

Chapter 1 : Flatland (ebook) by Edwin A. Abbott |

Penguin Books, Introduction by Alan Lightman. In the summer of , I went on a camping trip in Sequoia national Park. I was a graduate student in physics at the time, and my two companions were also physicists.

Beginnings[edit] Lightman was born into a white, upper-middle-class, Jewish family in Memphis, Tennessee and grew up there during the racially divided and inflamed s and s. His paternal great grandfather, Joseph, immigrated from Hungary to the U. At age forty three, he swam across the Mississippi River. He also devoted himself to civic action and, among many other activities, was president of the Jewish Welfare Fund and head of fund raising for the all-black Collins Chapel Hospital in Memphis. David began sweeping the floors of the Crescent Box Factory in New Orleans and eventually rose to become owner and president of the factory. He worked as a businessman in the movie theater business started by his father. In the early s, Richard played a key role in the civil rights movement by being the first movie theater owner in Memphis to integrate his theaters, only the second business of any kind to do so in that pivotal city. From an early age, Lightman was interested in both science and the arts. While in high school, he began independent science projects and writing poetry. His combination of talents in both science and creative writing drew attention as he won city and statewide science fairs as well as won the statewide creative writing competition from the National Council of Teachers of English. Alan and Jean have two daughters, Elyse and Kara. Early career[edit] Lightman earned his PhD in theoretical physics from the California Institute of Technology in , where he had received a National Science Foundation pre-doctoral fellowship. His thesis advisor was relativist Kip Thorne , who won the Nobel Prize in physics. From to , Lightman was a postdoctoral fellow in astrophysics at Cornell University. He became an Assistant Professor of astronomy at Harvard University from to and from to a research scientist at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics. In , Lightman was appointed professor of science and writing and senior lecturer in physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology MIT. He was the first professor at MIT to receive a joint appointment in science and the humanities. In , he was appointed John Burchard Professor of Humanities at MIT, a position that he resigned in to allow himself more time for writing. In the late s, Lightman chaired a committee at MIT that established a new Communication Requirement requiring each undergraduate to have a writing and speaking course each of his or her four years at MIT. Scientific work[edit] In his scientific work, Lightman has made fundamental contributions to the theory of astrophysical processes under extreme temperatures and densities. In particular, his research has focused on relativistic gravitation theory, the structure and behavior of accretion disks , stellar dynamics , radiative processes , and relativistic plasmas. Some of his significant achievements are his discovery, with Douglas Eardley , of a structural instability in orbiting disks of matter, called accretion disks, that form around massive condensed objects such as black holes , with wide application in astronomy; [1] his proof, with David L. Lee , that all gravitation theories obeying the Weak Equivalence Principle the experimentally verified fact that all objects fall with the same acceleration in a gravitational field must be metric theories of gravity, that is, must describe gravity as a geometrical warping of time and space; [2] his calculations, with Stuart Shapiro, of the distribution of stars around a massive black hole and the rate of destruction of those stars by the hole; [3] his discovery, independently of Roland Svensson of Sweden, of the negative heat behavior of optically thin, hot thermal plasmas dominated by electron- positron pairs, that is, the result that adding energy to thin hot gases causes their temperature to decrease rather than increase; [4] and his work on unusual radiation processes, such as unsaturated inverse Compton scattering , in thermal media, also with wide application in astrophysics. In , Lightman began publishing essays about science, the human side of science, and the "mind of science", beginning with Smithsonian and moving to Science 82, The New Yorker , and other magazines. The novel has been used in numerous colleges and universities, in many cases for university-wide adoptions in "common-book" programs. In Lightman released his novel, Ghost, an examination of the dichotomies of the physical world and the spiritual world, scepticism and faith, the natural and the supernatural, and science and religion. His novel Mr g, published in , is the story of creation as told by God. Mr g has recently been adapted for the stage by Wesley Savick. In , Lightman published his first volume of poetry, a book-length narrative in

