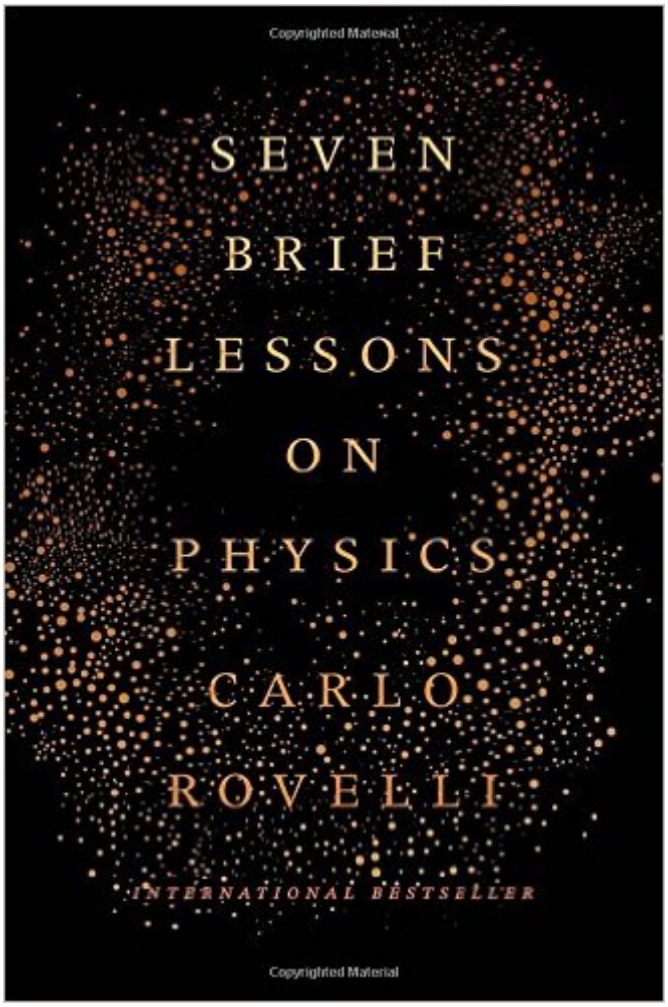
Seven Brief Lessons On Physics



Synopsis

Look out for Carlo Rovelli’s next book, Reality Is Not What It Seems.Instant New York Times Bestsellerâ œClear, elegant...a whirlwind tour of some of the biggest ideas in physics.â •â ”The New York Times Book Reviewâ œA startling and illustrative distillation of centuries of science.â •â ”The Economist Â â œLean, lucid and enchanting.â •â ”New Scientist Â All the beauty of modern physics in seven short and enlightening lessons Â This playful, entertaining, and mind-bending introduction to modern physics briskly explains Einstein’s general relativity, quantum mechanics, elementary particles, gravity, black holes, the complex architecture of the universe, and the role humans play in this weird and wonderful world. CarloÂ Rovelli, a renowned theoretical physicist, is a delightfully poetic and philosophical scientific guide. He takes us 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. TheÂ book celebrates the joy of discovery.Â Â â œHere, on the edge of what we know, in contact with the ocean of the unknown, shines the mystery and the beauty of the world,â • Rovelli writes. â œAnd itâ ™s breathtaking.â •

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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. Iâ ™ll 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 arenâ ™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 moreâ ”and lessâ ”than I bargained for. I still donâ ™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 startedâ |â •if this Italian Physics professor can describe these things so simply and elegantly, I really must be a half-wit, because Iâ ™m still mystified.

Every once in a while it’s a good idea to stand back from the daily necessities of our lives and look back and marvel at what we as human beings have accomplished in our understanding of ourselves and our universe. In very few instances is this wonder more apparent than in an appreciation of the discoveries that physics has made regarding space and time.In this short and highly readable book, Italian physicist Carlo Rovelli leads us through a tour of what he thinks are seven of the foremost ideas (or "lessons’) in physics. These are ideas which have not just furthered our understanding of our material world but which have also expanded our consciousness and connected us to our origins and future. Rovelliâ ™s writing is often poignant and beautiful, simple and without frills and from the heart, and I would be lying if I said the experience wasn’t uplifting. Personally I would have included an extra eighth lesson on chaos theory and complexity since I think those are going to be key scientific issues in the 21st century. Also, there is little new per se in here which would not be familiar to physics aficionados. But as it stands Rovelli’s offering is a marvelous feast which should ignite a renewed sense of inspiration regarding the reach and beauty of science even in hardened veterans.The first lesson is about Einstein’s general theory of relativity which saw yet another towering validation this year with the discovery of gravitational waves. The Russian physicist Lev Landau called it the "most beautiful theory" and I would say there would be few contenders for that title. The basic equation of the theory fits on a napkin, and the essentials of the framework are both startling and elegant.

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