expression

Chapter 9 The Transfer of Genetic Information 333

STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF PROTEINS 334

Protein Structure 334

Function of Proteins as Enzymes 338

The active site 339 *The allosteric site* 340 *Regulation by covalent modification* 342

The Vertebrate Hemoglobins 342

To Sum Up 346

GENES AND PROTEINS 347

Relationship between Genes and Proteins 347

Genetic Complementation 349

Intragenic complementation 350

Colinearity of Gene and Polypeptide 353

The triplet code 354 *Overlapping genes* 354

Split genes 356

To Sum Up 357

INFORMATION FLOW FROM DNA 358

Transcription 358

Nature and modification of mRNA 360 *Characteristics of rRNA and ribosomes* 363 *Transfer RNA* 365

Translation 366

Initiation of polypeptide synthesis 370 *Elongation of the polypeptide chain* 370 *Termination* 372

The Genetic Code 373

Deciphering the code 373 *Characteristics of the code* 376
Wobble hypothesis 377

To Sum Up 378

QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS 378

Chapter 10 Organization and Regulation of Genes in Chromosomes 383

FUNCTIONALLY RELATED GENES IN BACTERIA AND VIRUSES 383

Operon Structure and Control: General Characteristics 384

Functional Organization of Bacterial Chromosomes 384

Inducible and repressible operons 386 *The lactose genes: An inducible operon* 387 *Positive control of the lac operon* 390

Functional Organization of Bacteriophage Chromosomes 392

Operon control of phage lambda 393

To Sum Up 398

ORGANIZATION AND REGULATION OF GENES IN EUKARYOTES 399

Organization of DNA Sequences in Chromatin 399

Characterization of repetitive DNA 401 *Interspersion of repetitive and nonrepetitive sequences* 406

Regulation of Gene Expression 407

Chromatin condensation 408 *X-chromosome inactivation* 409
Hormonal regulation 410

Cancer: A Loss of Normal Gene Regulation 413

Oncogenic viruses 416 *Oncogenes* 418

To Sum Up 420

QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS 420

Suggested Readings/Part IV 423

V Mutation

Chapter 11 Mechanisms of Mutation and Repair 427

NATURE OF GENE MUTATION 427

Rates of Mutation 428

Molecular Mechanisms of Mutation	430
Base substitutions	430
Effects of base substitutions on protein structure	430
Frameshift mutations	433
Secondary Consequences of Mutation	435
Metabolic basis of inherited disease	435
To Sum Up	442
MUTAGENS AND THEIR EFFECTS	442
Chemical Mutagens	445
Base analogs	445
DNA modifiers	448
Radiation	451
Screening Tests for Mutagens	454
Transposable Genetic Elements	456
Mutable and mutator genes	458
Characteristics of transposable genetic elements	460
To Sum Up	464
MECHANISMS OF REPAIR	464
Repair of Damage Caused by Ultraviolet Light	465
Photoreactivation	465
Excision-repair	465
Post-replication repair and misrepair	468
Inducible repair	468
Proofreading Function of DNA Polymerases	470
Eukaryotic Repair Systems	473
Protective Mechanisms	474
To Sum Up	477
QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS	478
Chapter 12 Chromosome Abnormalities	481
ANEUPLOIDY	482
Nature and Production of Aneuploids	482
Genetic analysis of trisomics	483
Associating linkage groups with particular chromosomes	485
Aneuploidy in Humans	486
Autosomal aneuploids	486
Sex chromosome aneuploids	489
Chromosome Mosaics	490
To Sum Up	492
EUPLOIDY	492
Changes in the Euploid State	493
Monoploids	493
Autopolyploids	494
Allopolyploids	498
Experimental Production of Polyploids	500
Induction of polyploidy	500
Polyploids from somatic cell fusion	502
Evolution through Polyploidy	502
Evolution of wheat	503
To Sum Up	505
STRUCTURAL ALTERATIONS OF CHROMOSOMES	505
Types of Aberrations	505
Deficiencies	506
Duplications	508
Inversions	509
Translocations	511

Use of Aberrations in Gene Mapping	512
Structural Aberrations and Evolution	515
Structural Aberrations in Humans	517
<i>Types of aberrations</i>	517
<i>Analysis of aberrant chromosomes</i>	519
To Sum Up	521
QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS	522
<i>Suggested Readings/Part V</i>	525

VI Population and Quantitative Genetics

Chapter 13 Genetics of Populations 529

ALLELIC VARIATION WITHIN POPULATIONS 530

Genotype and Allele Frequencies 530

Calculating allele frequencies from genotype frequencies 531

Detecting Allelic Variability 532

Detecting variation in protein structure 533

To Sum Up 537

ORGANIZATION OF GENETIC DIVERSITY 537

Random Mating Frequencies 538

Random union of gametes 540

Random Mating Equilibrium: The Hardy-Weinberg Law 541

Equilibrium at a single autosomal locus 542

Applications of the Hardy-Weinberg Law 544

Confirmation of random mating 544 *Allele-frequency analysis*
 when dominance is involved 544 *Testing for dominant/recessive*
 inheritance 547

