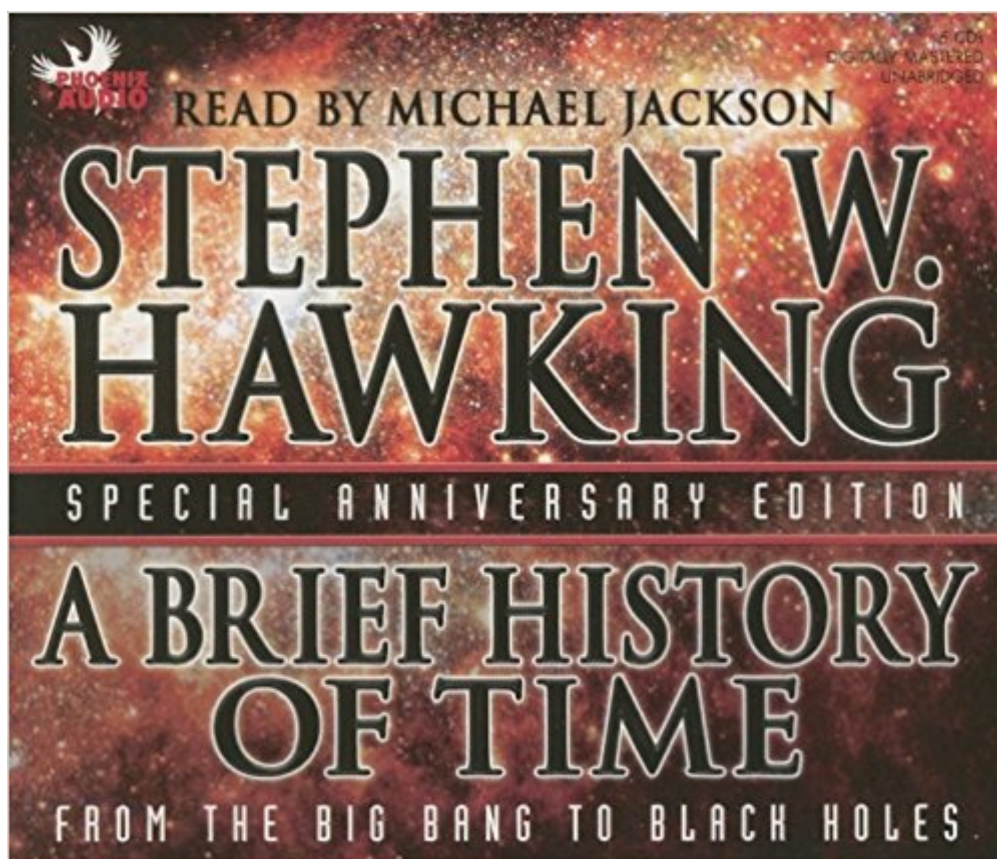


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A Brief History Of Time: From The Big Bang To Black Holes



Synopsis

A Brief History of Time, published in 1988, was a landmark volume in science writing and in world-wide acclaim and popularity, with more than 9 million copies in print globally. The original edition was on the cutting edge of what was then known about the origins and nature of the universe. But the ensuing years have seen extraordinary advances in the technology of observing both the micro- and the macrocosmic world -- observations that have confirmed many of Hawking's theoretical predictions in the first edition of his book. Now a decade later, this edition updates the chapters throughout to document those advances, and also includes an entirely new chapter on Wormholes and Time Travel and a new introduction. It makes vividly clear why A Brief History of Time has transformed our view of the universe.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Stephen Hawking, one of the most brilliant theoretical physicists in history, wrote the modern classic A Brief History of Time to help nonscientists understand the questions being asked by scientists today: Where did the universe come from? How and why did it begin? Will it come to an end, and if so, how? Hawking attempts to reveal these questions (and where we're looking for answers) using a minimum of technical jargon. Among the topics gracefully covered are gravity, black holes, the Big Bang, the nature of time, and physicists' search for a grand unifying theory. This is deep science; these concepts are so vast (or so tiny) as to cause vertigo while reading, and one can't help but marvel at Hawking's ability to synthesize this difficult subject for people not used to thinking about things like alternate dimensions. The journey is certainly worth taking, for, as Hawking says, the

reward of understanding the universe may be a glimpse of "the mind of God." --Therese Littleton
--This text refers to the Paperback edition.

