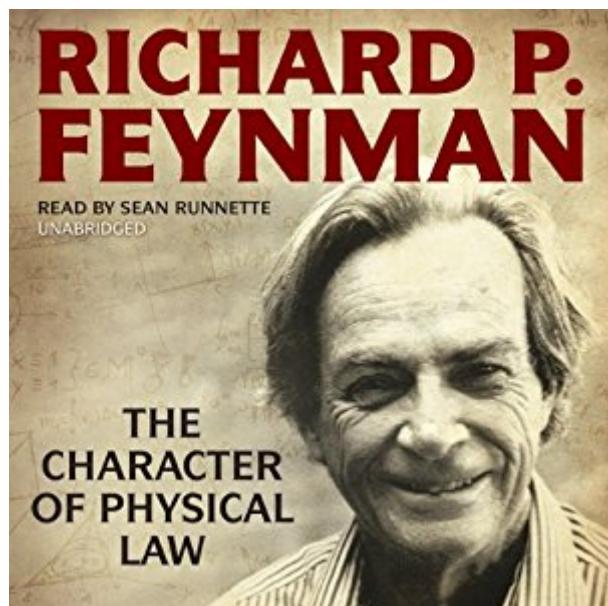


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The Character Of Physical Law



Synopsis

In these Messenger Lectures, originally delivered at Cornell University and recorded for television by the BBC, Richard Feynman offers an overview of selected physical laws and gathers their common features into one broad principle of invariance. He maintains at the outset that the importance of a physical law is not "how clever we are to have found it out but...how clever nature is to pay attention to it" and steers his discussions toward a final exposition of the elegance and simplicity of all scientific laws. Rather than an essay on the most significant achievements in modern science, *The Character of Physical Law* is a statement of what is most remarkable in nature. Feynman's enlightened approach, his wit, and his enthusiasm make this a memorable exposition of the scientist's craft. The law of gravitation is the author's principal example. Relating the details of its discovery and stressing its mathematical character, he uses it to demonstrate the essential interaction of mathematics and physics. He views mathematics as the key to any system of scientific laws, suggesting that if it were possible to fill out the structure of scientific theory completely, the result would be an integrated set of mathematical axioms. The principles of conservation, symmetry, and time irreversibility are then considered in relation to developments in classical and modern physics, and in his final lecture, Feynman develops his own analysis of the process and future of scientific discovery. Like any set of oral reflections, *The Character of Physical Law* has special value as a demonstration of the mind in action. The reader is particularly lucky in Richard Feynman - one of the most eminent and imaginative modern physicists.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As good as you can get with the exception of seeing the original lectures. This is a transcript. He did

not write any lecture, but had notes. He did not like writing. I don't think a single book with him credited as author was actually written by him, but a transcript or someone quoting his words. And when you hear him tell of all these things you realize this guy truly knows what he is talking about. and the tiny errors he makes in the lecture actually make you realize how Intelligent he is, and how much he loves physics.

An excellent, though somewhat challenging read. Feynman's talent for presenting complex physics without resorting to high level math is outstandingly obvious in this work.

Feynman always used plain English, so one can readily understand what he is talking about. Some of the concepts, however, are not easy, even for the technically educated, e.g. physicists and engineers. This is a book that is best read in relatively small doses and bears revisiting. It's well worth the effort though.

I've been on a bit of a pop-physics bender recently and came across a few Feynman lectures on YouTube. I've tried reading a couple of other Feynman books (eg the 6 easy/not-so-easy pieces) and felt disappointed they weren't the complete series of lectures. This series on the character of physical law is a wonderfully clear description of how physics sat in the 1960s that still feels fresh today. That all of the lectures are present means that complex ideas can be developed properly and delivered over a few chapters. This is a great text for any science nerds who want a genius to clarify for them exactly what it is about science that is so entrancing, from the perspective of physics.

Worth every penny. Good audio quality too. If you love science and specifically physics, be sure to throw this one in your glove compartment as it's a great listen on those long drives.

Dr. Feynman's love of science is most evident when he does presentations for non-professionals. His descriptions are complete and clear, helping us truly understand without the overwhelming mathematics that is his stock in trade. I am a physicist myself, and I still learn something every time I read one of his books. Try "You Must Be Kidding" for another fun trip.

I used this as a text for a university course I taught years ago to liberal arts majors. This book reveals the elegant essence of physics to (even a non mathematical) reader, and would be especially beneficial as a precursor to anyone's first physics class.

Indispensable for all scientists and lay people interested in what science is really about.

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