

A BRIEF HISTORY OF TIME – AND ITS AUTHOR



He was born on the 300th anniversary of the death of Galileo, and died on the 139th anniversary of the birth of Einstein. He even got his nickname in school from the latter scientist because he enjoyed maths and science. He studied physics and chemistry, and later became a Math Professor at the University of Cambridge. He is most famous for his work on black holes and the origin of universe.

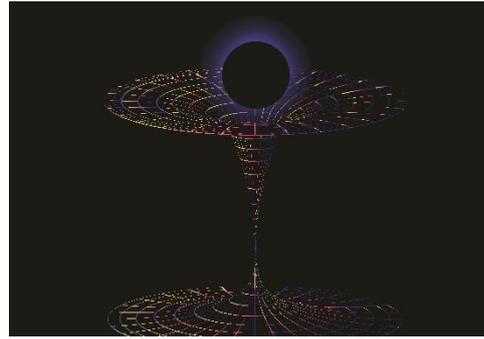
Do you know who he is?

Stephen Hawking is one of the most famous physicists of our time. Not only was he a scientist, but also a promotor of science. Several documentaries and films have been made about his life and work. He appeared on many TV shows, including the Simpsons, Star Trek, and the Big Bang. He wrote popular books about science, as well as children's books, so that kids could understand the world they live in from an early age. He himself had two sons and a daughter. One thing he did not manage to do was go into space because commercial travel to space was not possible in his lifetime.

Do you know what his greatest challenge was?

When he was only 21 years old, Hawking was diagnosed with a serious illness – the motor neurone disease, which slowly made him more and more paralysed as years went by. When the doctors first found out about it, they told him he would probably not live for more than two years. However, with the advancement in medicine, Hawking managed to live for 55 years more! At first, he had to use crutches, and then a wheelchair, to be able to move around. His speech also got worse, so that after a while he could only communicate by moving his eyebrows. Luckily, in the 1980s he got a computer program to help him. Until 2005, he could choose the words with his finger, and then with his cheek. Due to his own experience, Hawking supported different disability charities from the 1990s.

Do you know what his most popular book about space is?



Published in 1988, *A Brief History of Time* has sold over 25 million copies to the present day! It was one of the first books that talked about science in a popular way, and people could buy it even in airports. In twelve chapters, it covers topics such as space and time, the uncertainty principle, elementary particles and forces of nature, black holes, and the origin and fate of the universe. In order to be interesting to a wide audience, Hawking only included one equation – Einstein’s most popular $E = mc^2$.

Do you know whether he won the Nobel Prize?

Stephen Hawking won many prizes. Among them are the Albert Einstein Medal, the Order of the British Empire, the Copley Medal from the Royal Society, the U.S. Presidential Medal of Freedom, and the Wolf Prize in Physics. However, he never won the Nobel Prize because it is given to discoveries which can be experimentally tested. Hawking’s theories have only recently been proven, and the Nobel Prize went to his colleague, Roger Penrose.

Questions:

- 1) What are the seven transferable skills mentioned in the text?
- 2) Why are they called “transferable” or “universal”?
- 3) Which is the most difficult one?
- 4) Which do you think is the most modern one?
- 5) Which two are, in your opinion, most important and why?
- 6) What subjects at school help with each of these skills, and in which ways?

Tasks:

- 1) Order the skills from those that come most naturally to you, to those that you find difficult.
- 2) Work in pairs: Ask your classmate for some simple advice to develop the skills you lack.
- 3) Give a presentation on one thing you do well and give examples to help others who might struggle with it.