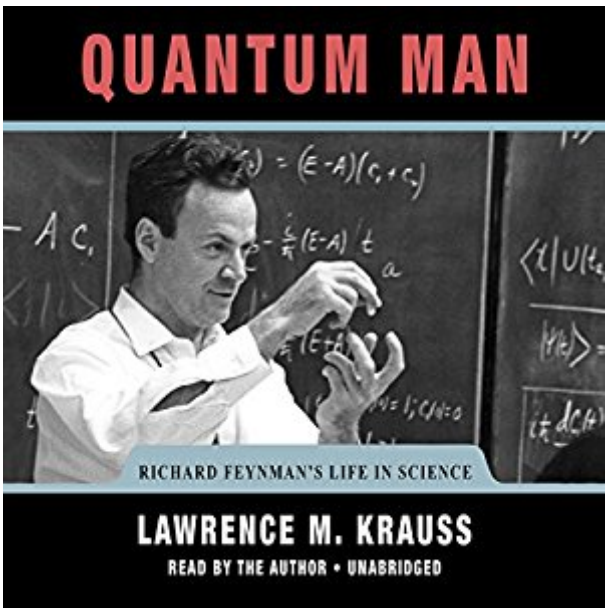
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Quantum Man: Richard FeynmanÃ¢â‚¬â„¢s Life In Science



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Synopsis

A gripping new scientific biography of the revered Nobel Prize-winning physicist (and curious character) Richard Feynman.Perhaps the greatest physicist of the second half of the 20th century, Richard Feynman changed the way we think about quantum mechanics, the most perplexing of all physical theories. Here Lawrence M. Krauss, himself a theoretical physicist and best-selling author, offers a unique scientific biography: a rollicking narrative coupled with clear and novel expositions of science at the limits. An immensely colorful person in and out of the office, Feynman revolutionized our understanding of nature amid a turbulent life. From the death of Feynman's childhood sweetheart during the Manhattan Project to his reluctant rise as a scientific icon, Krauss presents that life as seen through the science, providing a new understanding of the legacy of a man who has fascinated millions. An accessible reflection on the issues that drive physics today, Quantum Man captures the story of a man who was willing to break all the rules to tame a theory that broke all the rules.

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Customer Reviews

With the disclaimer that Richard Feynman is my all-time favorite physicist, I thought this was a great book. Lawrence Krauss can get goofy with his writing sometime - like in A Universe From Nothing, for instance - but here, he expressed no ideology other than that Feynman was a remarkable person and physicist. That's a claim that is very hard to argue with. I've read the other biographies, but I get the most insight into how Feynman approached problems from this treatment of his life and

work. Krauss digs up some of the best accounts of Feynman from people who worked with him or were inspired by him. Being a physicist himself, Krauss went back to Feynman's original publications and the publications of those who built their work on his and even if he had not written this book, I'm certain that he gained a remarkable perspective on how his own work was influenced by Feynman. Now, if you want to read about the adventures that Feynman had - and they are awesome adventures - I would suggest reading Surely, You're Joking Mr. Feynman, What Do You Care What Other People Think and Tuva or Bust. You won't regret it. However, if you want to get a sense of how physics was influenced by Feynman, read this book.

Having read all of Feynman's autobiographical works, and a good amount of his lectures, I am a fan. This book is *much* better than the previous biography _Genius_ but is still a little drier than I would like for such a raconteur.The physics content is probably some of the most accessible I've read of his quantum work, but there's no masking that it's still some of the hardest concepts in science even today.To sum up: I enjoyed the book, I enjoyed learning the things about this man that I hadn't learned before, and I learned more of the physics too.

The is an excellent scientific biography, that is one that focuses on the story of the physics that Feynman developed, as opposed to the story of his personal life. If you want a biography of his personal life, I highly recommend Gleick's "Genius", it is 80% about the man and 20% about his physics, whereas this book is 90% about Feynmam's physics. His personal life is discussed, but it is ancillary to the physics in the book. I think that Professor Krauss was largely successful in addressing the questions of:Ãƒâ Ã Â What were Feynman's scientific contributions?Ãƒâ Ã Â What influenced his scientific ideas?Ãƒâ Ã Â What influence did he have on physics?Ãƒâ Ã Â What drove him; in essence what made Feynman one of the seminal physicists of the 20th century?Addressing these questions required quite a bit of physics, but physics that is presented without a single mathematical equation. This was not an easy task, and in some areas Professor Krauss was more successful than in others. I found Feynman's discussion of QED (in his book of the same name) to be superior to that presented here, but I nonetheless did learn some new ideas from this book concerning this subject. Most importantly, I learned that the idea of renormalization was not Feynman's and that it was not just a piece of slight of hand that had to be introduced to overcome the infinities inherent in the theory. I also got a better appreciation of why it may actually be an indispensable reflection of nature, rather than a mathematical shortcut. I particularly enjoyed the discussion of Feynman's approach to quantum mechanics, his work on superfluidity and nuclear

physics, and I found the discussion of quantum computers to be extremely illuminating.Rather than just building on the work of others, Feynman taught himself why things behaved as they did, thus satisfying his need to understand things in his own unique manner. This led him to develop unique solutions to problems, and while this sometimes led him to lose out in the race for the laurels given to the first to explain phenomena, it often had unexpected payoffs, sometimes decades later.While there are no equations in the book, it contains a lot of physics and readers with no background in this subject will likely be frustrated and disappointed. Thus, I rate this book at five stars only for those with a decent background in physics. This book is probably not a good choice for those who think, based on the books of Feynman anecdotes, that Feynman is a cool guy and want another book about his life that illustrates this. He was indeed a "cool guy", and I think even more so in the way that he tackled physics problems than in his personal life, and this book does an excellent job of describing this. The book shows that Feynman was a unique physicist, one driven to understand nature, rather than the riches that such an understanding might bring.

The author of this book, Lawrence Krauss, states that he " ... was approached about producing a short and accessible volume that might reflect Feynman the man as seen through his scientific contributions, ..." In my view he definitely achieves this goal. I have read many books by, and about, Richard Feynman - mostly they focus on Feynman the person. To find out about his physics it is necessary to read a technical book or article - mostly understandable by only physicists or mathematicians. This book helps to bridge this gap, presenting a picture of Feynman the physicist in language most of us can understand. I did wonder, given the large amount of material already available, whether another book would add much to my picture of who Feynman was, but by the end of the last chapter I was in no doubt - this book considerably broadened my knowledge of the complex person called Richard Feynman and was well worth the read.

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