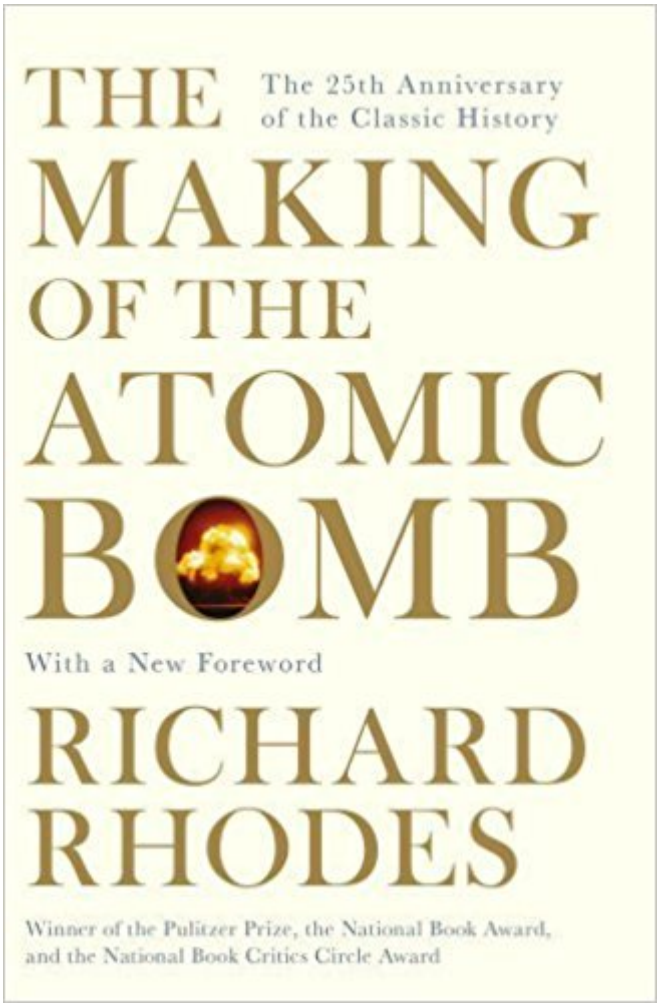
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The Making Of The Atomic Bomb



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Book Information

Paperback: 886 pages

Publisher: Simon & Schuster (1986)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0671657194

ISBN-13: 978-0671657192

ASIN: B00BIFBHBW

Package Dimensions: 9.4 x 6 x 1.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.6 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 730 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #601,985 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #91 inÃ Â Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Energy Production & Extraction > Nuclear #223 inÃ Â Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Military Technology #308 inÃ Â Books > History > Military > Weapons & Warfare > Nuclear

Customer Reviews

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A quick note for anyone deciding which edition to buy: The "25th Anniversary Edition" removes the book’s final chapter completely. This feels utterly disingenuous and revisionist to me. Rhodes’ "Dark Sun" covers the same ground as the omitted epilogue, but this edition ends so abruptly I’m amazed there wasn’t an advertisement for the other books in his "nuclear anthology" on the final page. The Kindle version is somewhat flawed; there are quite a few typos and dropped punctuation, and it’s not always obvious when direct quotations begin and end. I’d recommend buying one of the older physical editions if you want to read this book as it was meant to be read."The Making of the Atomic Bomb" is a richly detailed epic, a table-shaking beast of a book that frequently sent me on evening walks to ponder and process the last few chapters I’d read. This is more than just a book about

