



1942: John Michael Crichton is born in Chicago, Illinois on Oct. 23.

1960: Crichton graduates from Roslyn High School on Long Island, New York, with high marks and a reputation as a star basketball player. He decides to attend Harvard University to study English. During his studies, he rankles under his writing professors' criticism. As an act of rebellion, Crichton submits an essay by George Orwell as his own. The professor doesn't catch the plagiarism and gives Orwell a B-. This experience convinces Crichton to change his field of study to anthropology.

1964: Crichton graduates summa cum laude from Harvard University in anthropology. After studying further as a visiting lecturer at Cambridge University and receiving the Henry Russell Shaw Travelling Fellowship, which allowed him to travel in Europe and North Africa, Crichton begins coursework at the Harvard School of Medicine. To help fund his medical endeavors, he writes spy thrillers under several pen names. One of these works, [A Case of Need](#), wins the 1968 Mystery Writers of America's Edgar Allan Poe Award.

1969: Crichton graduates from Harvard Medical school and is accepted as a post-doctoral fellow at the Salk Institute for Biological Science in La Jolla, Calif. However, his career in medicine is waylaid by the publication of the first novel under his own name, [The Andromeda Strain](#). The novel, about an apocalyptic plague, climbs high on bestseller lists and is later made into a [popular film](#). Crichton said of his decision to pursue writing full time: "To quit medicine to become a writer struck most people like quitting the Supreme Court to become a bail bondsman."

1972: Crichton's second novel under his own name [The Terminal Man](#), is published. Also, two of Crichton's previous works under his pen names, *Dealing* and *A Case of Need* are made into movies. After watching the filming, Crichton decides to try his hand at directing. He will eventually direct seven films including the 1973 science-fiction hit [Westworld](#), which was the first film ever to use computer-generated effects.

1980: Crichton draws on his anthropology background and fascination with new technology to create [Congo](#), a best-selling novel about a search for industrial diamonds and a new race of gorillas. The novel, patterned after the adventure writings of H. Ryder Haggard, updates the genre with the inclusion of high-tech gadgets that, although may seem quaint 20 years later, serve to set Crichton's work apart and he begins to cement his reputation as "the father of the techno-thriller."

1990: After the 1980s, which saw the publication of the underwater adventure [Sphere](#) (1987) and an invitation to become a visiting writer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1988), Crichton begins the new decade with a bang via the publication of his most popular novel, [Jurassic Park](#). The book is a powerful example of Crichton's use of science and technology as the bedrock for his work. Heady discussion of genetic engineering, chaos theory, and paleontology run throughout the tightly-wound thriller that strands a crew of scientists on an island populated by cloned dinosaurs run amok. The novel inspires the 1993 [Steven Spielberg film](#), and together book and film will re-ignite the world's fascination with dinosaurs.

1995: Crichton resurrects an idea from his medical school days to create the Emmy-Award Winning television series [ER](#). In this year, *ER* won eight Emmys and Crichton received an award from the Producers Guild of America in the category of outstanding multi-episodic series. Set in an insanely busy and often dangerous Chicago emergency room, the fast-paced drama is defined by Crichton's now trademark use of technical expertise and insider jargon. The year also saw the publication of [The Lost World](#) returning readers to the dinosaur-infested island.

2000: In recognition for Crichton's contribution in popularizing paleontology, a dinosaur discovered in southern China is named after him. "Crichton's ankylosaur" is a small, armored plant-eating dinosaur that dates to the early Jurassic Period, about 180 million years ago. "For a person like me, this is much better than an Academy Award," Crichton said of the honor.

2004: Crichton's newest thriller *State of Fear* is published.



Amazon.com's Significant Seven

Michael Crichton kindly agreed to take the life quiz we like to give to all our authors: the Amazon.com Significant Seven.

Q: What book has had the most significant impact on your life?

A: [*Prisoners of Childhood*](#) by Alice Miller

Q: You are stranded on a desert island with only one book, one CD, and one DVD--what are they?