verse titled "Song of Two Worlds. His book *The Accidental Universe* was chosen by *Brainpickings* as one of the ten best books of . His book *Screening Room*, a slightly fictionalized memoir, was chosen by the *Washington Post* as one of the best books of the year. His most recent books are *In Praise of Wasting Time*, and *In Search of Stars on an Island in Maine*, about the way in which religion and science differ in their methods and approach to truth. There he met a Cambodian lawyer named Veasna Chea who told him that when she had been going to university in Phnom Penh in the mid s, she and a handful of female students lived underneath the university building, in the two-meter crawl space between the bottom of the building and the mud, because there was no housing for female university students. Male students could live in the Buddhist pagodas or safely rent rooms together, but those options were not available to female students. Lightman and Chea together conceived the idea of a dormitory for female university students in Phnom Penh. Lightman raised the money to build the facility, which was completed in , the first such facility in the country. During this work, Lightman founded the Harpswell Foundation , a nonprofit organization whose mission is to advance a new generation of women leaders in Southeast Asia. Harpswell is funded from the donations of private individuals, foundations, and corporations. Harpswell now operates two dormitory and leadership centers in Phnom Penh. In addition to providing free housing, food, and medical care, the facility gives outstanding young women a rigorous in-house program in leadership skills and critical thinking which they take in the evenings and weekends when they are not attending their regular university classes. The in-house program includes English instruction, computer literacy, debate, analytical writing, comparative genocide studies, strategies for civic engagement, leadership training, and discussion and analysis of national and international events. After its first two years of operation, the Harpswell students were first in their class at most of the major universities in Cambodia. As of Fall , the Cambodian program has about graduates and about 76 current students. On average, Harpswell graduates earn five to ten times the salary of an average Cambodian woman and are now advancing into leadership positions as project managers at NGOs, lawyers, businesswomen, journalists, engineers, health care workers, teachers and professors, government staff, and bankers. In , Harpswell launched a new program in leadership for young professional women from all ten countries of Southeast Asia: The program consists of an intense, two week summer program in Penang Malaysia, with lectures and workshops in critical thinking, civic engagement, Southeast Asian geography and society, technology and communication, and gender issues. The program has a total of 25 participants each year, who are flown to Penang from their respective countries. We are also developing a strong alumnae association. Further information is available at the website of the Harpswell Foundation. Other Activities[edit] In , Lightman and playwright Alan Brody launched a monthly salon of scientists and theater artists from the greater Boston area to discuss questions of mutual interest to scientists and artists. The Collaborative has created and sponsored a number of new plays that embrace the culture of science. Lightman serves as one of its directors. He is also on the Board of Advisors of *Primary Source*, a nonprofit that works to raise global awareness in high school student in Massachusetts. He is on the Editorial Board of *Undark*, an online magazine about science and society.

Chapter 2 : A place where time stands still alan lightman essays

Brief introduction: "Alan Lightman brings a light touch to heavy questions. Here is a book about nesting ospreys, multiple universes, atheism, spiritualism, and the arrow of time.

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Chapter 3 : The Accidental Universe: The World You Thought You Knew - free PDF, EPUB, FB3, TXT

Alan Lightman is a novelist, essayist, physicist, and educator. Currently, he is Professor of the Practice of the Humanities at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Until , he was John Burchard Professor of the Humanities at MIT.