Hiroshima, Oppenheimer, and the Manhattan Project. We get an in-depth look at the early history of atomic physics, the personalities of key scientists, politicians, and military leaders, the complex political and military issues surrounding the bomb’s development and use, and the historic and social events that shaped its creation. This is NOT a beach read - better put aside two weeks and plenty of undivided attention before tackling it!I first read this book back in 2001, and I was totally enthralled by it, devouring it from cover to cover in four days. Having read it four times since then, some cracks have formed in its facade. Namely, it feels like two books grafted together - a decent one on the early history of nuclear physics, and an enthralling one on the actual making of the atomic bomb. The first 250 pages, while perhaps essential, tend to get bogged down by Rhodes’ occasionally self-indulgent scene-setting (do we really need to know what shape the windows were?) and rather heavy philosophizing. Things pick up immensely with the actual discovery that the Uranium atom can be split, but I can see why some people give up early on. The "making of" is told with a remarkable lack of sensationalizing and sermonizing, and as horrific as the accounts of the actual bombings are, Rhodes is remarkably nonjudgmental about the bomb’s use. People looking for pointed criticisms or historical revisionism will probably be disappointed; although Rhodes clearly abhors war, he seems to view Hiroshima and Nagasaki as the inevitable climax of an increasingly savage conflict against an enemy which refused to surrender. Considering how emotionally charged most books on nuclear weapons are, I actually admired Rhodes’ somewhat pragmatic approach. Then again, it might leave others cold and confused.Although it’s not the flawless masterpiece I once held it as, "The Making of the Atomic Bomb" is still a pretty solid tome. It’s big, multi-layered, thought-provoking, darkly funny, disturbing, richly detailed, philosophical... and just a tad over-rated. The first third is somewhat rough going, and, in retrospect, could have used some careful editing. The last 500 pages, however, are among the best history writing I’ve ever read. If the early history of nuclear weapons and nuclear physics fascinates you, give it a shot. You just need some patience going in.

The story of the building of the atomic bomb is probably the single most important piece of science and history of the 20th century and perhaps all of human history. The atomic bomb gave humanity a weapon by which it could achieve its own destruction, something unparalleled in history. Since the test at Trinity in 1945, the entire world has lived in the shadow of annihilation by mass suicide.Now, as nuclear proliferation becomes a greater reality than ever, the threat of superpowers destroying each other in a geopolitical contest has been replaced by the idea of ideological dictators (like North Korea) or terrorist organizations (like ISIS) destroying cities and nations, and in so doing, becoming

the cause of such a world-ending world war.But how the atomic bomb was created is a story that many people do not know, and in itself, is a rich and fascinating tale. It combines basic scientific curiosity with the terrible geopolitics of the 1930s, the horrifying tableaux of the world's ghastliest war in the 1940s, the backdrop of Nazi racism, the incredible engineering power of the United States' economy and its military establishment, the growing paranoia and fears of the burgeoning Cold War, and some of the most interesting and intriguing characters in scientific, political, and military history...familiar names like Einstein and Fermi, somewhat less familiar names like Oppenheimer, Groves, and Bohr, and people who should be better remembered, like Kistiakowsky, Feynman, and Alvarez.The scientific and engineering struggle to create the world's first "atomic device" is told with immense writing ability, great research, and rich detail -- an entire chapter focuses on anti-Semitism and how it worked in Europe, hindering Hitler's plans to build an atomic bomb and aiding America's. Later chapters depict in detail the engineering and scientific processes to create atomic piles, nuclear reactors, and finally, "The Gadget," to its first test on July 16, 1945.After that, the pace continues to quicken, as "Little Boy" and "Fat Man" make well-documented voyages to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, respectively, and the atomic attacks are rendered from both points of view: American and Japanese -- victory and the shortening of the war for the Americans, an unbelievable horror for the Japanese. At the end, one feels cognizant of Albert Einstein's warnings about how nuclear weaponry would lead to "general annihilation."This is a book that will fascinate, educate, and make you aware of the ghastly reality we face: we must live together as a species or die by mutual suicide.

It's a fascinating, long, and detailed history from before WWI until the end of WWII of the science, the scientists, the chance events and brilliant discoveries that ushered in the new field of nuclear physics, and that eventually led to the race to make a super-bomb before the Axis powers succeeded in doing so. It reads like a novel, a thriller, a horror story; sad, funny, inspirational and heartbreaking.Many characters we already know (Einstein, Bohr, Fermi) but many of the most historically influential in this narrative are unknown to most (like the first guy to conceive of the notion of a chain reaction, who then later worked so hard to prevent the creation and use of an atomic weapon).There are very detailed descriptions of the scientific techniques used at the time, revealing the painstaking detective work of those dedicated to the research. This contrasts with the political and military figures who, once they understood the implications and learned that other nations were also on the path, pushed for a practical implementation of the theory with extreme urgency. At the end is a gut wrenching account of the first days and the aftermath of the birth of the

nuclear age.Highly recommended.

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