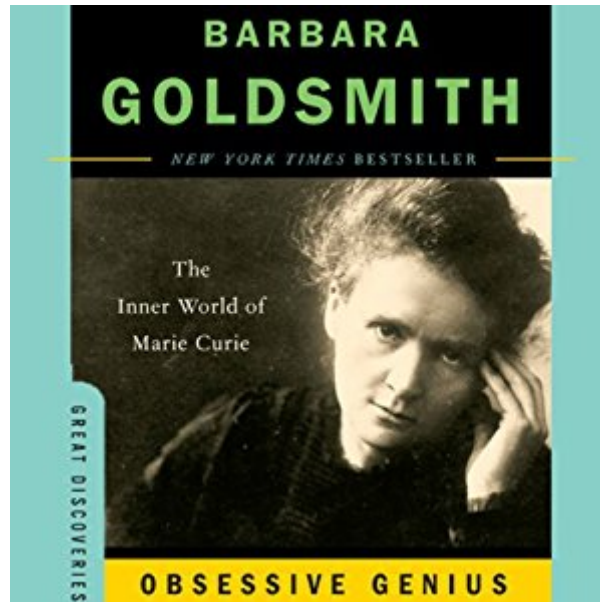




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# Obsessive Genius



## Synopsis

Through family interviews, diaries, letters, and workbooks that had been sealed for over 60 years, Barbara Goldsmith reveals the Marie Curie behind the myth - an all-too-human woman struggling to balance a spectacular scientific career, a demanding family, the prejudice of society, and her own passionate nature. *Obsessive Genius* is a dazzling portrait of Curie, her amazing scientific success, and the price she paid for fame. The best-selling, "excellent...poignant - and scientifically lucid - portrait" (New York Times Book Review) of the remarkable Marie Curie....

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Marie Curie was known for being a "first mover" in many areas -- she was one of the first women to receive a Nobel Prize for her discovery of new elements (polonium and radium), was one of the first women to receive various teaching "chairs" throughout her career, and in France, was considered nothing short of a "goddess" of science, which is pretty remarkable, given the fact that during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, women were considered good for little more than bearing children and housekeeping chores. The only thing I knew about Marie Curie, however, was that she discovered radium (which ultimately led to more experimentation in radioactivity) and that the majority of her notes and clothing ended up sealed in lead faults because they, too, were radioactive and dangerous. I decided Goldsmith's biography would be a good one with which to start, and I wasn't disappointed. Goldsmith moves through Curie's life very well, explaining her scientific discoveries and experiments without bogging down the reader in a lot of scientific language. The

author begins Curie's life from her girlhood in Poland, brings her to France and her marriage with Pierre Curie, the love of her life, and concludes the narrative with Curie's death, and how her eldest daughter, Irene, carried on her parents' work (and also died at an early age). The thing I really liked about this book was that the author kept her own opinions and feelings to herself -- as any good nonfiction writer should, she reported only the facts. The book also shed some very good light on the huge lack of safeguards there were, at the time, in dealing with dangerous substances such as radium. I was appalled, for example, at the casual mention that the Curies handled this stuff casually, even using pipettes to suck up the substance to transport it to another location. I was further perplexed by the lack of safeguards -- I am a thyroid cancer survivor, and whenever anyone gave me radiation treatments (in the form of pills), these pills came in lead containers and were handed to be my radiation technicians who wore lead, before I, myself, was isolated from others. A picture in the book of Irene Jouliet-Curie, sucking up a radioactive substance through a pipette, had me baffled. For me, personally, this book is just short of five stars because I am interested in context when it comes to major discoveries. Radium became a huge part of society for a long time because of its supposedly "curative" factors and the author does address this. But I would have been interested in learning about Curies' efforts to keep radium her own personal property, and how she addressed charlatans who were in competition with her for this substance. Again, Goldsmith addresses this, but I would have liked to have seen more. Otherwise, the book did provide a very good overview of Marie Curie and her accomplishments. More importantly, it made me want to learn more about her and the times in which she survived.

It was fairly interesting but short on explaining the hard science you need to know to understand the work of Marie Curie and her contemporaries.. Goldsmith does provide a lot of interesting information about other members of the Curie family, including her daughters Irene and Eve. It disappointed me that obsessive Genius contributes to the myth that Albert Einstein was a "poor student." Not true.

One of my favorite things about Goldsmith's writings is how in the prologue or introduction, she tells the reader what she thinks, why she was interested in the topic she wrote about and her reflections of the topic/person. This book is no exception. Goldsmith informs us of major themes in her writing that includes: "Why are some women trapped in their environment while others escape, or circumvent, or ignore these obstacles? How did society and family affect their aspirations? Why do some women seek independence while others want to tread a prescribed path?" (p. 18). So begins Goldsmith's telling of the story of Marie Curie, an exploration of the inner woman. At one point

Goldsmith revealed, "She had learned that if she had enough patience and tenacity the seemingly impossible could be accomplished. She masked her feelings with a cool intellect" (p. 45). Curie's story is about the inner workings of a scientist, sexism, duty/obligation in marriage, and how a woman lived her life. A wonderful insightful book!

Good read.

Great book on one of the few renowned women in science. Goldsmith's insight into Curie's personal struggles as a path-maker among misogynists provides the reader with an insight as to the strength, endurance and tenacity that Marie possessed that finally earned her credit of discovery.

Gives good accurate detail taken from personal papers, documents, letters and worksheets written by Marie. Her detailed writings and personal daily journals provide a look into her daily life that would not be able to be known otherwise. You get to know Marie in a way that is unique. Very good read.

I found this book very enlightening. I never realized the struggles that scientist go through. I certainly respect the determination and courage of Madam Curie. I am glad I read this book.

A wonderfully written account/ story of a brilliant woman, and her extraordinary contributions, who did not let the conventions of her time hold her captive.

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