A: [*Tao Te Ching*](#) by Lao Tzu (Witter Bynner version)

[*Symphony #2 in D Major*](#) by Johannes Brahms (Georg Solti)

[*Ikiru*](#) by Akira Kurosawa

Q: What is the worst lie you've ever told?

A: Surely you're joking.

Q: Describe the perfect writing environment.

A: Small room. Shades down. No daylight. No disturbances. Macintosh with a big screen. Plenty of coffee. Quiet.

Q: If you could write your own epitaph, what would it say?

A: I don't want an epitaph. If forced, I would say "Why Are You Here? Go Live Your Life."

Q: Who is the one person living or dead that you would like to have dinner with?

A: Benjamin Franklin

Q: If you could have one superpower what would it be?

A: Invisibility

From Publishers Weekly

If Crichton is right—if the scientific evidence for global warming is thin; if the environmental movement, ignoring science, has gone off track; if we live in what he in his Author's Message calls a "State of Fear," a "near-hysterical preoccupation with safety that's at best a waste of resources and a crimp on the human spirit, and at worst an invitation to totalitarianism"—then his extraordinary new thriller may in time be viewed as a landmark publication, both cautionary and prophetic. If he is wrong, then the novel will be remembered simply as another smart and robust, albeit preachy, addition to an astonishing writing career that has produced, among other works, *Jurassic Park*, *Rising Sun*, *Disclosure* and *The Andromeda Strain*. Crichton dramatizes his message by way of a frantic chase to prevent environmental terrorists from wreaking widespread destruction aimed at galvanizing the world against global warming. A team lead by MIT scientist/federal agent John Kenner crosses the globe to prevent the terrorists from calving a giant Antarctic iceberg; inducing terrible storms and flash floods in the US; and, using giant cavitators, causing a Pacific tidal wave. Behind the terrorists lurks the fantastical, fund-seeking chief of a mainstream environmental group; on Kenner's team, most notably, is young attorney Peter Evans, aka everyman, whose typically liberal views on global warming chill as Kenner instructs him in the truth about the so-called crisis. The novel is dense with cliffhangers and chases and derring-do, while stuffed between these, mostly via Kenner's dialogue, is a talky yet highly provocative survey of how Crichton thinks environmentalism has derailed. There are plenty of ready-to-film minor characters as well, from a karate-kicking beauty to a dimwitted, pro-environmentalist TV star who meets one of the nastiest fates in recent fiction. There's a lot of message here, but fortunately Crichton knows how to write a thriller of cyclonic speed and intensity. Certainly one of the more unusual novels of the year for its high-level mix of education and entertainment, with a decidedly daring contrarian take, this take-no-prisoners consideration of environmentalism wrapped in extravagantly enjoyable pages is one of the most memorable novels of the year and is bound to be a #1 bestseller.

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In the darkness, he touched her arm and said, "Stay here." [Read the first page](#)

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[stars-4-0.Crichton reverses field](#), December 10, 2004

Reviewer: [David J. Gannon](#) (San Antonio, TX USA) - [See all my reviews](#)
[c7y_badge_tr_5.](#) [c7y_badge_rn_1.](#)

Michael Crichton has always used the latent but, in his view, underappreciated dangers associated with scientific advancement as a theme in his books (microbiology in *The Andromeda Strain*, genetic engineering in *Jurassic park*, and so on).

In *State of Fear* he reverses field and uses the incorrectly perceived threats of environmental disaster as the underlying impetus for a novel. In Crichton's view, the whole global warming argument is false. His view is that environmentalism has degenerated into a quasi religious system devoid of scientific veracity. Thus, the proponents of the global warming hysteria are pushing faith over fact, many of them have lost their moorings and the inevitable result is a grand conspiracy.

