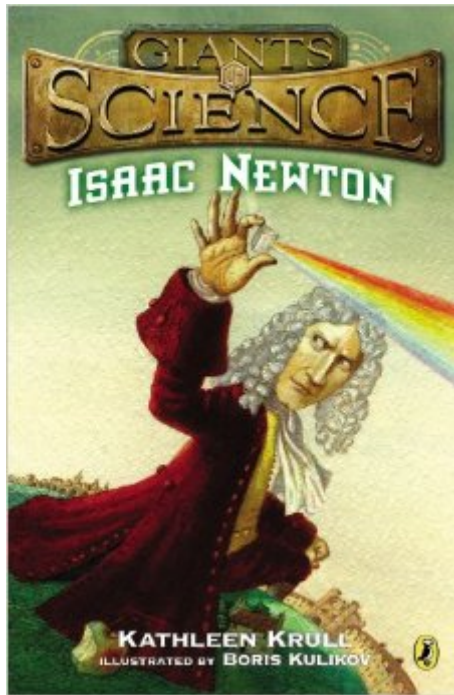


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Isaac Newton (Giants Of Science)



Synopsis

Here is a man with an imagination so large that just by thinking on it, he invented calculus and figured out the scientific explanation of gravity. Kathleen Krull presents a portrait of Isaac Newton that will challenge your beliefs about a genius whose amazing discoveries changed the world.

Book Information

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Series: Giants of Science

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

I bought this book for my 9-year-old, and I read it, too. Sir Isaac Newton is an interesting topic. I would certainly encourage children to find out more about him. However, this book has many sentence fragments and other grammatical errors. I found the poor writing to be very distracting from the content of the book. Also, the book contains a discussion of whether or not he is homosexual. I really think that discussions of a person's sex life should be left out of biographies for elementary and middle school students.

I like science in the way that I like foreign cars. It's not something I'd usually focus my brain on, but I'm willing to give it some thought should the need arise. As a child, however, my heroes were not scientists. Scientists, I would have told you, are dull as dishwater human beings who never had a

poetic or romantic thought in their lives. They were, for me, the epitome of dull dry brilliance. Trust Kathleen Krull then to write about a fellow who manages to prove my personal stereotypes both right and wrong at the same time. You might be able to make a case for Isaac Newton having never had a romantic thought in his life. But dull? Honey, this guy was so wham-bang whizzing crazy that his mere existence itself makes for a fabulous bio. The "Giants of Science" series has a way of making anyone and everyone it touches look interesting. But with Mr. Newton, it sure doesn't seem like they needed much help. He was born on Christmas Day in 1642 in rural England. An unwanted child, Isaac was shuttled amongst various relatives and essentially ignored by his mother and stepfather. In fact, his stepfather was so against Isaac's mere existence that the marriage contract was careful to state that the boy was not allowed even allowed in the man's home. The boy grew up solitary and unendingly curious. He worked for an apothecary at one point, attended Cambridge, and was incredibly religious. He was also, "secretive, vindictive, withdrawn, obsessive, and, oh, yes, brilliant". With a bit of historical panache, Krull brings Newton's life into powerful focus. Whether he was erasing all memory of his deceased enemies, staring at the sun in "experiments", fearing any and all forms of publication, or just making the lives of those around him just a little bit difficult, Newton made up in smarts what he lacked in charm. Aw, man. This title's good. Heck, even the science in this book makes sense. And what small passages don't make sense are easily skipped by those readers who wish to learn more about the kind of guy who'd poke things into his eyes for experiments. Having recently finished Joan Dash's Benjamin Franklin biography, "A Dangerous Engine", which consisted of wading through deep tracts of scientific jargon, Isaac Newton's calculus comes across like clarification incarnate. What I liked most about this book, however, was how much I never knew about this familiar name. For example, Newton's fear of publication was one of the more interesting aspects to his personality. He didn't want to publish any of his ideas for fear of someone stealing them. On the other hand, he was absolutely incensed if anyone came up with an idea even a bit close to one of his own theories. In this way, Newton comes across as a spoiled selfish child. He has lots of pretty toys to play with, but he doesn't want anyone to borrow any of them, even for a little while. He was not prepared for the "sharing-and-getting-feedback part of science", as Krull puts it. In fact he was so protective that even when he wanted to prove he'd invented calculus first, he explained it in a letter in code. A code that only he had the key to. You can imagine how well THAT went down. Krull is, by the way, the queen of the fabulous child-friendly bio. If you've not had a chance to read one of her "Lives of the ... " books, consider yourself truly wretched. What sets her apart from other biographers is that she always seems to have the child reader foremost in her mind. As such, these bios become truly interesting, even when their subject

