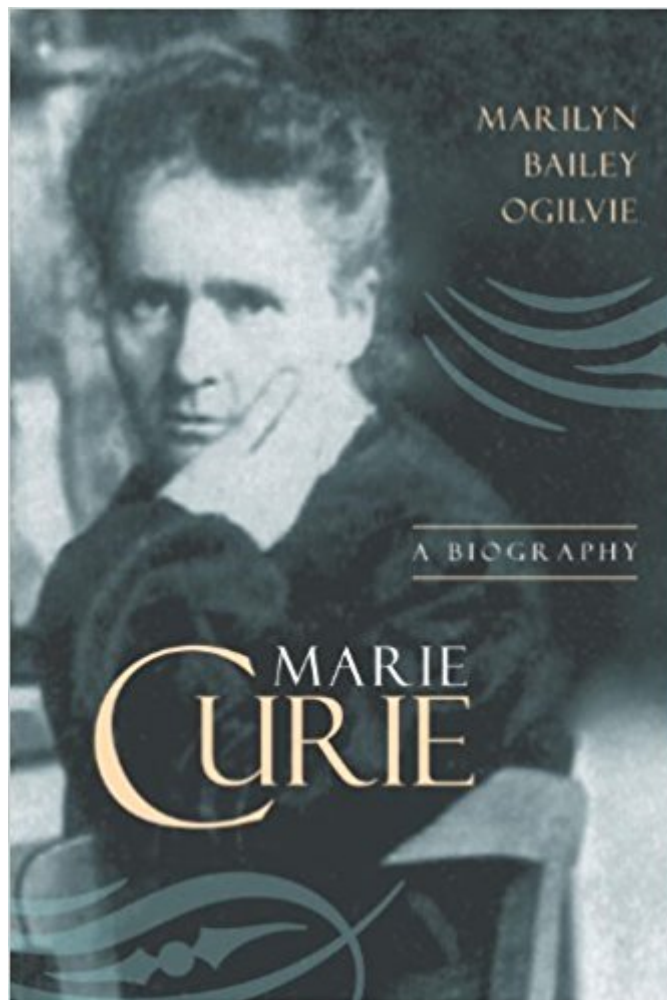


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Marie Curie: A Biography



Synopsis

There is probably no woman scientist more famous than Marie Curie (1867-1934). She made one of the most important theoretical breakthroughs of the twentieth century when she postulated that radiation was an atomic rather than a chemical property, an important milestone in understanding the structure of matter. Not only did she coin the term radioactivity, but her painstaking research culminated in the isolation of two new elements, polonium and radium. For her achievements she won two Nobel Prizes, one in physics (in 1903) and the other in chemistry (in 1911). This informative, accessible, and concise biography looks at Marie Curie not just as a dedicated scientist but also as a complex woman with a sometimes-tumultuous personal life. This historian of science describes Curie's life and career, from her early years in Poland, where she was born Maria Skłodowska; through her marriage to and collaboration with Pierre Curie; her appointment as the first female professor at Sorbonne University after his untimely death; and the scientific work that led to her recognition by the Nobel Prize committee. The author also candidly discusses the controversy that surrounded Marie when detractors charged that her work was actually performed by her late husband. Finally, she describes Curie's work in founding the radium institutes to study radiation and in establishing mobile X-ray units during World War I. Eventually, her long exposure to radium led to her death from aplastic anemia in 1934. A year later, Albert Einstein published a tribute to her in memoriam, praising both her intuition and her tenacity under the most trying circumstances. Ogilvie's appealing narrative brings the brilliant scientist and courageous woman to life in a story that will continue to inspire future scientists.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This concise look at the life of one of the most famous female scientist gives readers insight into her struggle with the demands of family and the social responsibility associated with her groundbreaking work in physics and chemistry. The youngest daughter of educated Polish parents, during an era when Russian control clamped down on the slightest hint of Polish nationalism, Marie learned early that you had to fight, often secretly, for what you believed in. With a childhood marred by the deaths of her mother and sister, these early lessons made this "stubborn" woman determined to get an education at a time when women were not encouraged to attend university—let alone to study science. Ogilvie reveals a deeper story behind Marie's romantic and professional relationship with Pierre Curie, a kindred soul who, like Marie, believed that "salvation lay in science and religion." A shy, private woman, she couldn't understand the publicity over her later work with physicist Paul Langevin, years after Pierre died in a traffic accident. Even as her health faded, a terrible side effect of handling radioactive materials for years, she continued to work hard. Ogilvie's biography offers brisk insight in this fascinating woman whose life and work became the model for the modern female scientist. (Dec.)

"[P]rovides a fast-paced and well-documented portrait of Marie Curie and the world surrounding her....[t]his book creates a delicate balance between her personal and professional life. The author is careful in her conclusions from available records. This book is a wonderful addition to those narratives about an accomplished scientist." -- The American Biology Teacher

"The book tells the story of Marie Curie's life. Her struggles against poverty and prejudice are emphasized, and throughout the book the author makes many links that may be familiar to modern teenagers. The importance of Marie Curie's pioneering work in radioactivity is described and, while the author is careful to describe and credit Pierre Curie's contributions, she explores the difficulties that Marie Curie had in gaining recognition as a scientist from the establishment....[t]he meticulous bibliographies at the end of each chapter are a model of good practice for students." --School Science Review

"[A] top pick for high school to college-level collections." --MBR Internet Bookwatch

I would recommend this book highly, especially for a non scientist. It is very readable . My whole

family read it and it gave us all a better understanding of radioactivity. I especially liked knowing that she also had a family life, and an amazing husband.

I'm a biology major and chemistry is not my best subject. I know that they go together, but I have a tough time with it. I read this book to go along with an assignment from my chemistry class last semester. As a woman, I really respect and admire what Curie went through to get where she's at. I think of this book daily. It was an interesting read, and it really brought my interest level with chemistry way up. Suddenly I want to know more about nuclear chemistry. And, if you knew me, you would know that this is a very new development. Anyhow, I love this book! I think it's a good and easy read. It gives a good background of nuclear chemistry. And, finally, it is a great biography of Curie-- it really details her struggles to become who she was as well as her determination to become who she became.

After watching the movie Madame Curie on TCM I wanted to learn more about her, Pierre and her children. Fascinating book about a brilliant and complicated woman. Author did an excellent job of research and made Marie come alive for me. Not just the facts, but real insight into her personality and relationships with others.

She really inspire me and thank you...

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