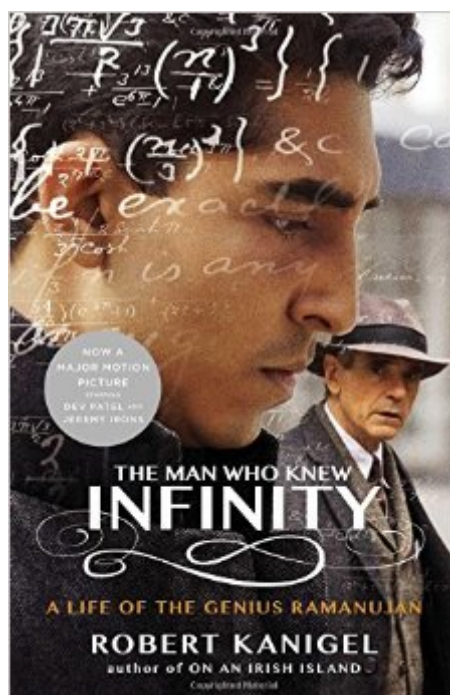


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The Man Who Knew Infinity: A Life Of The Genius Ramanujan



Synopsis

NOW A MAJOR MOTION PICTURE STARRING JEREMY IRONS AND DEV PATEL! In 1913, a young unschooled Indian clerk wrote a letter to G H Hardy, begging the preeminent English mathematician's opinion on several ideas he had about numbers. Realizing the letter was the work of a genius, Hardy arranged for Srinivasa Ramanujan to come to England. Thus began one of the most improbable and productive collaborations ever chronicled. With a passion for rich and evocative detail, Robert Kanigel takes us from the temples and slums of Madras to the courts and chapels of Cambridge University, where the devout Hindu Ramanujan, "the Prince of Intuition," tested his brilliant theories alongside the sophisticated and eccentric Hardy, "the Apostle of Proof." In time, Ramanujan's creative intensity took its toll: he died at the age of thirty-two and left behind a magical and inspired legacy that is still being plumbed for its secrets today.

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Customer Reviews

This is a captivating, illuminating, and deeply moving biography of the Indian mathematical genius S. Ramanujan. Genius is always enigmatic, and mathematical genius doubly so to the general reader for whom math will always be a closed book. One of the extraordinary things about this biography is Kanigel's gift for mathematical exposition at the layman level. As a mathematician myself, I can only say I've never seen its equal. Although to some extent he is helped by the "elementary" nature of much of R.'s work -- its gist can be grasped with only a basic understanding of calculus -- the task is still daunting. Yet everything is clearly and correctly explained, freshly,

succinctly, memorably. Kanigel's book is equally rich in human terms, too. His portrait of R. shows not only a genius but also a simple, spontaneous, likeable man. R. must have been the world's worst math tutor -- one shudders at the thought -- yet people liked him. This was a crucial factor in R.'s getting the opportunity to bring his gifts to full flower, for heaven and earth had to be moved. It's sad to think of the other Ramanujans in India and elsewhere who, crushed by life's hardships, were never able to develop or perhaps even recognize their gifts. I take issue with the previous reviewer concerning Kanigel's treatment of Hardy. Hardy is a complex and fascinating figure in his own right and his personality needs to be explored in the context of his relationship with R. His homosexuality was a part of the constellation and a factor in his championing of the underdog (including women in mathematics), his openness to the unorthodox, and his willingness to take risks. Although bound by their common love for mathematics, the two men were otherwise poles apart both temperamentally and culturally.

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