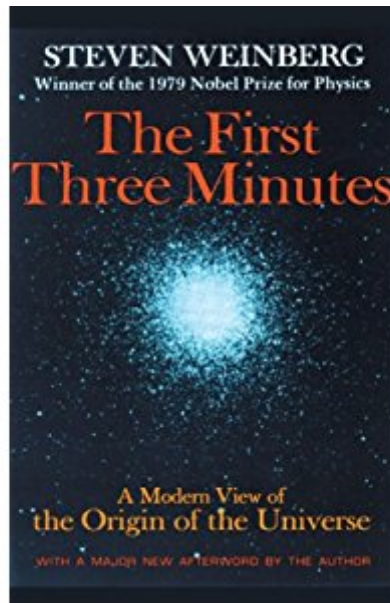




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The First Three Minutes: A Modern View Of The Origin Of The Universe



Synopsis

This classic of contemporary science writing by a Nobel Prize-winning physicist explains to general readers what happened when the universe began, and how we know. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Published in 1977 "The First Three Minutes" was an immediate hit with the general lay-public, from teens to adults, and instantly reset the bar for quality science writing for all science books that followed. Written by American theoretical physicist and future Nobel Laureate Steven Weinberg, it introduces the wonders of Cosmology and Physics to "anyone willing to puzzle through some detailed arguments", in this he was eminently successful. In the 1993 edition he wrote a new preface and an "Afterword: Cosmology Since 1977" in which he updates some features of the book, but, for the most part, the main text was left pretty much as is. Though written for interested layperson the book also attracted a lot of attention among his professional colleagues as well and has continued to do so up to the present day. It's not surprising to find Weinberg and/or "The First Three Minutes" referenced in moderne day books by Brian Greene, Michio Kaku, Stephen Hawking and Carl Sagan along with a host of others. Be that as it may, there have been a lot of changes in this branch of Physics, new research and observations have altered the way we look at The Big Bang and the first few minutes of our universe. In spite of these modern alterations the original theory's basic tenet is still valid. Any "stale dated" issues that may or may not be present should not alter the benefits of this book for the general reader. Just keep in mind when the book was written

and use that as a jumping off place for more recent works. Dr Weinberg's writing is smooth and entertaining while keeping the scientific jargon and mathematical underpinnings to a minimum. To help the reader understand what science thinks the first minutes were really like Dr Weinberg provides an overview of some other Cosmological properties like; the expansion of the universe, the cosmic microwave background radiation, thermal equilibrium and absolute time units. In the latter half of the book Weinberg takes a brief look at the human side of physics history, specifically the mystery of why it took so long to discover the CMB, he also engages in a little bit of self-criticism as to his part in that long delay. With this background info the reader is ready to tackle the Big Bang's first three minutes and on down to the first one-hundredth second. Modern day theories didn't just come out of nowhere, fully formed and ready to go, they got their start in the minds of forward thinking scientist who often contemplate possible explanations for their observations and research. In reading the 1977 text I noticed a few hints of Things To Come. As the universe expanded there was some indication of a unknown force pushing space outward while some kind of invisible matter seemed to be slowing it down (dark energy and matter?). Weinberg mentions isolated patches of space that were like "Domains" with different rates of expansion and he poses a question: Do we live in one of those Domains? (Sounds like the Multiverse to me). While Weinberg doesn't mention things like Dark Matter/Energy or alternate Universes in the original text he does cover those issues in the 1993 update as well as other modern concepts like String Theory and a kind of super-space filled with a bubbly froth of different universes/dimensions. From this interested layman's point of view "The First Three Minutes" is an important look back at where modern science has come from and where it's going in the future as new research and observations lead us down some previously untraveled roads to a new world-view and a different way of looking at the universe around us. I had no technical or formatting problems with this Kindle edition.

Last Ranger

Great book by insightful physicist. I'm an engineering student and always love talking with my physicist friend. This book covers a great introduction to the big bang cosmology. The amazing thing about it is that you don't have to have a degree in physics to appreciate it. Some high school physics about Newton law is enough, though a statistical mechanical understanding of temperature is helpful.

For someone who is not a physics student or expert, but likes physics and has read some basic popular books such as Hawking's "A Brief History of Time", and/or Simon Singh's excellent book on the Big Bang, or Gamow excellent books - this book is the next step. With a somewhat more

in-depth physics (but not too intimidating...) I found the book really as the next step I needed in my free reading. I am less concerned with some of the critics about its up-to-date accuracy, or other interesting critics such as "what exactly are three minutes at the early universe where the meaning of time may have been different, etc.". These comments, while maybe true, do not diminish my opinion of the book, which is well written. This book resides well with "A Brief History of Time" as one of the must-have books on this subject.

I am a true layman, having had NO education in physics beyond high school "physical science." However, I have read Hawking's "Brief History of Time," Timothy Ferris' "The Whole Shebang," and read Scientific American. I say this to point out that you do not need to bring a great deal of knowledge to the table to appreciate this book, provided you have some aptitude for cosmology. And, sure, it helps to have a passing acquaintance with General Relativity, Special Relativity, and some of the basics of particle physics. I can't imagine anybody would pick up this book if they didn't already have some passing interest in cosmology and had read a few magazine articles. The text is clear and, considering the subject matter, amazingly brief. The author does not dummy down the mathematics too much either, which is a fault of some books written for laymen. On the other hand, he also doesn't overwhelm the reader with mathematics either. He wisely chooses to include a mathematics appendix and lets you either explore the math or not. Quantum mechanics and general relativity are not particularly "intuitive" topics, so any beginning reader is going to have to read this slowly, carefully, and with some patience. But the book is as clear and open to lay people as I've yet encountered. And, frankly, I think any educated lay person should have a BASIC understanding of the principles in this book. For the curious, this is a great place to start. And even if you've been through the "story" before, this book is great for reinforcing the story of the birth of the universe in a concise, holistic layout.

Professor Weinberg reminds me of the best and most acclaimed Physics lecturer I experienced in college. He loves his field, he does a superb job of explaining his subject so everyone can understand it clearly, appreciate it and understand how we discovered and proved it. The Big Bang as explained by Dr. Weinberg is a great enlightenment, much different than I had thought. His work is a classic and still relatively up to date. As he carefully explains, it is difficult to prove anything with observations from the very distant parts of our universe which will prove that either the universe will expand forever or someday start to contract. Everyone, regardless of their education will gain a lot from this book. Bravo!

Bought as a gift. They loved it.

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