Viruses
A Very Short Introduction
By Dorothy H Crawford

Questions for Discussion:

- What are viruses and should they be classified as living things?
- The origin of viruses is unknown. What are the relative merits of the present theories? Are there any other possible origins?
- The mind-boggling number of viruses in the oceans means that despite their tiny size they are making a significant contribution to the planet’s CO2 build up. Could this be remedied in any way?
- Where do ‘new’ viruses come from? Where is the next human pandemic virus likely to come from?
- How can we prevent pandemics?
- Is vaccination the best way to prevent acute virus infections like respiratory syncytial virus and rotavirus?
- Why is it important to continue a vaccination programme when the disease has been eliminated from the country? Is this reasonable?
- Given its high infectivity and fatality rate, why is it that an Ebola epidemic is relatively easy to control?
- Which of our common virus infections have evolved to spread among sparse populations and how do they manage it?
- Why do some viruses cause cancer when this may kill the host that they are dependent on for survival?
- Where might you look to discover another human cancer virus?
- Have viruses had a significant impact on world history?
- Could the study of viruses tell us anything about ancient human migrations?
- Was Edward Jenner’s experiment with smallpox vaccination on James Phipps justified?
- Should the world’s remaining stocks of smallpox virus be destroyed?
- Should antiviral agents be available over-the-counter? What are the problems with free availability?
- What orphan diseases are likely to be caused by a virus and how would you go about finding the virus?
- What are the most likely man-made viral threats in the future?
- Should governments or agencies provide the money for pandemic prevention by identifying potential viral threats in wild animals?
- If the production of an effective HIV vaccine is still several years away how can spread of the virus be prevented?

Other books by Dorothy H. Crawford

_Deadly Companions: How microbes shaped our history_, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007)

Suggested further reading