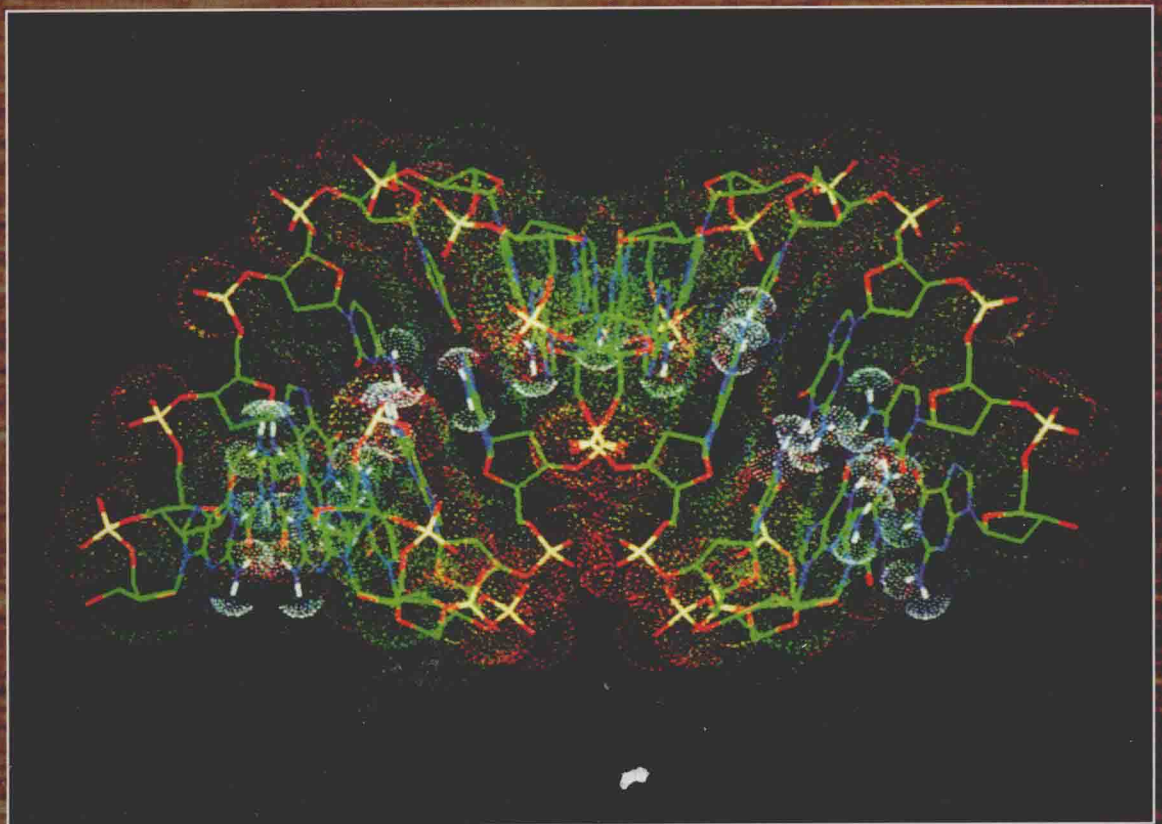


Molecular Biology

Fourth Edition



Robert F. Weaver

Molecular Biology

Fourth Edition

Robert F. Weaver

University of Kansas



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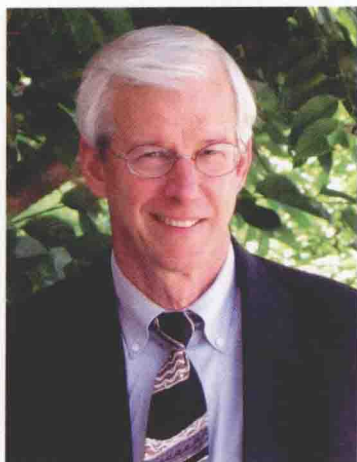
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To Camilla and Nora

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



(Source: Ashvini C. Ganesh)

Rob Weaver was born in Topeka, Kansas, and grew up in Arlington, Virginia. He received his bachelor's degree in chemistry from the College of Wooster in Wooster, Ohio, in 1964. He earned his Ph.D. in biochemistry at Duke University in 1969, then spent two years doing postdoctoral research at the University of California, San Francisco, where he studied the structure of eukaryotic RNA polymerases with William J. Rutter.

He joined the faculty of the University of Kansas as an assistant professor of biochemistry in 1971, was promoted to associate professor, and then to full professor in 1981. In 1984, he became chair of the Department of Biochemistry, and served in that capacity until he was named Associate Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences in 1995.