To Sum Up 548

EXTENSIONS OF THE HARDY-WEINBERG LAW 549

Multiple Alleles 549

Allele frequencies at the ABO locus 550

Sex-Linked Genes 551

Equilibrium at Two Loci 552

Gradual approach to equilibrium 554

To Sum Up 557

QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS 557

Chapter 14 Genetic Processes of Evolution 561

NATURAL SELECTION 561

Reproductive Fitness 562

Selective Elimination of an Allele 564

Complete selection 564 *Partial selection* 567

Selection in Action 571

Resistance to chemicals 572 *Resistance to disease* 574

Balancing Selection	574
<i>Heterozygote advantage</i>	575
Frequency-dependent selection	577
To Sum Up	579
NONSELECTIVE CHANGES IN GENE FREQUENCY	579
Mutation	579
<i>Effects of recurrent mutation and selection</i>	581
<i>Opposing mutation</i>	583
Migration	584
Random Genetic Drift	586
<i>Theory of genetic drift</i>	587
<i>Bottlenecks and founder effects</i>	589
To Sum Up	590
DIFFERENTIATION OF POPULATIONS	591
Joint Action of Evolutionary Forces	591
Geographic Differentiation	593
Evolutionary Divergence	595
<i>Molecular phylogenies: DNA hybridization</i>	597
<i>Molecular phylogenies: Amino acid sequences</i>	599
To Sum Up	602
QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS	602
 Chapter 15 Quantitative Inheritance	607
CONTINUOUS VARIATION AND QUANTITATIVE TRAITS	608
Nature and Sources of Variation	608
Statistical Analysis of Quantitative Traits	609
<i>Mean and variance</i>	609
<i>Genotypic variation and heritability</i>	614
<i>Twin studies</i>	614
To Sum Up	617
INHERITANCE OF QUANTITATIVE TRAITS	617
Polygenes and Additive Effects	619
<i>The additive polygene model</i>	619
<i>Estimating gene effects and number of loci</i>	622
Dominance and Nonallelic Gene Interaction	625
Multiplicative Gene Effects and Threshold Characters	628
<i>Genes with multiplicative effects</i>	628
<i>Threshold traits</i>	630
To Sum Up	632
GENETICS OF BEHAVIOR PATTERNS	632
Genetic Analysis of Behavioral Traits	633
<i>Geotaxis in Drosophila</i>	635
<i>The inheritance of IQ</i>	638
To Sum Up	641
QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS	641
 Chapter 16 Mating Systems and Selective Breeding	645
MATING SYSTEMS	646
Inbreeding and Degree of Relationship	646
<i>The inbreeding coefficient</i>	646
<i>Measuring inbreeding from pedigrees</i>	648

Effects of Inbreeding on Populations	651
<i>Genotype frequencies with inbreeding</i>	651
<i>Inbreeding and homozygosis</i>	653
<i>Fixation of genetic characters</i>	655
<i>Increase in deleterious recessive traits</i>	656
<i>Inbreeding in isolates</i>	658
Assortative Mating	658
Disassortative Mating and Outbreeding	659
To Sum Up	661
HETEROSIS	661
Heterosis and Inbreeding Depression	662
<i>Measuring heterosis</i>	663
Genetic Basis for Heterosis	664
<i>Overdominance and complementary gene interactions</i>	665
Practical Uses of Inbreeding and Hybridization	666
<i>Outbreeding and crossbreeding</i>	667
<i>Production of hybrid seed corn</i>	669
To Sum Up	671
GENETIC ADVANCE THROUGH SELECTION	671
Response to Individual Selection	671
<i>Selection differential and regression</i>	672
<i>Selection response and heritability</i>	675
<i>Selection for more than one character</i>	677
Other Methods of Selection	678
<i>Family selection</i>	678
<i>Pedigree selection and line breeding</i>	679
To Sum Up	679
QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS	680
<i>Suggested Readings/Part VI</i>	683

VII Genetic Engineering

Chapter 17 Approaches to Genetic Engineering 687

RECOMBINANT DNA TECHNOLOGY	688
Restriction Endonucleases	688
<i>Construction of recombinant DNA molecules</i>	690
Applications in Genetic Research	694
<i>DNA cloning</i>	694
<i>Construction of cDNA probes</i>	697
<i>Restriction mapping</i>	700
<i>DNA sequencing</i>	706
<i>Expression of eukaryotic genes in bacteria</i>	709
Applications in Industry	712
<i>The pharmaceutical industry</i>	712
<i>The chemical industry</i>	714
<i>Pollution control</i>	715
To Sum Up	716
ADVANCES IN PLANT AND ANIMAL IMPROVEMENT	716
Incorporating Wild Gene Resources into Crop Plants	716
<i>Chromosome and gene transfer in wheat</i>	717