

'Overlooked' DNA pioneer gets Google tribute

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Rosalind Franklin, a British biophysicist who became a cause celebre in feminism, on Thursday was awarded a 21st-century tribute in the form of a Google "doodle" on what would have been her 93rd birthday.

In its signature graphic replacing the corporate logo, Google's search engine featured a portrait of Franklin, a molecule of DNA and a now-famous X-ray image she took that helped determine the structure of the code for life.

Two Britons and an American—all men—shared the 1962 Nobel Prize for Medicine, nine years after revealing that DNA had a double-helix structure of chemical "rungs" that fitted together.

The landmark paper was published by Francis Crick and James Watson of the legendary Cavendish Laboratory at the University of Cambridge on April 25, 1953.

They were selected for the Nobel along with Maurice Wilkins, who headed the laboratory at King's College London where Franklin took the X-ray diffraction images that helped unlock the discovery.

Franklin, a rare woman scientist in what was then a man's world, was snubbed by the three men, who exploited her work without giving her recognition, say feminists.

She has even been dubbed "the Sylvia Plath of molecular biology," a

reference to the then-overlooked American writer who took her own life in 1963 during a stormy marriage to fellow poet Ted Hughes.

In a 1961 letter that surfaced earlier this year to coincide with the 60th anniversary of the discovery of DNA, Crick acknowledged the importance of her work in determining "certain features" of the molecule.

Franklin in any case could not be considered for a Nobel, as she died of ovarian cancer in 1958 at the age of 37 and the prize is never awarded posthumously.

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