Lightman was born in Memphis, Tennessee, in This is the only joint appointment in humanities and science at MIT. Professor Lightman has won numerous awards and distinctions and is fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He lives in the Boston area with his wife and two daughters. I was very charmed by your introduction to the Best Essays [of] because you framed it in a very humane setting. They are enlightened people. I felt that I had to say it. My recollection of past introductions in this series usually includes talk of the selection process and highlights from the edition. It was more important to meâ€I picked such seemingly disparate essays, I thought it was important to say what was the guiding principle in the selection rather than focus on any one essay. I reached for some principle that had been subconscious in me and lifted it into consciousness. Authenticity and sincerity were the most important unifying principles of all these apparently different essays. The essay is where she shines the mostâ€and I agree about Jamaica Kincaid. More short-story collections but seemingly not profitable and then one step further down the profit ladderâ€ AL: Poetry, no one ever expects poetry to sellâ€ RB: I love the fact publishers are still publishing unprofitable material. Who is reading short stories and essays? Other writers, aspiring writers or students or very, very serious readersâ€? Writers read essays and serious thinkers and serious readersâ€ that is a small population. Are these forms of literature and narrative having any affect on our culture? A hundred people can affect the cultureâ€ RB: But not the poetsâ€ who is leading this country? Can you identify some voices that are carrying some weight or influence? Yeah, I think Joe Leiber has been one of the leaders of the countryâ€people have such a broad respect for him as a moral force. I think Henry Louis Gates is one of the leaders of the country. People pay attention to him. I think Susan Sontag is an influential voice. How much of your time did the Best Essay book take? It took about six months. It was not a huge project. Had you completed The Diagnosis? I had mostly finished it and was doing the last round of revisions. I worked on that book for five years altogether but the last year was very fine revisions. I was on my fifteenth draft by that time, making very small changes. And you also teach regularly at MIT? Twice a week, both semesters. Are there other projects? I have a family, and you know very well the time that that takes. I have a couple hobbies. In the summer my family and I uproot ourselves and go live in Maine for the summer. We have a house on a very tiny island in Maine. Which is really my spiritual center. We ran an underwater cable. There are six houses on the islandâ€six people who live there. I spend a lot of time just listening to the ospreys. We have an osprey family which about five years ago made a nest in a tree about a hundred feet from our house. And every summer I watch them go through their life cycle. They spend the winter in South America. The mother and father osprey stay together. And every summer they raise a new brood of children. They came back to the nest in the middle of April. How do you know that? Because ornithologists have tagged them. Then they lay the eggs at the end of April. The mother starts sitting on the nest. The father catches fishes for the family. Around the middle of August the babies start trying to fly. The mother gives them flying lessons, which is the most incredible thing to watch. Because they are very high up in the tree? Because they have never left the tree. Most birds, particularly ospreys, you think of as graceful flyers, but on their first practice flight when they are adolescents they crash into trees, they have trouble landing. It has really gotten deep into my bloodstream. So when you ask what else I do, I feel like this is part of what I doâ€is to watch these birds. This may be an absurd question, but what appliances do you have in Maine? Since we ran electricity we have the modern appliances. We have a stove and a refrigeratorâ€ RB: No computer, and without the telephone service we are mercifully without the faxes and e-mails. You stated that The Diagnosis took you five years. The references to it have described it as very funny. Do you think this a funny book? I would say that it has comic moments. I think all tragedies are best told with some humor. You have to relieve the darkness to let the reader get through it. Also, that life has happiness and sadness mixed together. Was it painful to write this book? It was

painful both because of the subject matter and also because for the first several years I was pretty sure that I had bitten off more than I could chew. I had such great hopes for it—there was so much I wanted to do with the book. I was extremely insecure about it for several years. I think that for any novel you never know exactly how the book is going to turn out—RB: You have to do that because if you over-plot your book you strangle your characters. Your characters have to have enough freedom and life to be able to surprise you. What that means is that they may take the book in a different direction that you had envisioned. You are constantly balancing between those two opposing forces. Is that fine-tuning or making significant changes? Ten drafts of very significant changing, where I went through the whole book, wholesale and changed everything. Then the last year or so it was making small changes. I would do something and let it sit for three months—just brood about and decide I needed to slightly change something here or there. But I think everybody goes through this. Do you look forward to writing? Are you eager to pick up the work? I never look at it as this is what I do. I think what gets you through a small writing project, is just one burst of inspiration. When I used to play golf. In 18 holes you make horrible shots off in the woods, in the water—You make one good shot and it brings you back the next time. I really had hold of something I was visited by the muse. Now that this book is out and you read it in public, are there things you discover you want to revise—in that sense is the work really finished? My second novel, *Good Benito*, was not finished. I wished that I had spent another year with it. One thing that I do believe is: A good novel should invite the reader in and let the reader participate in the creative experience and bring their own life experiences to it, interpret with their own individual life experiences.

Alan Paige Lightman is an American physicist, writer, and social scientist. He has served on the faculties of Harvard and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and is currently professor of the practice of the humanities at MIT.