Prof. Weaver is the divisional dean for the science and mathematics departments within the College, which includes supervising 10 different departments and programs. As a professor of molecular biosciences, he teaches courses in introductory molecular biology and the molecular biology of cancer. In his research laboratory, undergraduates and graduate students participated in research on the molecular biology of a baculovirus that infects caterpillars.

Prof. Weaver is the author of many scientific papers resulting from research funded by the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, and the American Cancer Society. He has also coauthored two genetics textbooks and has written two articles on molecular biology in the *National Geographic Magazine*. He has spent two years performing research in European Laboratories as an American Cancer Society Research Scholar, one year in Zurich, Switzerland, and one year in Oxford, England.

This textbook is designed for an introductory course in molecular biology. But what is molecular biology? The definition of this elusive term depends on who is doing the defining. In this book, I consider molecular biology to be the study of genes and their activities at the molecular level.

When I was a student in college and graduate school I found that I became most excited about science, and learned best, when the instructor emphasized the experimental strategy and the data that led to the conclusions, rather than just the conclusions themselves. Thus, when I began teaching an introductory molecular biology course in 1972, I adopted that teaching strategy and have used it ever since. I have found that my students react as positively as I did.

One problem with this approach, however, was that no textbook placed as great an emphasis on experimental data as I would have liked. So I tried assigning reading from the literature in lieu of a textbook. Although this method was entirely appropriate for an advanced course, it was a relatively inefficient process and not practical for a first course in molecular biology. To streamline the process, I augmented the literature readings with hand-drawn cartoons of the data I wanted to present, and I made transparencies of figures from the journal articles. But I really wanted a textbook that presented the concepts of molecular biology, along with experiments that led to those concepts. I wanted clear explanations that showed students the relationship between the experiments and the concepts. So, I finally decided that the best way to get such a book would be to write it myself. I had already coauthored a successful introductory genetics text in which I took an experimental approach—as much as possible with a book at that level. That gave me the courage to try writing an entire book by myself and to treat the subject as an adventure in discovery.

Organization

The book begins with a four-chapter sequence that should be a review for most students. Chapter 1 is a brief history of genetics. Chapter 2 discusses the structure and chemical properties of DNA. Chapter 3 is an overview of gene expression, and Chapter 4 deals with the nuts and bolts of gene cloning. All these are topics that the great majority of molecular biology students have already learned in an introductory genetics course. Still, students of molecular biology need to have a grasp of these concepts and may need

to refresh their understanding of them. I do not deal specifically with these chapters in class; instead, I suggest students consult them if they need more work on these topics. These chapters are written at a more basic level than the rest of the book.

Chapter 5 describes a number of common techniques used by molecular biologists. It would not have been possible to include all the techniques described in this book in one chapter, so I tried to include the most common or, in a few cases, valuable techniques that are not mentioned elsewhere in the book. When I teach this course, I do not present Chapter 5 as such. Instead, I refer students to it when we first encounter a technique in a later chapter. I do it that way to avoid boring my students with technique after technique. I also realize that the concepts behind some of these techniques are rather sophisticated, and the students' appreciation of them is much deeper after they've acquired more experience in molecular biology.

Chapters 6–9 describe transcription in bacteria. Chapter 6 introduces the basic transcription apparatus, including promoters, terminators, and RNA polymerase, and shows how transcripts are initiated, elongated, and terminated. Chapter 7 describes the control of transcription in three different operons, then Chapter 8 shows how bacteria and their phages control transcription of many genes at a time, often by providing alternative sigma factors. Chapter 9 discusses the interaction between bacterial DNA-binding proteins, mostly helix-turn-helix proteins, and their DNA targets.

Chapters 10–13 present control of transcription in eukaryotes. Chapter 10 deals with the three eukaryotic RNA polymerases and the promoters they recognize. Chapter 11 introduces the general transcription factors that collaborate with the three RNA polymerases and points out the unifying theme of the TATA-box-binding protein, which participates in transcription by all three polymerases. Chapter 12 explains the functions of gene-specific transcription factors, or activators. This chapter also illustrates the structures of several representative activators and shows how they interact with their DNA targets. Chapter 13 describes the structure of eukaryotic chromatin and shows how activators can interact with histones to activate or repress transcription.

Chapters 14–16 introduce some of the posttranscriptional events that occur in eukaryotes. Chapter 14 deals with RNA splicing. Chapter 15 describes capping and polyadenylation, and Chapter 16 introduces a collection of

fascinating “other posttranscriptional events,” including rRNA and tRNA processing, *trans*-splicing, and RNA editing. This chapter also discusses three kinds of posttranscriptional control of gene expression: (1) RNA interference; (2) modulating mRNA stability (using the transferrin receptor gene as the prime example); and (3) control by microRNAs.

