



STEPHEN HAWKING-ASTROPHYSICIST

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

Stephen William Hawking (8 January 1942 – 14 March 2018) was an English theoretical physicist, cosmologist, and author who was director of research at the Centre for Theoretical Cosmology at the University of Cambridge. Hawking was the first to set out a theory of cosmology explained by a union of the general theory of relativity and quantum mechanics. Hawking achieved commercial success with several works of popular science in which he discussed his theories and cosmology in general. His book *A Brief History of Time* appeared on the Sunday Times bestseller list for a record-breaking 237 weeks.

THE LESSON- 'STEPHEN HAWKING' HAWKING'

Hawking was only 17 years old when he attended the University of Oxford. He had wanted to pursue a degree in mathematics, but since the college did not offer any such course at the time, he chose to study physics instead. He was the youngest in his class and found it difficult to make friends. As a result, during his first year in college, he had a fairly quiet life. Academically, he continued to excel. Rober Berman, his physics professor said : 'It was only necessary for him to know that something could be done, and he could do it without looking to see how other people do it.'

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During his second and third year at college, Hawking became a member of the University college Boat Club. He participated in various college events. He did not however, possess the most admirable study habits, later estimating that he probably studied a mere 1000 hours during his three years at the university. Such behavior meant he found his final examination challenging. When the results were published, he learnt he had been awarded a score that fell between a first and second class degree. Due to this, it was necessary for him to attend an oral examination in order to determine his final result. Hawking was aware that he required a first class honours degree to get into the University of Cambridge for his doctoral degree in cosmology. When asked by the examiners to elaborate on his plans for the future, he said, "If you award me a first, I will go to Cambridge. If I receive a second, I shall stay in Oxford, so I expect you will give a first." Fortunately for him, the examiners considered him a highly intelligent young man and deemed him worthy of a first.

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Hawking attended Cambridge University in 1982. He quickly discovered his training in mathematics was insufficient for work in general relativity and cosmology. In addition, it was around this time that he received his diagnosis of Lou Gehrig's disease. His doctors initially believed that he had only two years to live, and this plunged Hawking into a state of depression. Thankfully his disease progressed more slowly than first predicted. With the encouragement of his supervisor, Dennis William Sciama, one of the founders of modern cosmology, Hawking eventually decided to continue his studies while negotiating immense lifestyle changes and health-related difficulties as result of his disease.

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His first thesis in 1965 was based on work by the English mathematician, Roger Penrose. His thesis was approved in 1966, and he was later awarded a research fellowship as well as prestigious Adams Prize. In 1973, he joined the teaching staff at the department of applied mathematics and Theoretical Physics at the University of Cambridge. In 1974, he became a member of the Royal Society. With every passing year, his list of accomplishments grew. Over the course of his illustrious career he received 12 honorary degree in various fields of study, numerous awards for his stellar work in the field of physics, and various honours including the Presidential Medal of Freedom- the highest civilian award in the United States of America. He was also the author of bestselling titles such as 'A Brief History of Time and the Universe' in a Nutshell.

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Stephen Hawking passed away in his home in Cambridge at the age of 76 on 14 March 2018. He is survived by his three children-Robert, Lucy and Timothy-with his former wife, Jane Wilde. He is widely regarded as a role model for his many remarkable accomplishments while living with Lou Gehrig's disease for over 50 years, and is considered to be one of the most brilliant theoretical physicist Lawrence Krauss said: 'A star just went out in the cosmos. We have lost an amazing human being. Stephen Hawking fought and tamed the cosmos bravely for 76 years and taught us all something important about what it truly means to celebrate being human.'