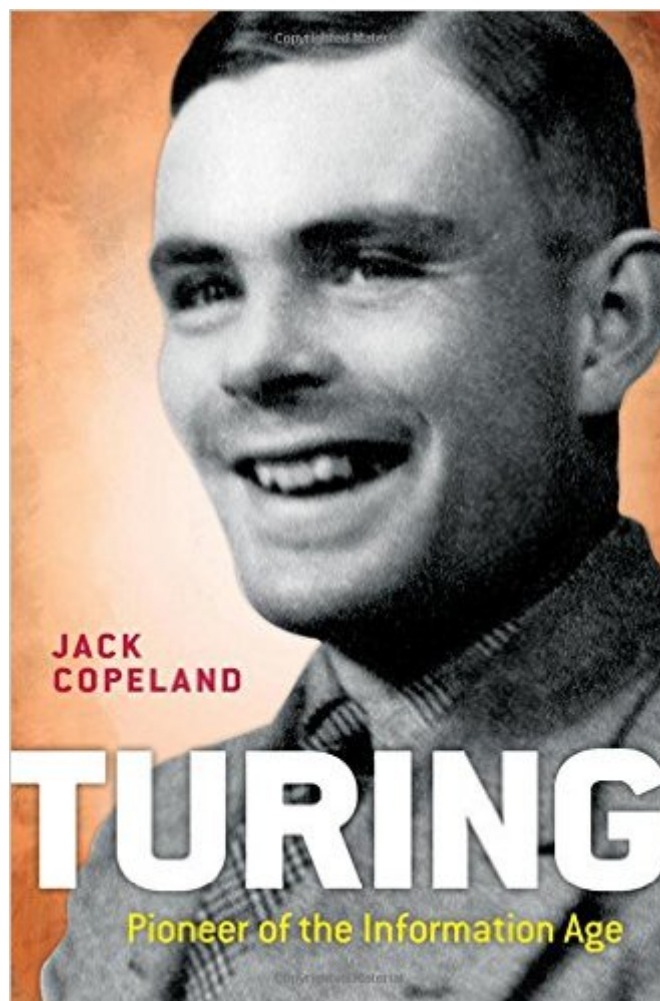


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Turing: Pioneer Of The Information Age



Synopsis

Alan Turing is regarded as one of the greatest scientists of the 20th century. But who was Turing, and what did he achieve during his tragically short life of 41 years? Best known as the genius who broke Germany's most secret codes during the war of 1939-45, Turing was also the father of the modern computer. Today, all who 'click-to-open' are familiar with the impact of Turing's ideas. Here, B. Jack Copeland provides an account of Turing's life and work, exploring the key elements of his life-story in tandem with his leading ideas and contributions. The book highlights Turing's contributions to computing and to computer science, including Artificial Intelligence and Artificial Life, and the emphasis throughout is on the relevance of his work to modern developments. The story of his contributions to codebreaking during the Second World War is set in the context of his thinking about machines, as is the account of his work in the foundations of mathematics.

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Customer Reviews

This is a fantastic book -- I could barely put it down. It is both excellent narrative and carefully documented history. As a computer scientist I am familiar with Turing's groundbreaking work, including the technical construction of his "Turing machine." But I did not realize many of the other contributions he was responsible for, such as "artificial life," electronic music, and even sequential analysis (from statistics). The book does not dwell on technical details, but does present enough about the work to be accurate and informative. The alternative read of the evidence concerning Turing's untimely death, in the last chapter of the book, is also very compelling. In sum: This book is

evidence that the Imitation Game, while a great film, sold us short: Turing's life story could have been told in a historically accurate manner while still being great entertainment. Read this book to be gripped, and to learn the story of an amazing man.

This is not a comprehensive intellectual biography of Alan Turing. Its focus narrower - it looks at the intersection of Turing's ideas about computing and his code-breaking work in WWII. It very nicely provides photographic documentation of hardware development and is well written in a way that is accessible to the non-expert. Thumbs up!

This is not a detailed biography of Alan Turing; it more the intersection between the lives of Turing and computers. I am sure that there was a lot more to Turing's private life than was revealed in Jack Copeland's book, however this didn't lessen my enjoyment of the book. The time flew by as I read. The pace was crisp and Copeland did a great job of explaining the birth of computing and why Turing was indeed "Pioneer of the Information Age" as the book's subtitle reads. Some of the information was a little technical but the technical details aren't the point of the story, it is how many people, led by Turing, developed the computer. No prior detailed knowledge about computers is required; Copeland did a very good job of explaining everything along the way. I strongly recommend this book for anyone interested in computers or the history of science.

Excellent bio of Alan Turing. Copeland's description of his personality and life is good, but what really interested me was his description of his work. He gives a good, detailed description of Turing's role in inventing modern computing and his work at Bletchley, enough to satisfy geeky people like me. He considers the possibilities for Turing's death, and he convinces me at least that it was probably caused by sloppy lab behavior rather than suicide. He mentions the possibility that the British secret service had him killed, and yes, that is a distant possibility. One reviewer said Copeland believed that was the most likely explanation, but if you read the book you realize that all he is describing is a possibility.

Most accounts of innovations in computing omit stories of the earliest ideas and practical implementations. In this they are not to blame, because the British Government enforced secrecy about WW II code-breaking for about 60 years. Jack Copeland's 2012 book, Turing--Pioneer of the Information Age, corrects the record. It is a good read, even for people who eschew reading about technical topics!

I thought this was a useful portrayal of someone who was undoubtedly a genius but wasn't allowed to have a private life, especially as a gay man in those days. Even when convicted for what was then an offence, there punishment should have been vastly more lenient as nobody was suffering as a consequence.

I am admirer of Turing and I just finished another book about him. Much thinner than this one and, consequently, less informative. This one, on the other hand, provides a lot of information RELATED to Turing and his ideas but, strictly speaking, not really about his original work. Turing was, if I understand his short life correctly, in a unique position. As someone who contributed significantly, perhaps decidedly, to the breaking of two different German military codes and a post war peaceful applications of computers, he knew more than many of his colleagues. Unfortunately, once the war was won by the allies, the standard squabbling started and the progress on building new computers based on Turing's ideas slowed down considerably. Mr. Copeland obviously interviewed many Turing's contemporaries, he is too young to know Turing before his untimely death. Four stars, recommended to all who want to learn about the early history of computers.

The message that I got from Turing: Pioneer of the Information Age is that he never got any of the credit that he rightfully deserved. The main reason for this is that a lot of the groundbreaking work that he did was at Bletchley Park and it had to be kept secret. Therefore, a vast majority of the credit for the development of the modern computer, stored programming, and artificial intelligence was given to others (both American and English). In fact, history books and textbooks on computer science up until fairly recently made no mention of the two men that were behind the development of modern computers: Alan Turing and Thomas Flowers. Turing was truly ahead of the times with his theories that computers could be 'taught' and that artificial intelligence was an inevitable part of our future (the fear is real within me, guys). Unfortunately, much of his findings on this went either unpublished or unseen and once again other scientists got the jump on him. (At this point, I have to say that this is just the opinion of one man but the overwhelming evidence backs him up.) I learned what the 'imitation game' is and also discovered I had read about it before in Our Final Invention: Artificial Intelligence and the End of the Human Era by James Barrat. The author only briefly touched on the tragic end to Turing's life and suggested that the case may not have been a cut and dry suicide after all. You'll have to read the book to get the full details! ;-)

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