Chapters 17–19 describe the translation process in both bacteria and eukaryotes. Chapter 17 deals with initiation of translation, including the control of translation at the initiation step. Chapter 18 shows how polypeptides are elongated, with the emphasis on elongation in bacteria. Chapter 19 provides details on the structure and function of two of the key players in translation: ribosomes and tRNA.

Chapters 20–23 describe the mechanisms of DNA replication, recombination, and translocation. Chapter 20 introduces the basic mechanisms of DNA replication and repair, and some of the proteins (including the DNA polymerases) involved in replication. Chapter 21 provides details of the initiation, elongation, and termination steps in DNA replication in bacteria and eukaryotes. Chapters 22 and 23 describe DNA rearrangements that occur naturally in cells. Chapter 22 discusses homologous recombination and Chapter 23 deals with translocation.

Chapter 24 presents concepts of genomics, proteomics, and bioinformatics. The chapter begins with an old-fashioned positional cloning story involving the Huntington disease gene and contrasts this lengthy and heroic quest with the relative ease of performing positional cloning with the human genome (and other genomes).

New to the Fourth Edition

One of the most significant developments in molecular biology since the last edition has been the recognition of the importance of noncoding RNAs. Some of these, like microRNAs (miRNAs), control gene expression in eukaryotes. Accordingly, a new section has been added to **Chapter 16**, showing how miRNAs can act like siRNAs in causing target mRNA destruction, or can depress the translation of target mRNAs without destroying them.

This edition also introduces riboswitches, segments of mRNAs that bind to small molecules and respond by changing RNA conformation, thereby controlling translation. In **Chapter 7**, we will see one example in which a small molecule binds to a riboswitch in a nascent mRNA, forcing it to form a terminator that aborts mRNA synthesis. In **Chapter 17**, we will see another example in which binding of a small molecule to a riboswitch in an mRNA causes the mRNA to change conformation in such a way as to hide the ribosome-binding site, blocking translation.

All but the introductory chapters of this fourth edition have been updated and include new information. Here are a few highlights:

Chapter 10: X-ray crystallography of RNA polymerase II in complex with DNA has revealed the role

of the polymerase in separating the nascent RNA from its DNA template strand. Also, for the first time, the 12-subunit RNA polymerase II has been crystallized. This complete crystal structure shows a prominent clamp in the closed position, leaving room only for a single strand of DNA to enter the enzyme. This implies that the DNA must melt in order for the template strand to descend by itself into the active site.

Chapter 11: Structural studies on a TFIIB-polymerase II complex show that TFIIB binds to TBP at the TATA box via its C-terminal domain, and to polymerase II via its N-terminal domain. This bridging action effects a coarse positioning of the polymerase active center about 25 bp downstream of the TATA box.

Chapter 13: We still do not understand chromatin remodeling in detail, but we now know that catalyzed remodeling of nucleosomes involves the formation of distinct conformations of the nucleosomal DNA with respect to the core histones. This contrasts with uncatalyzed DNA exposure in nucleosomes, or simple sliding of nucleosomes along a stretch of DNA. We also have new insight into the structure of the 30-nm chromatin fiber. The crystal structure of a tetranucleosome consists of dual stacks of nucleosomes, with a zigzag of linker DNAs between the two stacks. This arrangement is incompatible with the solenoid model, and most other models for the 30-nm fiber, but it is consistent with a crossed-linker, two-start helix. That is, the two stacks of nucleosomes could coil around each other in a left-handed double helix.

Chapter 14: Alternative splicing is a very common phenomenon in higher eukaryotes. It represents a way to get more than one protein product out of the same gene, and a way to control gene expression in cells. Control of alternative splicing is exerted by splicing factors that bind to the splice sites and branchpoint, and also by proteins that interact with exonic splicing enhancers (ESEs), exonic splicing silencers (ESSs), and intronic silencing elements.

Chapter 16: In addition to the new material on miRNAs, this chapter includes new information on the mechanism of RNAi. In particular, the protein known as slicer, which cleaves target mRNAs, is now identified as Argonaute2, and a minimal RISC composed only of the Argonaute protein Ago2 and siRNA is described. New information on the assembly of the RISC is also presented.

Chapter 17: In addition to the new material on the control of prokaryotic translation initiation by a riboswitch, this chapter presents a model for the control of eukaryotic translation initiation by a microRNA.

Chapter 18: This chapter shows how the unusual amino acids selenocysteine and pyrrolysine are incorporated into growing polypeptides in response to the

termination codons UGA and UAG, respectively. It also discusses a prokaryotic protein called trigger factor, which associates with the ribosome in such a way as to catch nascent polypeptides as they emerge from the ribosome's exit tunnel. In this way, hydrophobic regions of a nascent polypeptide are protected from inappropriate associations until the appropriate partner is available.

