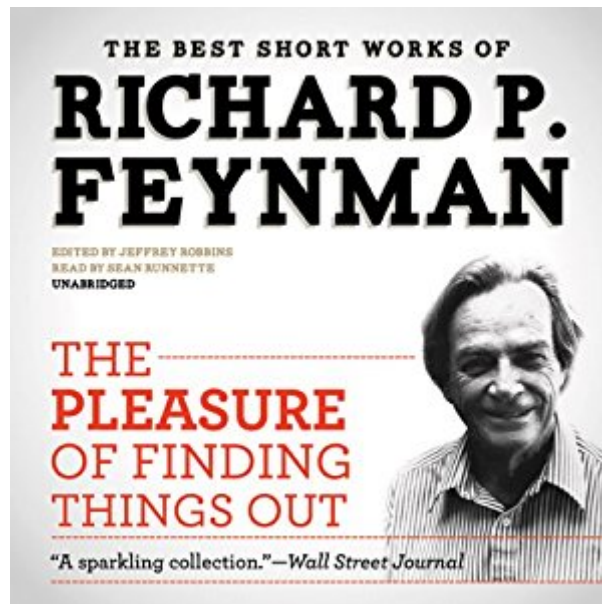


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The Pleasure Of Finding Things Out: The Best Short Works Of Richard P. Feynman



Synopsis

The Pleasure of Finding Things Out is a magnificent treasury of the best short works of Richard P. Feynman, from interviews and speeches to lectures and printed articles. A sweeping, wide-ranging collection, it presents an intimate and fascinating view of a life in science - a life like no other. From his ruminations on science in our culture to his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, this book will delight anyone interested in the world of ideas. "From the irregular trivia of ordinary life mixed with a bit of scientific doodling and failure to the intense dramatic concentration as one closes in on the truth and the final elation (plus, with gradually decreasing frequency, the sudden sharp pangs of doubt) - that is how science is done." (Richard P. Feynman to James D. Watson)

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Customer Reviews

I felt a bit of trepidation when approaching this work, as reading a collection of what are considered "The Best Short Works" of a Nobel Laureate Physicist, sounds daunting even for someone trained to some degree in the field. I am not so trained. Mr. Richard Feynman has the additional gift of speaking passionately, and often in a self-deprecating manner, about what he does, with the result that the layperson can enjoy both his originally spoken, and written thoughts. There are terms and concepts that are understood best, and perhaps only, by those who have made the decision to pursue physics to its higher levels. However the vast majority of the book is readable to any that are inquisitive. Mr. Feynman's Father was also a remarkable man. He was not a trained scientist, and his profession had absolutely nothing to do with science. However as is repeated throughout the book he was the catalyst that recognized and nurtured the talent his precocious son possessed. This topic and the ideas that are expressed about learning and teaching are just one of the topics

that is completely accessible to any reader. The topics make for such interesting reading, as the author's enthusiasm combined with his gift for explaining the complex and the abstract, is what allows his thoughts to be accessible, and this is what I enjoyed so much. He was a man of great enthusiasm for the wonders that he sought to understand, and his writing transfers this feeling to his audience. The quote that titles this review is Mr. Feynman's way of describing his feelings when he learns something new.

I very much enjoyed this entertaining and delightful collection of lectures, talks and essays by the world-renown and sorely missed Professor Feynman, Nobel Prize winning physicist, idiosyncratic genius and one of the great men of the twentieth century. I particularly enjoyed the subtle yet unmistakable way he scolded the people at NASA for putting their political butts before the safety of the space program they were managing in his famous "Minority Report to the Space Shuttle Challenger Inquiry." But the chapter that really sold me on Richard P. Feynman, boy wonder grown up, was "It's as Simple as One, Two, Three" in which he explores the ability to do two things at once through an experiment with counting. Such a delight he took in learning as a kid from his friend Bernie that we sometimes think in pictures and not in words. And then the further delight he took in learning that some people count with their inner voice (himself), and others (his friend John Tukey) count by visualization. I was also loved the chapter, "What is Science?", a talk to science teachers in which Feynman demonstrates that the real difference between science and other ways of "knowing" (e.g., religion) is the ability to doubt. In science we learn, as Feynman said he himself learned, to live with doubt. But in the religious way of "knowing" doubt is intolerable. Feynman gives an evolutionary illustration of why doubt is essential. He begins with the "intelligent" animals "which can learn something from experience (like cats)." At this stage, he says, each animal learned "from its own experience." Then came some animals that could learn more rapidly and from the experience of others by watching. Then came something "completely new..."

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