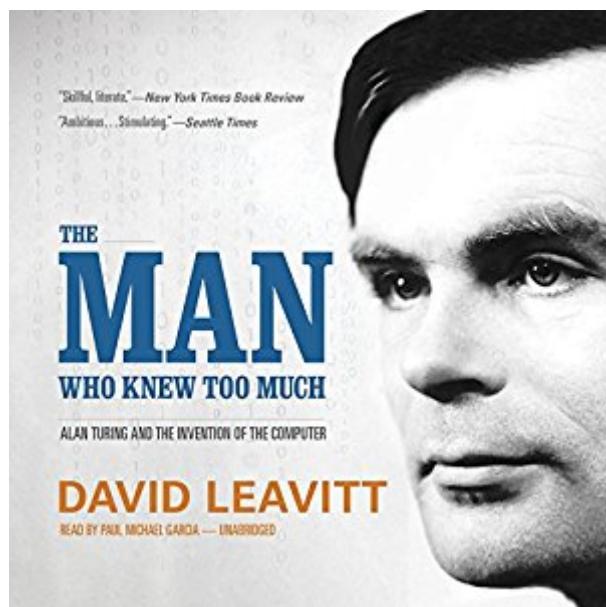


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The Man Who Knew Too Much: Alan Turing And The Invention Of The Computer



Synopsis

A "skillful, literate" (New York Times Book Review) biography of the persecuted genius who helped create the modern computer. To solve one of the great mathematical problems of his day, Alan Turing proposed an imaginary computer. Then, attempting to break a Nazi code during World War II, he successfully designed and built one, thus ensuring the Allied victory. Turing became a champion of artificial intelligence, but his work was cut short. As an openly gay man at a time when homosexuality was illegal in England, he was convicted and forced to undergo a humiliating "treatment" that may have led to his suicide. With a novelist's sensitivity, David Leavitt portrays Turing in all his humanity - his eccentricities, his brilliance, his fatal candor - and elegantly explains his work and its implications.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 9 hours and 14 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Blackstone Audio, Inc.

Audible.com Release Date: May 29, 2014

Language: English

ASIN: B00KN17XQK

Best Sellers Rank: #39 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Science > Mathematics #65 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Professionals & Academics > Computers & Technology #67 in Books > Computers & Technology > History & Culture > History

Customer Reviews

The acceptance of the man Alan Turing , and fully acknowledging his contribution to the world is barely understood as the general knowledge of The value of what he had done is so difficult to grasp. Considering the battles that had hinged upon the intelligence provided by Ultra, an analyst can reasonably conclude that this was the biggest story of the war, Without having won Stalingrad, the landings of Normandy and the battle of the Ardennes, the war could easily have been lost !!! Few persons have accurately been able to convey what it would have been like to have had the Allies lose World War 2 !!! The fact that he was a homosexual , and was so wrongly persecuted should factor into our modern thinking where "Don't ask...don't tell " was the best policy for any and all sexual preferences. Between Alan Turing , breaking the Enigma codes, and Werner Heisenberg ,

who purposefully sabotaged the German atom bomb effort, they are the two big heroes of the war . The world owes both a tremendous debt of gratitude. It should also be noted that the military edge in the Cold War, was owed more to our grasp of computer technology and coordinated systems that his intelligence and further development of his ideas, had provided the West with, was also a contribution that is underrated. .

I have only finished about half of this book and having read two other books on Turing, can say that this book is the most readable. In many ways it is an interesting book, but also a sad book in recounting the rotten treatment of a genius who contributed so much to the invention of the computer, but also his work on code breaking during WWII. It is a sad ending to anyone's life when it involves suicide. The self-righteous stand of the elected British government is deplorable. I would heartily recommend this book to anyone who has even the slightest interest in the modern world and how it got this way. So much emphasis is given to the rappers and actors that men like Turing are lost to modern history. Ask anyone of your acquaintance who Turing was and get mostly a blank stare. There are several (well 3 anyway) books on Turing but this is the most readable. Highly recommend.

I found I wanted to learn more about Alan Turing and the work he did to solve the Enigma Code along with his research and work in general after seeing the excellent movie. This book will help fill in and flesh out the man and his work.

If the title "The Man Who Saved England" were to be applied to anyone of the World War II period, Alan Turing and Winston Churchill would be the most likely candidates. But whereas Churchill operated in the public eye and was a bigger than life character, either revered or reviled by the public and his colleagues in government, the very nature of Turing's most important work, arcane, esoteric and shrouded by the Official Secrets Act, plus his low-key personal style, combined to condemn him to virtual anonymity. Turing's best-known accomplishments, his work in code breaking and in developing the computer, were not as dramatically presented in this book as I would have liked. I was hoping for the book to promote Turing; to bring him forward and upward into the limelight. Instead it leads the reader down into the minutiae of Turing's mathematics and his homosexuality. Consequently the co-tragedies of his persecution and suicide, the ultimate irony of a society killing the man who saved it, were not as strongly or as dramatically presented as they might have been. In fairness to the author, Mr. Leavitt probably told Alan Turing's story as Mr. Turing would

have told it, himself. Rather than writing the promotional piece for Turing that I expected and wanted, Mr. Leavitt emphasized the mathematical challenges, achievements and social forces that shaped this brilliant man. Someone picking up this book to read about a mathematician and his work should find great interest in the details, the very details that for me were more of a distraction.

The first part of the book is a real mathematic challenge. But gives some insight as to the genius of the man. His society was more interested in protecting their own reputations rather than engaging his mind. At least the Queen has expunged his record and Alan has recouped his historical right. Seems to me that Britain doesn't encourage good minds.

This is a fantastic book about one of the most under-rated geniuses that worked in the field of mathematics, he basically invented the algorithm for computer science. Plus he helped win the war for the Allies.

I've read other books by David Leavitt and enjoyed them. I recently viewed the movie, The Imitation Game, and enjoyed it. So, I went searching for more about Turing. This book is a bait and switch. Leavitt purports to be a literary writer. This book is not a literary work about Turing, it is about Mathematics and Turing's "Machine." Don't waste your money like I did, don't purchase this book!

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