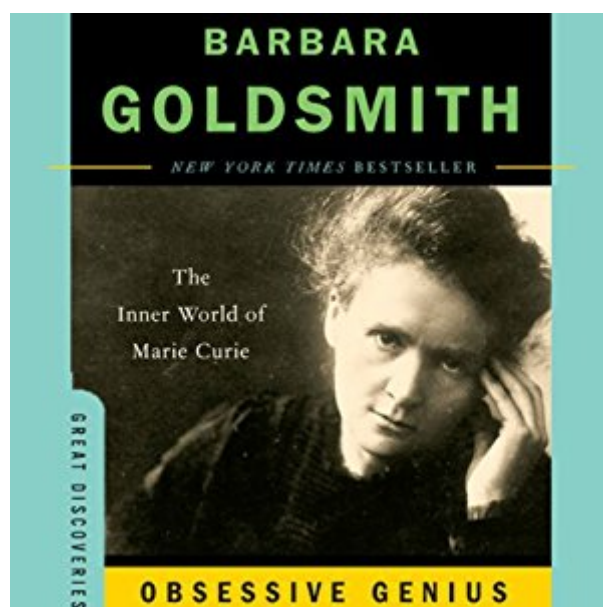


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# Obsessive Genius



## 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

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 7 hours and 10 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Audible Studios

Audible.com Release Date: May 7, 2013

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B00CLFWT1A

Best Sellers Rank: #8 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Science > Chemistry #53 in Books > Science & Math > Physics > Nuclear Physics #299 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Professionals & Academics > Scientists

## Customer Reviews

I'm working on a project about Curie, so I've read several biographies about her thus far. This book isn't absolutely terrible, but I think it handles Curie poorly. It underexplains much about her life and motivations, gives little due to the science behind her work, and goes out of its way to make her "inner world" excessively dramatic. Curie's story is amazing and fascinating, but this book sacrifices explanatory detail and historical context in favor of an emotionally simplified (and thus more boring) version of the person. Even the title is misleading -- Curie was dedicated to her work and slightly reclusive, but she was hardly an obsessive personality. I encourage you to please check out the longer but much more engrossing biography by Susan Quinn (titled *Marie Curie: A Life* (Radcliffe Biography Series)), which provides the historical and scientific context necessary to make Curie's story really come alive.

Obsessive Genius is an utterly fascinating portrait of a hallowed and difficult subject. If you are a fan of Goldsmith's work, (I am) you will immediately see that she is the perfect person to give Curie the complexity and dimension she deserves --as a scientist and as a woman. It's a short book which is by turns moving, informative, and intriguingly unexpected. I couldn't put it down.

I learned of this book in the magazine section of my Sunday newspaper. I strongly doubted that a nonfiction book would be able to hold my interest for long as they can be so dry and tedious, but the topic sounded interesting, the review was promising and as I am a huge historical fiction reader I thought it might be worth a try. I am so grateful that I ran across that recommendation or I would have missed out on a real gem! The story grabbed me in right from page one. I couldn't wait to find some free time to be able to get back to reading! While definitely written as nonfiction, the story at times reads like a simple novel with short dialogue, letter excerpts and diary entries. These personal touches add a wonderful element to the book. The scientific explanations were presented very simplistically and were easy enough to understand. They too, added a wonderful and important element to the story. Marie Curie's life was fascinating: a woman of rare intelligence and genius, she was also plagued by severe depression (especially after the loss of her beloved Pierre) and faced the constant struggle to prove herself and receive her much deserved credit in what was a very male-dominated field. Yet despite these struggles, her devotion to science and her world-changing discoveries never diminished; they enveloped her very soul. I must admit that at times, when reading about her accomplishments and the ease at which science came to her, I felt a little inadequate and less than intelligent. She was an inspiration! I was very happy to discover the wonderful coincidence that while I was reading this book, the anniversary of Marie Curie's discovery of radium and radioactivity took place. I strongly recommend this book to anyone that has an interest in science, history, women's rights, medicine or just plain life!

The author has discovered the truth of Marie Curie's impoverished, Dickensian, childhood, has read papers sealed for 60 years (some radioactive!) to get this incredible story, the truth behind the legend. Every library should have this sensational and deeply informative book and so should book clubs and anyone who wants a great read. A bestseller for sure. If there were more than five stars that's how I'd rate it. A must read!!!

Kudos to social historian and biographer Barbara Goldsmith for her newest achievement, the insightful and compelling "Obsessive Genius: The Inner World of Marie Curie." This is no dry

scientific treatise merely listing Curie's accomplishments in science, but an in-depth study of the very human side of this extraordinary woman and subsequently, the coterie of family, friends and peers who entered her realm. Ms. Goldsmith does make complicated scientific material accessible, indeed, understandable; however, she goes much further, examining the forces which aligned to create the eponymous Curie's character and enormous drive to achieve, which directed every aspect of her life. Through access to Curie's personal diaries and papers, previously unavailable for the past 60 years, as well as copious additional material, Ms. Goldsmith has culled a most fascinating portrait of a most fascinating personality. This book demands that yet another feather be placed in Barbara Goldsmith's literary cap (her previous titles include: "Other Powers: The Age of Suffrage, Spiritualism, and the Scandalous Victoria Woodhull," "Little Gloria...Happy At Last," "Johnson vs. Johnson," and "The Straw Man"). I highly recommend this biography to anyone interested in science, women's struggle for equal rights, the psychology of genius.....in short, anyone interested in an informative and thrilling "read!"

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!

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