

Color me physics

Nicolas Copernicus (1473-1543) [*pronounced co-PER-ni-cus*]

Nicolas Copernicus was a great astronomer. In school he studied math, light, medicine, and canon law—but his favorite subject was astronomy. Nicolas spent hours watching the night sky. He wrote a book based on his observations that showed how the earth rotated on its axis once a day and went around the sun once a year.

Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) [*pronounced ga-li-LAY-o*]

Galileo Galilei was the first person to use a telescope to look at the sky. With the telescope Galileo saw things that no person had ever seen before. He saw the moons of Jupiter, the phases of the planet Venus, and craters on the moon. Galileo's observations showed that Copernicus was right—the earth does revolve around the sun.

Isaac Newton (1642-1727)

Isaac Newton was expected to become a farmer like his father. However, his mother decided that he should go to college, after she saw how good he was in school. For the rest of his life Isaac worked in math and science instead of farming. He liked to solve problems, and we know him best for explaining how gravity works.

Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)

Benjamin Franklin had many talents. He was an inventor, politician, writer, printer, and scientist. He played an important role in the American Revolution and helped the United States become an independent country. In his free time, Ben made many important discoveries about electricity.

Edward Alexander Bouchet (1852-1918) [*pronounced boo-SHAY*]

Edward Alexander Bouchet was the son of a freed slave. He was good at science, and his parents and teachers encouraged him to go to college. Edward became the first African American to get a PhD from an American university and the sixth American to get a PhD in physics. He became a great chemistry and physics teacher.

Marie Sklodowska Curie (1867-1934)

Marie Sklodowska Curie studied what happens to an atom when it breaks apart. She became one of the most famous female scientists because of her important work. Marie won two Nobel Prizes for her work in physics and in chemistry.

Albert Einstein (1879-1955)

Albert Einstein was much more interested in learning than in school. He spent a lot of time thinking about problems that he didn't understand and trying to explain them. His work revolutionized modern science. Albert's famous equation, $E=mc^2$, shows how matter and energy are two different forms of the same thing.

Enrico Fermi (1901-1954)

Enrico Fermi liked to study the small particles that make up matter. He learned about what Marie Curie did and figured out how to get energy by breaking apart atoms. He especially liked to study pieces of broken atoms that moved very fast, and he led the way to building the first atomic energy sources.

Maria Goeppert-Mayer (1906-1972)

Maria Goeppert-Mayer was a very good physicist. However, because she was a woman, she was not paid for most of her work. Maria developed a model of the atom, and she won the Nobel Prize for this in 1963. Maria was only the second woman to win the Nobel Prize in physics (Marie Curie was the first).

Richard Feynman (1918-1988)

Richard Feynman liked challenges, whether they involved picking locks or understanding physics (he won the Nobel Prize in 1965). He often invented new ways, like his "Feynman Diagrams", to describe complex ideas. Richard was good at explaining things and wrote many popular science books.

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