



Obsessive Genius: The Inner World of Marie Curie (Great Discoveries)

By Barbara Goldsmith

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The bestselling, "excellent...poignant?and scientifically lucid?portrait" (*New York Times Book Review*) of the remarkable Marie Curie.

Through family interviews, diaries, letters, and workbooks that had been sealed for over sixty 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.

15 photographs

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

So enduring is the reputation of Marie Curie that more than 100 years after she won her first Nobel Prize, for physics in 1903 (she won a second, for chemistry, in 1911), Curie (1867–1934) is still regarded by most as the pre-eminent woman scientist of the 20th century. Goldsmith's straightforward biography illuminates both the public Curie, a tireless scientist obsessed with work, and the private one, a woman who suffered bouts of severe depression, was distant from her children and scarred deeply by the accidental death of her scientist husband, Pierre, in 1906. Using long-sealed Curie family archives, Goldsmith offers a well-rounded view of her subject that makes good dramatic use of the considerable intrigue that surrounded Curie's scientific accomplishments and her private life. Goldsmith also reminds us, without belaboring the point, that Curie overcame obstacles, including pervasive sexism within the scientific community that almost cost her the Nobel. Goldsmith is also adept at demonstrating that for Curie the nexus of public accomplishments and private happiness was tenuous. Although Curie continued working after Pierre's death, Goldsmith says she never allowed his name to be spoken: "Never again would there be a sign of joy." Goldsmith, biographer of Gloria Vanderbilt and Victoria Woodhull, is weakest at explaining the theoretical basis for Curie's scientific breakthroughs, which set the stage for the exploration of the atom. B&w illus.

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From Booklist

Best-selling historian Goldsmith incisively chronicles the intensely dramatic life of the first woman scientist to win the Nobel Prize, neatly explicating both scientific breakthroughs and complex personal and societal conflicts. Curie, born Marya Salomee Sklodowska, endured and triumphed over a tough childhood in Russian-occupied Poland as well as depression, sexism, and poverty. A brilliant and profoundly committed scientist who achieved many firsts, she found her soul mate in fellow scientist and maverick Pierre Curie, who helped her conduct the grueling experiments that enabled her to discover polonium, radium, and radioactivity, thus throwing "open the door to atomic science." A humanist who hoped that radiation would only be used for good, Marie Curie also invented a mobile X-ray unit that her courageous scientist daughter, Irene Joliot-Curie, who also won a Nobel Prize, operated on the front lines. Marie, Pierre, and Irene were all made fatally ill by their work with radioactive substances, and decades later, the Curie papers that Goldsmith has made such superb use of were still "hot." Marie Curie's life, Goldsmith concludes, was "tragic and glorious." Her powerful portrait reveals a woman of great passion, genius, and pain who changed the world in ways she would have deplored. *Donna Seaman*

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Review

"Never a dull moment...Goldsmith leads the reader through a wonderland of facts with just the right blend of science and story. In the end, the mystery of the great Madame [Curie] remains, but a deeper understanding of what she went through as a woman and a scientist shines as strong as her radium." (San Francisco Chronicle)

"Bestselling historian Goldsmith incisively chronicles [Curie's] intensely dramatic life...Her powerful portrait reveals a woman of great passion, genius, and pain who changed the world." (Booklist, starred review)

Users Review

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