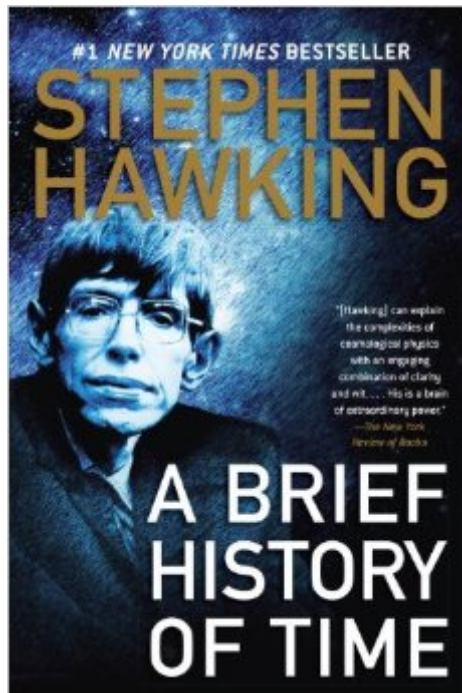


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A Brief History Of Time: And Other Essays



Synopsis

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER [^] Published more than two decades ago to great critical acclaim and commercial success, *A Brief History of Time* has become a landmark volume in science writing. Stephen Hawking, one of the great minds of our time, explores such profound questions as: How did the universe begin [^] and what made its start possible? Does time always flow forward? Is the universe unending [^] or are there boundaries? Are there other dimensions in space? What will happen when it all ends? [^] Told in language we all can understand, *A Brief History of Time* plunges into the exotic realms of black holes and quarks, of antimatter and [^] e arrows of time, [^] of the big bang and a bigger God [^] where the possibilities are wondrous and unexpected. With exciting images and profound imagination, Stephen Hawking brings us closer to the ultimate secrets at the very heart of creation.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars [^] [^] See all reviews [^] (1,610 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

Stephen Hawking is an established scientific genius, but this book establishes him as a brilliant writer - an extremely rare, yet valuable combination. A point he brings to attention is that it had been possible for the philosophers of ancient times to master practically all the knowledge of academia. Today, however, only a handful of extremely specialized scientists understand the latest ideas in their fields. While men of ancient times could easily understand the latest scientific ideas, people today are lost. Enter "A Brief History of Time." This book helps fill in that gap between an average person's understanding and the highly specialized scientists' knowledge. This book covers ideas that are profound and affect everyone. It explains theories that concern the creation of the universe, time

travel, light-speed travel, and many more topics. Imagine actually having some grasp of Einstein's general relativity. Ever heard of string theory? How might time travel actually be possible? What are these black holes of which I've heard? This book packs an incredible amount of information into its 248 pages, yet somehow is still easily read - this is the true marvel of this book. The illustrated version is worth the extra money. It contains many updates and additions throughout the book by Hawking (including the time travel chapter!). Every (and I mean every) concept throughout the book is accompanied by at least one illustration - think about it: 240 color illustrations with only 248 pages! Towards the middle of the book, some of the concepts get more complex (when he really gets into the details of sub-atomic particles). However, as a recent high school graduate, I can say with some level of certainty that the average person can understand 90% of this book - and those parts are the most interesting! It will change the way you look at the universe.

Most people know that Hawking is a brilliant physicist, but after reading this book, one develops a respect for his other talents as well. Most noticeable is Stephen Hawking's ability to make very complicated ideas seem quite clear through good explanations, clear comparisons to real life events, and a soft humor. The organization of chapters mostly follows a chronological order, which gives a sense of history from Aristotle to present day, yet also establishes concepts in an order that builds on itself. One also realizes that *A Brief History of Time* was written by a writer, not a scientist who happened to put ideas to paper. This makes a big difference in the enjoyment of a book, since good information in a dry, dull form can be difficult to read (remember trying to keep your eyes open while reading a dull textbook in a subject of interest?). On the other hand, interesting information presented in an interesting manner make *A Brief History of Time* as much of a 'page-turner' as physics can be. In summary, a fountain of information from galaxies and black holes to quantum mechanics presented in such a way that is not only as easy to understand as it can be, but is an enjoyable experience to read.

I read the original version of '*A Brief History of Time*' back in 1988. At the time, Hawking was into ground-breaking territory. The fact that his theories have gained such universal acceptance and that many of them have since been proved is evidence of the brilliance of the mind that thought through the logic. In this updated version, Hawking moves from time travel to black holes to general relativity, quantum mechanics and even string theory, he never fails to captivate and entrance, even though some of the theories are difficult to grasp. The sections devoted to black holes and time travel are, in my view, the most interesting... putting a human slant of a highly theoretical subject. With the addition

of hundreds of amazing illustrations and photos, Hawking has made his revised book extremely readable and colorful, both comprehensive and comprehensible, as one reviewer put it. An excellent introduction to relativity, big bang, and anything else you might have scratched your head about!

I must say my first reaction was to be surprised at how much better Hawking is at explaining modern physics than my college instructors were. Heisenberg's uncertainty principle was just an equation I learned. Hawking made it seem like common sense. Hawking tries a little too hard to be witty at times (and punctuates all of his jokes with exclamation points! just in case you missed them!), but all-in-all, this was a quite readable account of what's presently known about cosmology. I use the term "presently" guardedly, as just recently there was some big finding about dark matter (it exists!), but from now on, when there are new findings in physics, I want Hawking to explain them to me, because I feel like then I might understand them. That's why you should read this book. The reason you should not read this book is because you have no interest in wrestling with abstractions with which you will never interact in daily life, and would rather read about global warming or Darfur or something a bit more topical and practical. This was still a hard read, and I feel like I grasped maybe 80% of it. For you to decide, but for a former engineering student, this was something I wish I had read when I was taking physics.

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