[Hawking] can explain the complexities of cosmological physics with an engaging combination of clarity and wit. . . . His is a brain of extraordinary power. --The New York Review of Books
This book marries a child's wonder to a genius's intellect. We journey into Hawking's universe while marvelling at his mind. --The Sunday Times, (London)
Masterful. --The Wall Street Journal
Charming and lucid . . . [A book of] sunny brilliance. --The New Yorker
Lively and provocative . . . Mr. Hawking clearly possesses a natural teacher's gifts -- easy, good-natured humor and an ability to illustrate highly complex propositions with analogies plucked from daily life. --The New York Times
Even as he sits helpless in his wheelchair, his mind seems to soar ever more brilliantly across the vastness of space and time to unlock the secrets of the universe. --Time --Reviews

"...our goal is a complete understanding of the events around us, and of our own existence." ~ Stephen Hawking.
Hawking's book is a history of the scientific theories about the universe; how it came to be, how it works, and how it will end. Starting with the theories of Aristotel and Copernicus, he discusses their theories and the advancement on those theories made by other scientists up to and even beyond Albert Einstein's general theory of relativity. The ultimate goal of all the scientists is to provide one unified theory that explains everything (but not quite the day Douglass Adams would imagine it).
I found this book to be a challenging read, which is to be expected, because it is a book dealing entirely with science and the advancement of scientific theory. Hawking did a good job of putting much of it in terms easy to understand, but I think it would be impossible to cover this subject that way in its entirety. One thing I did find very interesting is the way theories are proposed and then models are developed to test them. Then further theories are developed to correct flaws and science progresses.

Probably not to everyone's taste (though that's what he's famous for isn't it? making Physics understandable to the masses) Professor Hawking is a very interesting man who is refreshingly straightforward. I say its not for everyone because I have an engineering degree and understand the academic method, am familiar with Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics so I find it fairly clearly written. But even so, Einstein's theories are not well understood even today. Perhaps I like this book as much for how forthright he is about his life, how it has gone, and how its not necessary to be dealt the right "cards" to take advantage of what you have. The book is probably worthwhile for the

one point he makes about how it's been a blessing for him to be non-communicative (or rather severely communication challenged). He says straight up people leave him alone so he has time to think and prepare his hypotheses and write about them, something that he didn't have time to do when he could easily communicate. He's a very interesting human and has profound observations about the universe that do explain in greater detail than I ever previously understood. His descriptions of Black Holes are thought provoking.

Somewhat shorter than I expected it to be, I nevertheless found this classic book fascinating and genuinely funny in parts. I've always been an avid science enthusiast, but had never taken the time to read this book. I know it was written quite some time ago, but a few 'tones' seemed discordant with modern scientific writing to me. Firstly, why does Professor Hawking eschew scientific notation when describing very large or small numbers? Does he feel the target audience incapable of grasping the concept? I found it unnecessarily cumbersome and ludicrous to have to parse "ten thousand million million" into a digestible format. The other, more worrisome, flavor to his writing is the frequent nods toward and mentions of "God", or the intentions of "God" in "creating" the universe and its underlying physical laws upon which the book is based. In doing so, some of the material came across as woo instead of proper scientific discourse. I can't help but think I am missing an underlying aspect to this, but there it is.

The book was very interesting. It really opened me to many existing ideas other than just general relativity. However, it's not really for people who never actually studied physics or very interested in physics. I struggled through the book especially at the end. Regularly, I have to pause the book and google what I was reading about. Anyway, I really liked the book and would recommend to anyone.

Hawking's book is very clear and despite the complexity of the subject understandable to a person like me who has not had a science lesson in his life. It is true that I had to read a few sections a few times until I got it, but that is not his fault but rather my ignorance. I also like the way he slips through the theologically tricky parts of our present knowledge, where others have been truly dogmatic and unpleasantly partisan. About the most comprehensive book on cosmology I have read. Since 1996 I am sure that much has happened and many new discoveries made. I cannot help wondering what he would say about the implications of the discovery of Higgs Boson. It is a fascinating read and particularly useful for getting a broad grasp of the subject. I now look forward to getting myself more up to date.

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