At the heart of this conspiracy is Nick Drake, head of a radical environmentalist group. Outraged that a significant source of funding has been closed by the donors getting Drakes science debunked by a MIT professor, drakes sets out on a murderous course that is designed to both do away with his detractors and enemies while concomitantly creating a profound state of fear about global warming among the public.

As is generally the case with Crichton, an avalanche of scientific data is imparted in Crichton's usual informative yet entertaining manner. Many will debate the validity of Crichton's "science" as regards the issue of global warming. As Crichton so deftly displays in this novel, this issue has become more political than scientific in many ways and there's no reason this novel won't be analyzed in that light.

The story has all the traditional strengths and weaknesses of a Crichton novel. Crichton is an accomplished technician and that comes through in this novel. It can justifiably be called a page turner. However, the methodology of using characters to do the education creates a scenario wherein the characters become somewhat robotic and predictable, not truly fully fleshed out human beings.

However, that's quibbling. This is a very fine novel. I suspect one's enjoyment will be colored to a great degree with how strongly one leans to or away from Crichton's premise. That aside, this ranks as one of his better works.

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471 of 603 people found the following review helpful:

[stars-4-0](#). **A Provocative and Informative Thriller about Avoiding Fear**, December 9, 2004

Reviewer: [Donald Mitchell "Your Dream Concierge: Live Rich on Little by reading my daily blog at http://livebetterthanabillionaireon5dollars.blogspot.com"](#) (a citizen of the world based on Boston) - [See all my reviews](#)
[c7y_badge_tr_2](#). [c7y_badge_rn_1](#).

This book reminded me very much of Moby Dick with its heavy emphasis on both an adventure story and sharing detailed information. Those who prefer one aspect or the other will probably find themselves flipping quickly through the pages that emphasize the other aspect.

Popular opinions are almost always wrong. That's the theme of this book. The point is made in the context of describing how global warming, as perceived by the public and media, is different from what scientists are describing. Dr. Crichton argues through his story that we can waste a lot of time and resources on popular delusions, and we need to get our facts right. His appendix I on the dangers of politicized science is something everyone should read. The eugenics example is a chilling one.

The adventure story itself is a Frederick Forsyth/Clive Cussler-type thriller written from the perspective of a young lawyer who tags along with a James Bond-like character who single-handedly saves the day along with his trusty, almost silent, sidekick. They are about as good a source for scintillating conversation as the Lone Ranger and Tonto. Instead of greedy multinationals or rich megalomaniacs being at fault, this story looks at how lawyers and rabid environmentalists can get carried away.

In typical Michael Crichton fashion, the story develops around little-known scientific facts about how humans can influence the environment. So if you wanted to know more about how giant ice bergs, tsunamis and flash floods can be created, this is your book. At the same time, there are nice subplots around how to track terrorists via the Internet and an obscure way to assassinate people.

I found myself drawn to both the adventure story and the global warming information. It's a nice combination for the reader who likes a little substance along with their thrillers. Even I, though, thought the global warming was overdone. The characters needed a lot of work to become interesting, rather than just being devices to drive the plot along. I graded the book down accordingly.

I kept thinking as I read this book that I would like to read a book like this by Dr. Crichton that looks at people manufacturing domestic terrorism for political gain. Perhaps that will be his next subject.

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[stars-4-0](#). **Great, but I'd wished for a little more**, September 24, 2005

Reviewer: [G. Stelzenmuller](#) - [See all my reviews](#)
[c7y_badge_rn_1](#).

Oh, Michael Creighton, how I longed for another "Andromeda Strain"! I would still give that first book of yours a five-star rating. What a great action, nerdy, scientifically detailed, scary novel "Andromeda" was - talk about state of fear!

