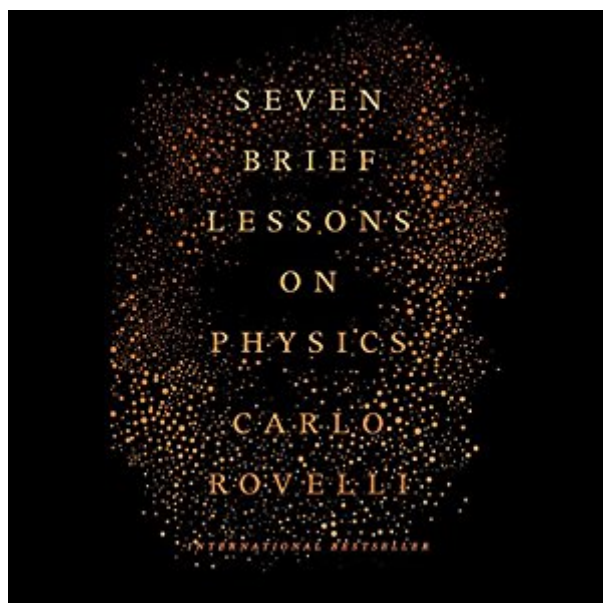


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Seven Brief Lessons On Physics



Synopsis

Everything you need to know about the beauty of modern physics. In seven brief lessons, Italian theoretical physicist Carlo Rovelli guides listeners with admirable clarity through the most transformative physics breakthroughs of the 20th and 21st centuries. This playful, entertaining, and mind-bending introduction to modern physics, already a major best seller in Italy, explains general relativity, quantum mechanics, elementary particles, gravity, black holes, the complex architecture of the universe, and the role of humans in the strange world Rovelli describes. This is a book about the joy of discovery. It takes listeners to the frontiers of our knowledge: to the most minute reaches of the fabric of space, back to the origins of the cosmos, and into the workings of our minds. "Here, on the edge of what we know, in contact with the ocean of the unknown, shines the mystery and the beauty of the world," Rovelli writes. "And it's breathtaking."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is indeed, a very brief book of very brief lessons or chapters, and it is intriguing, elusive, seductive and ultimately humbling all at once. I need to read it again several times over. The easy elegance and poetry of the writing deceptively masks a whole world of things being described, and the broader, better lessons aren't really about physics at all. Hitherto, my last experience with physics was a 2nd semester senior class in high school when, (having been accepted to university), I temporarily lost patience for absorbing further conceptual learning. I did, however, have ample capacity for sniggering at the nerds in the class who were capable of using physics concepts, 3 paper clips and assorted other parts to construct a functioning radio. I read

about this book in the Economist. I bought this book, in part, to atone for my high school sins, and also to finally overcome my phobia of the general theory of relativity. I also wanted it as a quick way to get refreshed on key physics concepts in "bite size" bits, suitable for impressing people at parties. (Because To be impressive at parties, everyone really should have their own "elevator speech" ready on the meaning of the theory of relativity, right?) This book gave me both more "Aha" and less "Ugh" than I bargained for. I still don't have my elevator speeches on topics such as relativity, quantum mechanics, thermodynamics or black holes; the lessons are indeed elegant but without sufficient detail to fully master the topics at hand. In fact, if anything, the simplicity and elegance of the book have made me feel even stupider than when I started. If this Italian Physics professor can describe these things so simply and elegantly, I really must be a half-wit, because I'm still mystified. (Memo to self: avoid elevators or parties for now.) However, even in its brevity the book gives a good deal more. There is the enthusiasm and excitement that imbues the (even brief) descriptions of physics and related concepts. I came away with a genuine desire to go after these topics in successively greater levels of detail, in order, finally, to conquer them. At the very least I see another series of sessions with a famous Stephen Hawking book in my future. The specific physics topics are only the most obvious level in this slim volume. It also touches both implicitly and explicitly on the nature of scientific enquiry, insights into the current bleeding edge physics theories and how they're developed, and (lastly) how scientists think. To read about this in such effective but matter-of-fact tones was extremely enlightening. The 7th and final lesson in the book is one which I've read three times already, because it's so marvelous. A homily by a thoughtful soul on the complexities of the universe, the perceptions and complexities of humans inhabiting their small place in it, and a heartfelt wonder about the ongoing discoveries we have in front of us. The final chapter, "ourselves" really is lovely, and could easily stand alone, with or without the preceding 6 chapters. I've given this five stars. Although it didn't take me where I thought I wanted to go, it took me someplace else, and much better.

Theoretical physicist Carlo Rovelli has condensed physics ideas into this 78 pages book. This work is the result of a series of articles published in an Italian newspaper. Building basic concepts to comprehend the nature of reality has not been simple for theoretical physicists, but the author has spared the narratives for leaner and lucid descriptions in the hopes that these ideas stir up some interest among readers. There is no math and no heavy discussion of relativity or quantum physics. String physics is not included in this discussion. This is certainly a good way to bring modern

physics for general readers. This reminds me of Nobel Laureate Richard Feynman's *Six Easy Pieces: Essentials of Physics Explained*. This book has appeared in many versions and captured the minds of readers in theoretical physics. But Rovelli covers only seven topics that include relativity, quantum physics, particle physics and black holes. The author is one of the inventors of loop quantum gravity which says that space is not continuous but it is made of grains, significantly smaller than an electron, and they are linked to each other forming a network. Quantum gravity essentially refers to quantum properties of space-time and not the quantum behavior of matter in spacetime. But the author has not discussed loop quantum gravity theory in any depth in this book. The author muses on human existence and our perception of physical reality. It is a song of god in which matter (energy) behave in spacetime in a certain way, and this guided by a set of physical laws. The Newtonian physics, relativistic physics, quantum physics and thermodynamics somehow connect with each other to create the nature of reality. But we are further away in comprehending it and Carlo Rovelli understands this better than other physicists.

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