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Stephen Jay Gould dies

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PHILADELPHIA - Stephen Jay Gould, paleontologist, evolutionary biologist and popular author, died of abdominal mesothelioma Monday in New York City. He was 60.

A provocative and controversial thinker, Gould was a fierce public defender of evolution. He became a figurehead for paleontology by making difficult concepts more digestible for the public in forums such as [The New York Times](#) and [The New York Review of Books](#).

While in graduate school, Gould and fellow student Niles Eldredge disputed the theories of evolution, which held that changes in organisms only occurred gradually, over eons. In their theory, known as punctuated equilibrium, evolution proceeded in bursts, followed by long periods of stasis. Thirty years later after their theory was first developed, the debate still rages.

Among the many awards and honors bestowed upon Gould were membership in the [National Academy of Sciences](#), the National Book Award, and the National Book Critics Circle Award. He also served as president of the [American Association for the Advancement of Science](#).

Gould wrote more than a dozen books, most recently publishing the 1,454-page *The Structure of Evolutionary Theory* (Harvard, 2001) and, this month, *I Have Landed : The End of a Beginning in Natural History* (Harmony Books, 2002). A fan of both fossils and the New York Yankees, Gould demonstrated Lou Gehrig-like tenacity by penning 300 consecutive monthly essays for *Natural History*, now collected in *I Have Landed*. Gould was so well known for popularizing science that he was even featured on an episode of 'The Simpsons' as a voice in a debate between evolution and creationism.

"The most erroneous stories are those we think we know best - and therefore never scrutinize or question," Gould wrote in 1996's *Full House*.

Gould received a bachelor's degree in geology from [Antioch College, Ohio](#), in 1963 and a doctorate in paleontology from [Columbia University](#) in 1967. He taught at [Harvard University](#), where he was Alexander Agassiz Professor of Zoology, and at [New York University](#), where he was Astor Visiting Research Professor of Biology.

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