Chapter 19: This chapter presents new evidence for the participation of the 2'-hydroxyl group of the P site tRNA in the chemistry of transpeptidation, the formation of peptide bonds by the ribosome. It also discusses the first crystal structure of the *E. coli* ribosome, which reveals a twisting of the head of the 30S particle that may be related to translocation.

Chapter 20: This chapter introduces two mechanisms for a new kind of base excision repair—the repair of 8-oxoguanine sites in DNA.

Chapter 22: This chapter discusses new evidence that suggests that Spo11, after causing and binding covalently to double-strand breaks, is released from the DSBs in a complex with oligonucleotides ranging from about 12–37 nt long. The cleavage by Spo11 appears to be asymmetric, which has implications for the mechanism of subsequent Holliday junction formation.

Chapter 24: The fields of genomics, proteomics, and bioinformatics are growing at an explosive rate. Accordingly, Chapter 24 is the most thoroughly updated chapter in the fourth edition, and it has been renamed to include bioinformatics in the title, reflecting the importance of this new subdiscipline. Some of the highlights of the updates in this chapter are: (1) Whole chromosome transcriptional mapping, which is high resolution mapping of transcripts to specific sites in chromosomes. Such studies have revealed the abundance of noncoding RNAs, including nonpolyadenylated RNAs, in eukaryotic cells. (2) RNAi analysis, in which RNAi is used to knock down the expression of genes on a genome-wide basis and the effects of these knockdowns are analyzed. (3) Tissue-specific expression profiling, which can be done by examining the spectrum of mRNAs whose levels are decreased by an exogenous miRNA, and comparing that to the natural spectrum of mRNA levels in various tissues. (4) The International HapMap Consortium has published a haplotype map including over 1 million human SNPs, discovered by genotyping 269 DNA samples from four distinct human populations. (5) Using bioinformatic

techniques, scientists have discovered highly conserved sequence motifs in the promoter regions and 3'-UTRs of four mammalian species, including humans. The motifs in the promoter regions probably represent binding sites for transcription factors. Most of the motifs in the 3'-UTRs probably represent binding sites for miRNAs. (6) The finished draft of the human genome is accomplished. The importance of this achievement is discussed and the human X chromosome is featured because of its role in human disease.

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Text-Specific Website

The following website, specific to this text, provides access to digital image files, animation quizzes, PowerPoint Lecture Outlines, answers to end-of-chapter questions, and web links.

www.mhhe.com/weaver4

In writing this book, I have been aided immeasurably by the advice of many editors and reviewers. They have contributed greatly to the accuracy and readability of the book, but they cannot be held accountable for any remaining errors or ambiguities. For those, I take full responsibility. I would like to thank the following people for their help.

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| Technique | Chapter | Page | Technique | Chapter | Page |
|------------------------------------------------|---------|--------|-------------------------------------------|---------|------|
| Activity gel assay | 13 | 378 | Gel electrophoresis (protein) | 5 | 86 |
| Affinity chromatography | 4 | 73 | Gel filtration chromatography | 5 | 88 |
| Affinity labeling | 6 | 147 | Gel mobility shift assay | 5 | 115 |
| Allele-specific RNAi | 18 | 599 | Gene cloning with λ phage vectors | 4 | 59 |
| Autoradiography | 5 | 90 | Gene cloning with cosmid vectors | 4 | 62 |
| Baculovirus expression vectors | 4 | 76 | Gene cloning with M13 phage vectors | 4 | 62 |
| cDNA cloning | 4 | 64 | Gene cloning with phagemid vectors | 4 | 62 |
| Chromatin immunoprecipitation (ChIP) | 13 | 384 | Gene cloning with plant vectors | 4 | 78 |
| Colony hybridization | 4 | 66 | Gene cloning with plasmid vectors | 4 | 55 |
| CsCl gradient ultracentrifugation | 20 | 640 | Gene cloning with BACs | 24 | 782 |
| Designing a probe by protein microsequencing | 18 | 593-94 | Gene cloning with YACs | 24 | 782 |
| Detecting DNA bending by electrophoresis | 7 | 185 | G-less cassette transcription | 5 | 111 |
| DMS footprinting | 5 | 118 | Hybridization | 2 | 26 |
| DNA fingerprinting | 5 | 94 | Hydroxyl radical probing | 18 | 602 |
| DNA helicase assay | 20 | 656 | Immunoblotting (Western blotting) | 5 | 97 |
| DNA microarrays | 24 | 798 | Immunoprecipitation | 5 | 115 |
| DNA microchips | 24 | 798 | In situ hybridization | 5 | 96 |
| DNA sequencing (automated) | 5 | 99 | Ion-exchange chromatography | 5 | 88 |
| DNA sequencing (Sanger chain termination) | 5 | 97 | Isoelectric focusing | 5 | 87 |
| DNA typing | 5 | 95 | Knockout mice | 5 | 120 |
| DNA-protein cross-linking | 6 | 149 | Linker scanning mutagenesis | 10 | 268 |
| DNase footprinting | 5 | 116 | Liquid scintillation counting | 5 | 91 |
| Dot blotting | 5 | 113 | Microsatellites | 24 | 784 |
| End-filling | 5 | 109 | Nick translation | 4 | 66 |
| Epitope tagging | 10 | 255 | Northern blotting | 5 | 106 |
| Exon trapping | 24 | 772 | Oligonucleotide-directed RNA degradation | 14 | 413 |
| Expressed sequence tags (ESTs) | 24 | 785 | Oligonucleotide probe design | 4 | 63 |
| Expression vectors | 4 | 72 | Phage display | 24 | 816 |
| Far Western blotting | 15 | 468 | Phosphorimaging | 5 | 91 |
| Filter-binding assay (DNA-protein interaction) | 5 | 115 | Plaque hybridization | 4 | 61 |
| Fingerprinting (protein) | 3 | 48 | Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) | 4 | 67 |
| Fluorescence in situ hybridization (FISH) | 5 | 96 | Positional cloning | 24 | 771 |
| Footprinting (protein) | 21 | 699 | Primer extension | 5 | 109 |
| Functional SELEX | 5 | 120 | Protein fingerprinting | 3 | 48 |
| Gel electrophoresis (DNA) | 5 | 84 | Protein footprinting | 21 | 699 |
| | | | Pulse-chase labeling | 16 | 494 |
| | | | Pulsed-field gel electrophoresis (PFGE) | 5 | 86 |