Set over the course of April to June, the novel presents a fictional version of the physicist Albert Einstein as he forms his famed theory of relativity. The book, then, is a meditation on the nature of time and of being human. At intervals throughout the book, Einstein is depicted in his waking life as he works towards perfecting the theory of relativity, which will bring him worldwide renown. The original edition of the novel remains in print, and a edition was released by Vintage Books. His father, Richard Lightman, owned a movie theater chain, and his mother, Jeanne Garretson Lightman, was a dance teacher who also volunteered as a Braille typist. Lightman attended White Station High School in Memphis, and though he continued his scientific studies, he also began writing poetry. He earned the state-level National Council of Teachers of English literary award for his efforts. Lightman graduated from high school in 1951, and then graduated magna cum laude with a bachelor of arts degree from Princeton University. In 1953, he received his Ph.D. Lightman went on to conduct his post-doctorate work in astrophysics at Cornell University from 1953 to 1956, publishing his poems in literary magazines at the same time. Lightman married the painter Jean Greenblatt in 1956, and the couple has two daughters, Elyse and Kara. After working as assistant professor of astronomy at Harvard University from 1956 to 1960, Lightman became a lecturer in astronomy and physics there from 1960 to 1963. He also worked at the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory, as a staff astrophysicist from 1963 to 1966. During this time, Lightman published his first scientific textbooks, including *Problem Book in Relativity and Gravitation* and *Revealing the Universe: By Einstein's Theory*. Lightman began writing essays about the more human aspects of science, most of which were published in a *Science* column from 1966 to 1970. In 1970, Lightman joined the Massachusetts Institute of Technology MIT as professor of science and writing and senior lecturer in physics. He was the first person to be assigned a post in both the sciences and humanities at MIT. In 1971, Lightman was named the John E. Burchard Professor of Humanities. He resigned from the position in 1972 in order to have more time to pursue his writing, although he remained employed at MIT as an adjunct professor of humanities, a post he still held as of 2008. *A Sense of the Mysterious: Science and the Human Spirit* was a finalist for the National Book Award. In 1973, Lightman founded the Harpswell Foundation, an organization dedicated to making education available to women and children in Cambodia. For his philanthropy work, Lightman was awarded the Gold Medal for humanitarian service from the government of Cambodia. Returning to fiction writing in 1977, Lightman released his fourth novel, *Reunion*. Aside from his novels, Lightman has continued to write books on science and on the intersection between science and humanities, such as *A Sense of the Mysterious: Science and the Human Spirit*. He is also the first author to have an essay on language published in the science periodical *Nature*, and to have a short story published in the physics journal *Physics Today*. It is based on the dreams he has been having since April. It opens with the statement: The world repeats itself, precisely, endlessly. Notably, this format can be seen in most of the dreams. In this world, people live their lives as if every moment is unique, unaware that it will repeat itself. People who are tragically swept into the past are afraid to act for fear of changing the future. A person like this is a "ghost" who has "lost his personhood" and "is an exile of time. Based on this decision, he meets a different woman and has a happy future with her. But, this world has "three dimensions, like space. In one of the two dimensions, they fall in love, and though she does not treat him well, he is still happy. In the other, they do not fall in love, and the man returns home, feeling "empty. Because of this, "there are an infinity of worlds. Those who live by mechanical time wake, eat, and work at the same exact time each day. Both worlds can simultaneously exist "in one," but when they come together, they cause "desperation," and when they move apart, they cause "contentment. Some do not care about extending their lives for a few minutes. They enjoy the empty valleys and swim in the deserted lakes. Over time, people forget "why higher is better," but they stay and continue to teach their children to do the same. They suffer in the cold, thin mountain air and they "have become thin like the air, bony, old before their time. Religious people think time is the "evidence for God. All over this world,

people are comforted by time. They take "refuge" in it and in the thought that the moment of their birth is "recorded," as are all of the moments of their lives. Despite this, the "future and past are entwined. A week later, he is unkind to them. In the "acausal" without cause world, the past and the future become meaningless. The present thus becomes ever more meaningful. Their conversation is banal, and they do nothing of interest. In this world, "little happens. This chapter also asks whether "time and the passage of events are the same. Their independently recorded concert is available from [http:](http://) A musical composition based on the book, titled "When Einstein Dreams," was written by Nando Michelin and performed by the Nando Michelin Group in Produced by record label Double-Time, this composition is available on compact disc. A choral production based on the novel, with music and lyrics by Lorraine L. Whittlesey, was staged in Baltimore, MD, in Besso thinks that Einstein, who is only twenty-six years old, may be too young to come up with a theory of time. Besso then thinks of all that Einstein has already achieved and begins to believe it may be possible. Afterwards, Besso thinks that Einstein is very independent; he does not go anywhere with his wife, and often sneaks away from her at home to work on his "equations. People are more honest with themselves and one another. They are also more polite; no one seems upset about the end because it will happen to everyone: In the "last seconds" it seems as if everyone has jumped from a mountain and "the end approaches like approaching ground. The architecture of each neighborhood reflects this. Time can "hypothetically" be "smooth or rough, prickly or silky, hard or soft. In this world "no one is happy" and "everyone is alone. For instance, the leaves fall from the trees in organized patterns, the paint on the buildings does not peel and grows brighter instead. Here, "the passage of time brings increasing order. Order is the law of nature. They break things and throw away their watches and appointment books. This goes on all through spring and winds down as summer begins. People who get closer to this place begin to slow down until they come to "dead center" and "stop. There is very little light at the center of time. It cannot travel through time as it normally would and therefore dims. People just outside the center move "at the pace of glaciers. Not surprisingly, some feel that the center should be avoided, believing that "life is a vessel of sadness, but it is noble to live life, and without time, there is no life. What follows in this chapter is a long list of these images, brief snapshots of people and nature. This world is nothing but individual tableaux of life. Although the people have lived in this city since they were born, they are always discovering it anew because "in this world, people have no memories. A man walking down the road suddenly turns around, shrieking "excitedly. Parents who see where their children will live in the future move their houses there today. People feel there is no point "in continuing the present when one has seen the future. Those who have not are unable to make decisions for fear of making the wrong one. Some people, however, try to avoid their futures. A man sees himself working as a barrister, so he decides to become a gardener. Eventually, he gets tired of his low pay and becomes a barrister. A woman falls in love with a man who is not the man she sees herself marrying. He leaves, and then she marries the other man. The chapter ends with the questions: Those who have seen the future and live only one life? Or those who have not seen the future and wait to live life? Or those who deny the future and live two lives? People run around and even their office desks constantly move about. Here, time moves "more slowly for people in motion. Because of this, "some people have stopped looking out their windows.

