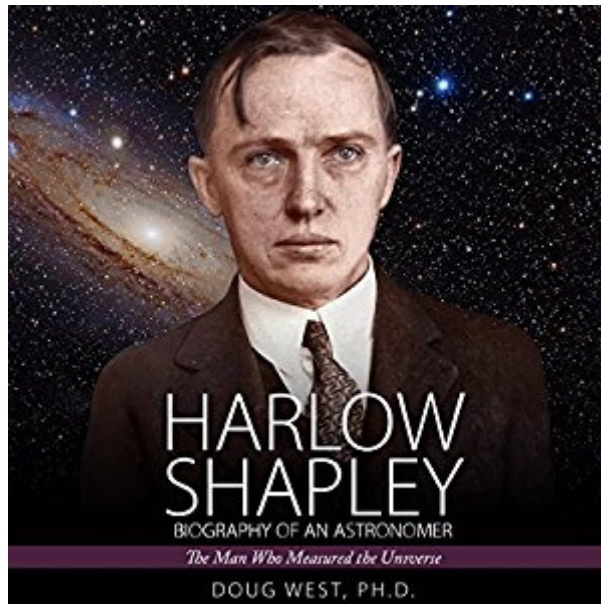


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Harlow Shapley - Biography Of An Astronomer: The Man Who Measured The Universe



Synopsis

Harlow Shapley was an astronomer, humanitarian, and public figure in his day. Born in the hills of the Ozarks in Missouri, he went on to become the director of the Harvard College Observatory and discovered our place in the galaxy. Because of the painstaking work of this tireless American astronomer, we were given a clearer picture of our place in the universe. Shapley was a prodigious astronomer who completed significant work on globular clusters, Cepheid variables, as well as key aspects of cosmology and stellar astronomy, including nebular and stellar spectroscopy and photometry. Shapley also did important work on the Magellanic Clouds, which are neighbor galaxies to our own Milky Way. He made the deduction that the Sun is located at the central plane of the galaxy on a minor arm of the Milky Way about 30,000 light years from the galactic center. This was in direct conflict with the prevailing view of the galaxy and caused quite a stir in the astronomical community. At the peak of his career as an astronomer, he worked at the Mt. Wilson Observatory and afterward served at the helm of the Harvard College Observatory, eventually transforming it into an important training and observational facility. Shapley was to lead the development of the Harvard Astronomy program, which produced many prominent astronomers. Shapley's work on international issues in astronomy lead him to multiple visits to Russia. This was at the early stages of the Cold War between the United States and Russia. Harlow Shapley had caught the eye of the FBI and the famed communist hunter Joseph McCarthy, and he was investigated by the Committee of Un-American activities. Shapley was later cleared of any wrong doing, but it almost cost him the directorship of the Harvard College Observatory. Shapley became a prodigious writer for the general public so they could understand and appreciate the wonders of the universe.

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Customer Reviews

As a novice astronomer and fan of its history, I was referred to this biography by a friend who thought it would be of interest to me. I consumed the book in one late night sitting and enjoyed not only the historical record of what this man did, but also the trajectory of his great life. Harlow was a brilliant astronomer that discovered the measurements of our galaxy and spent is life studying the stars. The author, in a succinct and entertaining style, has written Shapleyâ™s biography in a perfectly structured style. The writing is warm and inviting and the obvious love for this man and his work exudes from every chapter. I must say that I was definitely illuminated by the life of this unique and amazing individual. From saving the lives of over 1000 Jewish refugees and fostering international scientist relations, to writing manifold works on astronomy and being a recipient of multiple international honors, Harlow Shapley was a character to be respected and emulated. If anyone is looking for a biography about the life of a distinct and capable astronomer and contributor to humanity, you canâ™t do better than this one. This book, Iâ™m sure, will remain a staple in your library for some time to come.

Sadly I'd never heard of Harlow Shapley till this book. What a facinating man. I've always loved astronomy and this just rekindled that fascinationâ€. Another great biography!

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