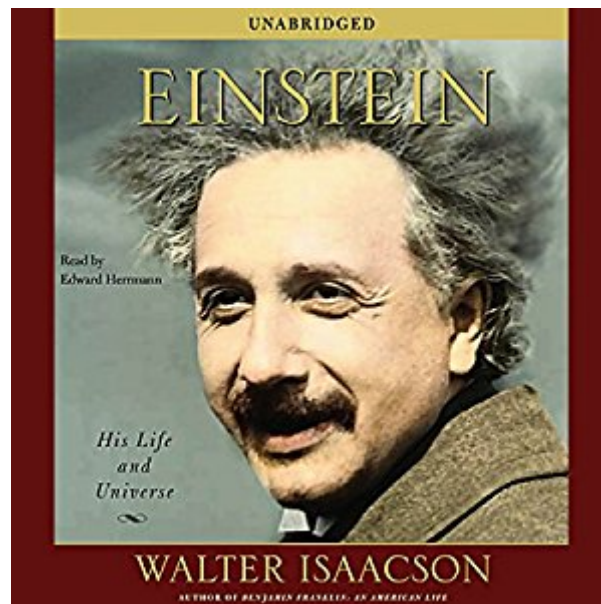


The book was found

Einstein: His Life And Universe



Synopsis

How did Einstein's mind work? What made him a genius? Isaacson's biography shows how his scientific imagination sprang from the rebellious nature of his personality. His fascinating story is a testament to the connection between creativity and freedom. Based on the newly released personal letters of Albert Einstein, Walter Isaacson explores how an imaginative, impertinent patent clerk, a struggling father in a difficult marriage who couldn't get a teaching job or a doctorate, became the mind reader of the creator of the cosmos, the locksmith of the mysteries of the atom and the universe. His success came from questioning conventional wisdom and marveling at mysteries that struck others as mundane. This led him to embrace a morality and politics based on respect for free minds, free spirits, and free individuals. These traits are just as vital for this new century of globalization, in which our success will depend on our creativity, as they were for the beginning of the last century, when Einstein helped usher in the modern age.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Walter Isaacson's biography of Einstein creates a fuller better rounded image of one of the finest minds of the 20th Century than many biographies of Einstein. Although it's not without its flaws, Isaacson's book covers much of Einstein's life pointing out both his successes and flaws as both a person and physicist. We learn that as a child Einstein suffered from what could be echolalia (which is where you mutter a phrase to yourself multiple times before saying it to others). Isaacson notes both Einstein's debt to Hume, Planck and philosophers such as Kant in helping develop both his world view and his breakthroughs in science. To his credit Isaacson also points out that the man

that came to embody the modern view of physics and became a hero who had feet of clay; Einstein gave up his daughter for adoption without ever seeing her and spent much of his time away from Mileva (who would eventually become his first wife) while she was pregnant for a variety of reasons some understandable some not. The young Einstein was brash, egotistic and obnoxious (or you could call him overly confident) often pointing out flaws in papers by the very professors he was seeking jobs from. He also charts Einstein's difficult path to his professorship including his stint working in the Swiss patent office. Isaacson does cover Einstein's support for the development of the atomic bomb (although this is a relatively small section of the biography) and mentions that Einstein later regretted his support and the bombing that occurred in Japan during World War II. When Einstein came up with his famous equation, he never imagined it would help pave the way for mass destruction.

It's often unfair to rate a book relative to its reputation, but sometimes it is necessary to do so to offset the impression given by other advance billings. I found Isaacson's Einstein to be a serviceable biography, nothing more; certainly not the tour de force I half-expected it to be based on its having climbed to #1 on the best-seller list. Among biographies I read in 2007, Neal Gabler's life of Disney, and Leigh Montville's Babe Ruth bio ("The Big Bam") were certainly superior. So too was Whittaker Chambers's haunting "Witness" (though this was a 50th-year anniversary re-release). Even Bill Bryson's light and unpretentious "The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid" far outshined this book in the biography/memoir category. Isaacson's book provides the salient details of Einstein's life, and does a fair if unspectacular job of bringing the gist of Einstein's theories into focus for the layman. Biographies of scientists, artists and philosophers can sometimes be frustrating reads when the life narrative isn't as interesting as the subject's body of work. This places a burden on the biographer to convey the aesthetic flavor and force of the subject's work (or, in other words, "what all the fuss was about.") Isaacson does a fair job of this. It's virtually impossible to fully do it with Einstein while omitting nearly all the math, but at least Isaacson manages to get it done without losing the essence of what made Einstein's work fascinating. The larger problem with the book is the author's reduction of Einstein's personality to a few summary points, repeating those over and over, even to the point of jamming virtually every life event into tight pigeonholes. Specifically:-- Einstein, we are told, was repulsed by conformity.

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