is not. Best of all, she's not one of those biographers that wade about knee deep in speculation, rumor, and hearsay just to fill a few pages. Isaac Newton could have been gay, you say? Perhaps, but while Krull will mention the theory she'll do so in a way that makes it clear that we have no hard evidence one way or another on the matter. How could we when it was such a dangerous thing to be, back in the 1600s? The book even brings up the occasional contemporary reference as well. When Isaac first comes to Cambridge, Krull compares what he must have felt to, "the thrill that entering Hogwarts School was to the young Harry Potter". Clear as crystal, that feeling. And when Newton is at last in charge of the Royal Society? Krull describes his reign as "slimy", and no word could possibly be better suited to his actions. And none of what I've mentioned even touches on how Newton used to work long and hard on alchemy, or served in Parliament and never said a word, or even how he only did so-so in school. With Ms. Krull to guide us, the reader sees both the good and the bad in this brilliant man. If nothing else, this book would be well-worth considering since it shows that you can be a genius and a jerk all at the same time. Brilliance does not preclude nastiness. As scientific bios go, this is a top notch addition to any and all libraries. Perhaps the finest children's biography of Newton ever conceived. Top drawer! Top drawer.

This book is an easy to read biography of Newton, in a conversational style that appeals. But I was quite turned off by the gossipy content of Chapter Nine (Newton versus Newton). First, it begins a discussion about Newton having emotional/psychological issues with the flippant and insensitive phrase "several slices short of a loaf". Then it goes on to speculate that Newton may have been gay, since he had at least two very close male friends, one of whom he lived with for 20 years. It grants that there is no concrete evidence, but whispers about it anyhow. I gave this book to Goodwill and went looking for something more factual and less vacuous.

I am homeschooling my 4th and 6th graders and we are studying the history of science through biographies of scientists. I chose this book after reading the first 3 chapters. I thought it would be a great addition to our studies. Unfortunately, chapter nine consists of pure postulation on Newton's sexuality. Why this is included in a biography written for middle school children is beyond me. It absolutely ruined the book for me as I had to discuss a topic that had nothing to do with Newton's accomplishments nor his role as one of the greatest scientists in the history of science. When I teach this subject again, I will try the Landmark biography on Newton. I highly recommend that you avoid this book at all costs.

A book which is listed as a biography for readers as young as age ten should not contain an irrelevant, non-factual discussion on the sexual orientation, whatever it may be, of the subject. The fact that such a discussion was included anyway suggests an attempt by the author to evangelize unsuspecting young readers on an issue of personal import. This is a violation by the author and publisher of the trust parents have in the quality and age-appropriate literature to be published under their banner.

I have no idea what possessed me to read this book. A review, perhaps. I'm not that interested in biographies to begin with, so I do wonder why I picked this up. However, I am VERY glad I did. The story of Newton's life was highly interesting, and I liked the somewhat modern irreverence sprinkled throughout the book: and I think kids will "get" and appreciate the modern tone in the midst of information about a giant of science who lived 400 years ago. Definitely worth reading!

I read this book before reading it with my 4th-grader. Great level of detail. The author makes Isaac Newton come alive, while still conveying a sense of his scientific/mathematical achievements. Actually, I was so intrigued after reading this that I also read a couple of the adult books from the bibliography. While worthwhile reading as well, this short book clearly and interestingly covered many of the high points found in those more detailed books. Minor flaws: in making the subject read as human, at times, felt there was a little too much of the human in there, that I would prefer to skip with my fourth grader. Will be checking out other books from this series.

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