| Technique | Chapter | Page | Technique | Chapter | Page |
|---------------------------------------------------|---------|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|------|
| Radiation hybrid mapping | 24 | 785 | Screen | 4 | 57 |
| Rapid amplification of cDNA ends (RACE) | 4 | 66 | SDS-PAGE (protein) | 5 | 86 |
| Real-time PCR | 4 | 71 | SELEX (systematic evolution of ligands by exponential enrichment) | 5 | 119 |
| Replica plating | 4 | 56 | Sequence-tagged sites (STSs) | 24 | 783 |
| Reporter gene transcription assay | 5 | 113 | Serial analysis of gene expression (SAGE) | 24 | 800 |
| Restriction fragment length polymorphisms (RFLPs) | 24 | 771 | Shotgun sequencing | 24 | 786 |
| Restriction mapping | 5 | 101 | Site-directed mutagenesis | 5 | 104 |
| Reverse transcriptase PCR (RT-PCR) | 4 | 69 | Southern blotting | 5 | 93 |
| R-looping | 14 | 400 | Stopped-flow kinetic assay | 18 | 587 |
| RNA helicase assay | 17 | 542 | Synthetic lethal screen | 14 | 425 |
| RNA interference (RNAi) | 16 | 501 | Toeprinting | 17 | 545 |
| RNA–RNA cross-linking (with 4-thioU) | 14 | 409 | Topoisomerase assay | 20 | 659 |
| RNA–RNA cross-linking (with psoralen) | 14 | 410 | Transformation | 2 | 13 |
| RNase mapping (RNase protection assay) | 5 | 109 | Two-dimensional gel electrophoresis | 5 | 87 |
| Run-off transcription | 5 | 110 | Ultracentrifugation | 2 | 13 |
| Run-on transcription | 5 | 112 | Variable number tandem repeats (VNTRs) | 24 | 783 |
| S1 mapping | 5 | 107 | X-ray crystallography | 9 | 230 |
| | | | Yeast two-hybrid assay | 14 | 425 |
| | | | Yeast two-hybrid screen | 14 | 425 |

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| About the Author | v |
| Preface | xv |
| Acknowledgments | xix |
| Guide to Experimental Techniques in Molecular Biology | xxi |

PART I

Introduction

- 1 A Brief History 1
- 2 The Molecular Nature of Genes 12
- 3 An Introduction to Gene Function 31

PART II

Methods in Molecular Biology

- 4 Molecular Cloning Methods 51
- 5 Molecular Tools for Studying Genes and Gene
Activity 83

PART III

Transcription in Bacteria

- 6 The Mechanism of Transcription in Bacteria 126
- 7 Operons: Fine Control of Bacterial
Transcription 172
- 8 Major Shifts in Bacterial Transcription 202
- 9 DNA-Protein Interactions in Bacteria 228

PART IV

Transcription in Eukaryotes

- 10 Eukaryotic RNA Polymerases and
Their Promoters 250
- 11 General Transcription Factors
in Eukaryotes 280
- 12 Transcription Activators in Eukaryotes 321
- 13 Chromatin Structure and Its Effects
on Transcription 359

