



How the Ray Gun Got Its Zap: Odd Excursions into Optics

Stephen R. Wilk

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How the Ray Gun Got Its Zap is a collection of essays that discusses odd and unusual topics in optics. Though optics is a fairly specialized branch of physics, this book extracts from the discipline topics that are particularly interesting, mysterious, culturally relevant, or accessible. The essays all first appeared, in abbreviated form, in *Optics and Photonics News* and in *The Spectrograph*; the author has updated and expanded upon each of them for this book. The book is divided into three thematic sections: History, Weird Science, and Pop Culture. Chapters will discuss surprising uses of optics in classics and early astronomy; explain why we think of the sun as yellow when it is actually white; present how the laser is used in popular film; and profile the eccentric scientists who contributed to optics. The essays are short and entertaining, and can be read in any order. The book should appeal to general audiences interested in optics or physics more generally, as well as members of the scientific community who are curious about optics phenomena.

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