Alas, "State of Fear" had too many wooden characters (all of them), too many unlikely rescued-at-the-last-minute scenes for me to rank it with your earlier book. My four stars come from 1) the story's plot, which is indeed sweeping in geography and numerous fields of science, and really is quite action-packed; and 2) the secondary message that global warming is not soundly based in science (yet). But the primary message about the world being put in a perpetual state of fear from all kinds of "causes" after the fall of the Soviet Union seems extreme. I think you could point to almost any time in the last century where the same could be said ("We have nothing to fear but fear itself"), just different rationales. I have to admit that Professor what's-his-name's rant about this perpetual state of fear was more interesting (and mercifully shorter) than John Galt's speech in "Atlas Shrugged." Last, I dearly wish Mr. Creighton wouldn't say both a character's first and last name late into the book. We KNOW by now who "Peter Evans" is. Either "Peter" or "Evans" will do nicely, and save a few type spaces!

As an promoter of rational scientific discussion, I'm right behind Mr. Creighton. Much of what his good-guy speeches say in the book I have heard before. Even on a PBS feature there was information refuting a global warming phenomenon, though I suspect the screen writer didn't intend to stumble this kind of information! Interestingly, the book prompted me to recall that contributors to several recent articles in Scientific American, of all things, assumed global warming to be fact, with almost no supporting information in the rest of article. Maybe I haven't read enough articles.

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2 of 6 people found the following review helpful:

[stars-2-0](#). **State of Fear**, September 23, 2005

Reviewer: [D. Cordery](#) (Spain) - [See all my reviews](#)
[c7y_badge_rn_1](#).

An interesting book, typical of the author, but, in this case, with a distinct point of view, basically antiglobal warming theories. He makes a distinction between "good" and "bad" science. However, the data that support his main theory has been recently proven wrong due to faulty mechanics (instruments providing incorrect input). What is clear is that 10000 years ago, or even 1 million years ago, there were not 5 billion people on the planet, especially those who drive a big ass car/truck 2 miles to get a doughnut..there also appears to be a few more hurricanes than normal.. Lets leave science to the scientists.

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4 of 5 people found the following review helpful:

[stars-4-0](#). **Very Thought Provoking!**, September 21, 2005

Reviewer: [CindaLee "Cinda"](#) (Virginia USA) - [See all my reviews](#)

Wow! This one really makes you think! Everyday we hear about global warming and climate change -- especially now with all the hurricanes -- well, this book might well make you question your beliefs. I think the main message I got from this book is not to simply accept what you see, hear or read -- for me, that means not only examining my long held beliefs that humans are harming the environment and that that harm is resulting in environmental changes, but also examining the theories this book puts forward. You may not agree with the author's interpretation of the facts and the conclusions he puts forth -- but it is a fun and very thought provoking read!!

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4 of 7 people found the following review helpful:

[stars-5-0](#). **Aren't We All Sick of the Hype?**, September 20, 2005

Reviewer: [W. T. Louderback "Tom Louderback"](#) (Louisville, Kentucky) - [See all my reviews](#)
[c7y_badge_rn_1](#).

This book was recommended to me by a friend of mine who is decidedly more conservative than I am. On global warming, we agree that it is a real problem but disagree about the urgency and severity of it. I think it's more pressing than he does. No surprise there. Both of us are burn't out on all the hype we see and hear about everything today in politics, religion, the media, advertising and so on. Let's have some straight talk!

I liked the plot of this book as much as my friend did and see the moral of the story the same way. Basically, we need to follow whatever Science is telling us about our environment wherever it takes us. Get rid of the hype and the sensational movies like "The Day After Tomorrow." Environmentalists ought not to behave like Intelligent Design extremists. That does not help anyone.

That said, I have a criticism. I'd say Crichton low balls the influence of corporate money in politics and government decisions. He acknowledges that the environmentalists are driven to extremes by the intense competition of their David v. Goliath battles with the power of money; but he seems to say they are paranoid about it. I don't think so!

For example, Crichton complains that the media is just telegraphing the news nowadays. Why is this happening? It's not hard to figure out. They're more concerned about selling commercials, market share, and paying dividends than getting the story right. It's about money.

Still, I'd say this book is a great read.

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