PART V

Posttranscriptional Events

- 14 Messenger RNA Processing I: Splicing 399
- 15 Messenger RNA Processing II: Capping and
Polyadenylation 444
- 16 Other RNA Processing Events 481

PART VI

Translation

- 17 The Mechanism of Translation I: Initiation 521
- 18 The Mechanism of Translation II: Elongation and
Termination 564
- 19 Ribosomes and Transfer RNA 607

PART VII

DNA Replication, Recombination, and Transposition

- 20 DNA Replication I: Basic Mechanism and
Enzymology 639
- 21 DNA Replication II: Detailed Mechanism 683
- 22 Homologous Recombination 718
- 23 Transposition 743

PART VIII

Genomes

- 24 Genomics, Proteomics, and Bioinformatics 770
- Glossary 829
Index 857

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| About the Author | v |
| Preface | xv |
| Acknowledgments | xix |
| Guide to Experimental Techniques in Molecular Biology | xxi |

PART I

Introduction

CHAPTER 1

A Brief History 1

- 1.1 Transmission Genetics 2
 - Mendel's Laws of Inheritance 2
 - The Chromosome Theory of Inheritance 3
 - Genetic Recombination and Mapping 4
 - Physical Evidence for Recombination 5
- 1.2 Molecular Genetics 5
 - The Discovery of DNA 5
 - The Relationship Between Genes and Proteins 6
 - Activities of Genes 7
- 1.3 The Three Domains of Life 9

CHAPTER 2

The Molecular Nature of Genes 12

- 2.1 The Nature of Genetic Material 13
 - Transformation in Bacteria 13
 - The Chemical Nature of Polynucleotides 15
- 2.2 DNA Structure 18
 - Experimental Background 19
 - The Double Helix 19
- 2.3 Genes Made of RNA 23
- 2.4 Physical Chemistry of Nucleic Acids 23
 - A Variety of DNA Structures 23
 - DNAs of Various Sizes and Shapes 27

CHAPTER 3

An Introduction to Gene Function 31

- 3.1 Storing Information 32
 - Overview of Gene Expression 32

- Protein Structure 32
- Protein Function 36
- Discovery of Messenger RNA 38
- Transcription 40
- Translation 42
- 3.2 Replication 46
- 3.3 Mutations 47
 - Sickle Cell Disease 47

PART II

Methods of Molecular Biology

CHAPTER 4

Molecular Cloning Methods 51

- 4.1 Gene Cloning 52
 - The Role of Restriction Endonucleases 52
 - Vectors 55
 - Identifying a Specific Clone with a Specific Probe 63
 - cDNA Cloning 64
 - Rapid Amplification of cDNA Ends 66
- 4.2 The Polymerase Chain Reaction 67
 - Standard PCR 67
 - Using Reverse Transcriptase PCR(RT-PCR)
in cDNA Cloning 69
 - Box 4.1** Jurassic Park: More than a Fantasy? 70
 - Real-Time PCR 71
- 4.3 Methods of Expressing Cloned Genes 71
 - Expression Vectors 72
 - Other Eukaryotic Vectors 78
 - Using the Ti Plasmid to Transfer Genes to Plants 78

CHAPTER 5

Molecular Tools for Studying Genes and Gene Activity 83

- 5.1 Molecular Separations 84
 - Gel Electrophoresis 84
 - Two-Dimensional Gel Electrophoresis 87
 - Ion-Exchange Chromatography 88
 - Gel Filtration Chromatography 88
 - Affinity Chromatography 89

- 5.2 **Labeled Tracers** 90
 - Autoradiography 90
 - Phosphorimaging 91
 - Liquid Scintillation Counting 91
 - Nonradioactive Tracers 92
- 5.3 **Using Nucleic Acid Hybridization** 93
 - Southern Blots: Identifying Specific DNA Fragments 93
 - DNA Fingerprinting and DNA Typing 94
 - Forensic Uses of DNA Fingerprinting and DNA Typing 95
 - Immunoblots (Western Blots) 97
 - DNA Sequencing 97
 - Restriction Mapping 101
 - Protein Engineering with Cloned Genes: Site-Directed Mutagenesis 104
- 5.4 **Mapping and Quantifying Transcripts** 106
 - Northern Blots 106
 - S1 Mapping 107
 - Primer Extension 109
 - Run-off Transcription and G-Less Cassette Transcription 110
- 5.5 **Measuring Transcription Rates in Vivo** 112
 - Nuclear Run-On Transcription 112
 - Reporter Gene Transcription 113
 - Measuring Protein Accumulation in Vivo 115
- 5.6 **Assaying DNA-Protein Interactions** 115
 - Filter Binding 115
 - Gel Mobility Shift 115
 - DNase Footprinting 116
 - DMS Footprinting and Other Footprinting Methods 118
- 5.7 **Finding RNA Sequences That Interact with Other Molecules** 119
 - SELEX 119
 - Functional SELEX 120
- 5.8 **Knockouts** 120