Chapter 5 : Alan Lightman Interview (The Diagnosis) - Identity Theory

By Albert Einstein Introduction by Alan Lightman By Albert Einstein Introduction by Alan Lightman By Albert Einstein By Albert Einstein. Category: Science | Literary.

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Chapter 6 : Alan lightman essay

Alan Lightman is the author of four previous novels, two collections of essays, and several books on science. His work has appeared in The Atlantic Monthly, Granta, The New Yorker, The New York Review of Books, and Nature, among many other publications.

The act of understanding the workings of nature- and our place and it- expresses for me what is most noble and the good in us. As for the applications of science, I am certainly not opposed to technology as a whole; I benefit greatly from it. But we cannot have advances in technology without an accompanying consideration of human values and quality of life. How should this examination and questioning proceed? The pro "I am not in favor of squashing new developments in pure science, in any form. The problem cannot be solved from top down. It is a cultural problem. Perhaps we must regulate ourselves. Perhaps we each must think about what is truly important in our lives and decide which technologies to except which to resist. That is a personal responsibility. In the long run, we need to change our thinking, to realize that we are not only a society of production and technology but also a society of human beings. Experimental results are often confusing and sometimes plain wrong. Without an interpretive theory, without a design offered by the beholder, observations of the physical world are just so many loose, meaningless facts. Little wonder then that the history of science is replete with personal prejudices, misleading philosophical of themes, players miss cast. Prejudice is a dirty word in science, whose musty quarters were supposedly swept clean by Copernicus and Galileo. Yet I suspect all scientists have been guilty of prejudice various times in their research. But science, especially physics, provides a powerful illusion of simplicity and certainty. Textbooks on physics rarely offer any discussion of the history of the subject, with its wrong turns and prejudices and human passions. Instead, there are Laws. And the Laws seduce with their beauty and precision. Every action has an equal and opposite reaction. The gravitational force between two masses varies inversely with the square of the distance between them. More than its purity and grace, physics was Certainty. The world was a jumble of mistaken adventures, crossed wires, mirrors at odd angles. Certainty was a deception. And for me, at that moment in my life, there was either certainty or randomness, nothing in between. I was right, sort of; in this collection of essays, Lightman takes liberty in going where he pleases, so for instance some of the essays may be a bit anticlimactic, or well-written at first then end on a slightly disappointing note. Some employ too much technicality, such that the creativity does not feel loud enough. There are some that I genuinely enjoyed though, such as: All the books I brought back from there automatically have a special place in my heart.

Chapter 7 : Dance for Two: Essays by Alan Lightman

Alan Lightman is the author of Einstein's Dreams, The Good Benito and his latest novel, The Diagnosis, which was a finalist in for the National Book Award for Fiction.

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The Academy in the News: For the Media: The Academy.

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Alan Lightman was born November 28, , in Memphis, Tennessee. His father, Richard Lightman, owned a movie theater chain, and his mother, Jeanne Garretson Lightman, was a dance teacher who also volunteered as a Braille typist.