How to Find a Habitable Planet

If anyone without an advanced degree in physics or chemistry wants to learn everything they need to know, and more, about finding a habitable planet...this is the book to read. James Kasting touches upon every angle needed to back up multiple arguments on nearly each topic. Also, not only does he tell the readers how to find a habitable planet, but he defines nearly every aspect of habitable planets as well as how they are created. If only Mary Roach had used so much science to describe getting to mars, I would practically be able to work for NASA by now.

Kasting’s writing is very easy to follow if you consider how difficult the subject material is. He leaves no stone unturned when trying to paint the perfect picture of what he is describing. The amount of complex science he uses would leave his readers utterly lost if he did not do such a fantastic job of being thorough and simple as possible in his writing. It isn’t as funny as Packing for Mars, and I am completely fine with that. I learned such large amounts just from a few chapters; my brain couldn’t come close to absorbing all of the information in the entire book. That is completely fine though, because his work, despite being complex science, is a page-turner. A big reason why I believe this is true is the great amount of sub-chapters within the chapters. It is a great way to transition from topic to topic, and because most of the sub-topics are very similar, the transitions are usually very smooth.

Personally, my favorite chapters cover how life and earth were possibly created. Life is believed to have its beginning with the chemical composition of DNA and RNA eventually fusing after great amounts of time floating around together. The beginnings of earth are still debated today, and Kasting touches on all of them. The most accepted form is accretion, stardust that is pulled into a disk rotating around the protosun, which eventually globs together with other bits of stardust. That has always been a big question mark how the first living thing was made, and I’m very happy to know the right hypothesis. It is also clear that Kasting just knows his stuff. He is meticulous in citing other authors, however if you read closely enough there are large portions of intense science that are purely him. His background as a NASA extra solar planet finder comes through clearly.

Kasting not only uses his words very well, but he chooses great diagrams and photos in order to help readers understand his point, while at the same time backing up his own points. Every several pages a diagram pops up which takes the often confusing words of Kasting and turns them into more understandable images. Based off of Kasting’s work, I absolutely believe there must be life somewhere else. The universe is far too vast, and has far too much matter and stars, for the earth to be as unique as some scholars believe. The possibilities of that occurring are way too small, in my opinion. However, the reason why there probably is life is the same reason why it will take ages to find it. The sheer size and magnitude of space is a hurdle that will not be able to be jumped for many years. Progress is being made, and people like Kastings need to lead our space program to more successful days that are reminiscent of the days of Apollo.