PART III

Transcription in Bacteria

CHAPTER 6

The Mechanism of Transcription in Bacteria 126

- 6.1 **RNA Polymerase Structure** 127
 - Sigma (σ) as a Specificity Factor 127
- 6.2 **Promoters** 128
 - Binding of RNA Polymerase to Promoters 128
 - Promoter Structure 130

- 6.3 **Transcription Initiation** 132
 - The Functions of σ 132
 - Structure and Function of σ 139
 - The Role of the α -Subunit in UP Element Recognition 144
- 6.4 **Elongation** 146
 - Core Polymerase Functions in Elongation 146
 - Structure of the Elongation Complex 151
- 6.5 **Termination of Transcription** 162
 - Rho-Independent Termination 162
 - Rho-Dependent Termination 165

CHAPTER 7

Operons: Fine Control of Bacterial Transcription 172

- 7.1 **The *lac* Operon** 173
 - Negative Control of the *lac* Operon 174
 - Discovery of the Operon 174
 - Repressor-Operator Interactions 178
 - The Mechanism of Repression 179
 - Positive Control of the *lac* Operon 182
 - The Mechanism of CAP Action 183
- 7.2 **The *ara* Operon** 188
 - The *ara* Operon Repression Loop 188
 - Evidence for the *ara* Operon Repression Loop 190
 - Autoregulation of *araC* 192
- 7.3 **The *trp* Operon** 192
 - Tryptophan's Role in Negative Control of the *trp* Operon 192
 - Control of the *trp* Operon by Attenuation 193
 - Defeating Attenuation 194
- 7.4 **Riboswitches** 195

CHAPTER 8

Major Shifts in Bacterial Transcription 202

- 8.1 **Sigma Factor Switching** 203
 - Phage Infection 203
 - Sporulation 205
 - Genes with Multiple Promoters 207
 - Other σ Switches 207
- 8.2 **The RNA Polymerase Encoded in Phage T7** 208
- 8.3 **Infection of *E. coli* by Phage λ** 209
 - Lytic Reproduction of Phage λ 210
 - Establishing Lysogeny 217

- Autoregulation of the *cI* Gene During Lysogeny 218
- Determining the Fate of a λ Infection:
Lysis or Lysogeny 222
- Lysogen Induction 224

CHAPTER 9

DNA-Protein Interactions in Bacteria 228

- 9.1 The λ Family of Repressors 229
 - Probing Binding Specificity by
Site-Directed Mutagenesis 229
 - Box 9.1** X-Ray Crystallography 230
 - High-Resolution Analysis of λ Repressor-Operator
Interactions 235
 - High-Resolution Analysis of Phage λ 434
Repressor-Operator Interactions 238
- 9.2 The *trp* Repressor 240
 - The Role of Tryptophan 240
- 9.3 General Considerations on
Protein-DNA Interactions 241
 - Hydrogen Bonding Capabilities of the Four Different
Base Pairs 241
 - The Importance of Multimeric DNA-Binding
Proteins 242
- 9.4 DNA-Binding Proteins: Action at a Distance 243
 - The *gal* Operon 243
 - Duplicated λ Operators 243
 - Enhancers 244

PART IV

Transcription in Eukaryotes

CHAPTER 10

Eukaryotic RNA Polymerases and Their Promoters 250

- 10.1 Multiple Forms of Eukaryotic
RNA Polymerase 251
 - Separation of the Three Nuclear Polymerases 251
 - The Roles of the Three RNA Polymerases 252
 - RNA Polymerase Subunit Structures 254
- 10.2 Promoters 266
 - Class II Promoters 266
 - Class I Promoters 271
 - Class III Promoters 271
- 10.3 Enhancers and Silencers 274
 - Enhancers 274
 - Silencers 276

CHAPTER 11

General Transcription Factors in Eukaryotes 280

- 11.1 Class II Factors 281
 - The Class II Preinitiation Complex 281
 - Structure and Function of TFIID 283
 - Structure and Function of TFIIB 294
 - Structure and Function of TFIIF 297
 - The Mediator Complex and the
RNA Polymerase II Holoenzyme 303
 - The Elongation Factor TFIIS 303
- 11.2 Class I Factors 306
 - The Core-Binding Factor 306
 - The UPE-Binding Factor 308
 - Structure and Function of SL1 309
- 11.3 Class III Factors 310
 - TFIIIA 310
 - TFIIIB and C 311
 - The Role of TBP 314

CHAPTER 12

Transcription Activators in Eukaryotes 321

- 12.1 Categories of Activators 322
 - DNA-Binding Domains 322
 - Transcription-Activating Domains 322
- 12.2 Structures of the DNA-Binding Motifs
of Activators 323
 - Zinc Fingers 323
 - The GAL4 Protein 325
 - The Nuclear Receptors 326
 - Homeodomains 328
 - The bZIP and bHLH Domains 329
- 12.3 Independence of the Domains of Activators 330
- 12.4 Functions of Activators 332
 - Recruitment of TFIID 332
 - Recruitment of the Holoenzyme 333
- 12.5 Interaction Among Activators 336
 - Dimerization 336
 - Action at a Distance 337
 - Complex Enhancers 340
 - Architectural Transcription Factors 341
 - Insulators 343
- 12.6 Regulation of Transcription Factors 347
 - Coactivators 347
 - Activator Ubiquitylation 350

| | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Activator Sumoylation | 351 |
| Activator Acetylation | 352 |
| Signal Transduction Pathways | 352 |

CHAPTER 13

Chromatin Structure and Its Effects on Transcription 359

| | | |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 13.1 | Histones | 360 |
| 13.2 | Nucleosomes | 361 |
| | The 30-nm Fiber | 364 |
| | Higher Order Chromatin Folding | 366 |
| 13.3 | Chromatin Structure and Gene Activity | 368 |
| | The Effects of Histones on 5S rRNA Gene Transcription | 369 |
| | The Effects of Histones on Transcription of Class II Genes | 370 |
| | Nucleosome Positioning | 373 |
| | Histone Acetylation | 377 |
| | Histone Deacetylation | 379 |
| | Chromatin Remodeling | 382 |
| | Heterochromatin and Silencing | 388 |
| | Nucleosomes and Transcription Elongation | 393 |

PART V

Posttranscriptional Events

CHAPTER 14

Messenger RNA Processing I: Splicing 399

| | | |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 14.1 | Genes in Pieces | 400 |
| | Evidence for Split Genes | 400 |
| | RNA Splicing | 401 |
| | Splicing Signals | 402 |
| 14.2 | The Mechanism of Splicing of Nuclear mRNA Precursors | 403 |
| | A Branched Intermediate | 403 |
| | A Signal at the Branch | 406 |
| | Spliceosomes | 406 |
| | Spliceosome Assembly and Function | 418 |
| | Commitment, Splice Site Selection, and Alternative Splicing | 422 |
| | Control of Splicing | 432 |
| 14.3 | Self-Splicing RNAs | 434 |
| | Group I Introns | 435 |
| | Group II Introns | 438 |

CHAPTER 15

Messenger RNA Processing II: Capping and Polyadenylation 444

| | | |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 15.1 | Capping | 445 |
| | Cap Structure | 445 |
| | Cap Synthesis | 446 |
| | Functions of Caps | 448 |
| 15.2 | Polyadenylation | 450 |
| | Poly(A) | 450 |
| | Functions of Poly(A) | 451 |
| | Basic Mechanism of Polyadenylation | 453 |
| | Polyadenylation Signals | 454 |
| | Cleavage and Polyadenylation of a Pre-mRNA | 456 |
| | Poly(A) Polymerase | 462 |
| | Turnover of Poly(A) | 463 |
| 15.3 | Coordination of mRNA Processing Events | 465 |
| | Effect of Cap on Splicing | 465 |
| | Effect of Poly(A) on Splicing | 466 |
| | Binding of the CTD of Rpb1 to mRNA-Processing Proteins | 467 |
| | Changes in Association of RNA-Processing Proteins with the CTD Correlate with Changes in CTD Phosphorylation | 468 |
| | Coupling Transcription Termination with mRNA 3'-end Processing | 471 |
| | Mechanism of Termination | 473 |
| | Role of Polyadenylation in mRNA Transport | 476 |

CHAPTER 16

Other RNA Processing Events 481

| | | |
|------|------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 16.1 | Ribosomal RNA Processing | 482 |
| | Eukaryotic rRNA Processing | 482 |
| | Bacterial rRNA Processing | 484 |
| 16.2 | Transfer RNA Processing | 485 |
| | Cutting Apart Polycistronic Precursors | 485 |
| | Forming Mature 5'-Ends | 485 |
| | Forming Mature 3'-Ends | 486 |
| 16.3 | Trans-Splicing | 487 |
| | The Mechanism of Trans-Splicing | 487 |
| 16.4 | RNA Editing | 490 |
| | Mechanism of Editing | 490 |
| | Editing by Nucleotide Deamination | 493 |
| 16.5 | Posttranscriptional Control of Gene Expression | 494 |
| | Casein mRNA Stability | 494 |
| | Transferrin Receptor mRNA Stability | 495 |
| | RNA Interference | 501 |
| | MicroRNAs and Gene Silencing | 513 |