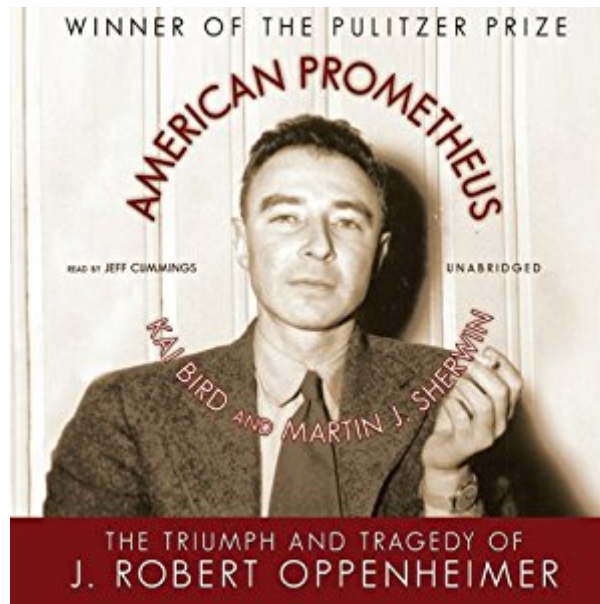


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American Prometheus: The Triumph And Tragedy Of J. Robert Oppenheimer



Synopsis

J. Robert Oppenheimer is one of the iconic figures of the twentieth century, a brilliant physicist who led the effort to build the atomic bomb for his country in a time of war and who later found himself confronting the moral consequences of scientific progress. When he proposed international controls over atomic materials, opposed the development of the hydrogen bomb, and criticized plans for a nuclear war, his ideas were anathema to powerful advocates of a massive nuclear buildup during the anti-Communist hysteria of the early 1950s. They declared that Oppenheimer could not be trusted with America's nuclear secrets. In this magisterial biography twenty-five years in the making, the authors capture Oppenheimer's life and times, from his early career to his central role in the Cold War. --This text refers to the MP3 CD edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

My father spent most of his career in nuclear engineering researching the mathematics of nuclear reactors at Brookhaven. My father had visited all the national labs and got to know all the key players in nuclear physics in the period from 1950-1970. Growing up in that environment I naturally knew a bit about Oppenheimer and Teller and others. It was clear to me that my father had sympathy for Oppenheimer and a great deal of respect. Teller was viewed more as a politician looking for fame and publicity. This became even more apparent to me when in the 1980s I saw how he lobbied the Reagan administration for research on laser based strategic defense satellites. This book is an account of Oppenheimer's life from childhood through the Manhattan

Project with emphasis on the most crucial part of his career as the head of the Los Alamos Laboratory where physicists mathematicians and chemists teamed up to develop the first nuclear weapons that were used against Japan. Oppenheimer was a reserved man who did not seek the limelight. He was brilliant but his biggest asset was his management and leadership capabilities along with very good judgement, something that Teller seemed to lack. It was just these qualities of leadership that led to the successful development of the atomic bomb in a few short years at Los Alamos. His liberal past and pre-war affiliation with communism caused him great difficulties and some in the military feared that he was a security risk. He was continually being checked out by J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI. Hoover did not like the appointment of Oppenheimer to the key leadership position at Los Alamos. After the war was over, strangely the man who was able to keep secrets during the crucial period of the Manhattan Project was not trusted after the war.

Oppenheimer was a man of his time for a time and quickly became a man out of time when he warned with foresight at the dangers of nuclear proliferation. This compelling, well researched biography by Kai Bird and Martin Sherwin provides the most complete picture of one of the most enigmatic, charismatic and iconic figures of the 20th Century. Pulling from a variety of sources, the authors create one of the most complete and compelling portraits of the "father of the atomic bomb". Following Oppenheimer and his family from his birth, through his work at UC Berkeley, involvement in protesting social injustice and ultimately his leadership of the team that develop the atomic bomb AMERICAN PROMETHUS looks at Oppenheimer flaws and all. Oppenheimer emerged at one of the most morally complex and scientifically rich times in history. His work at Los Alamos with his group of collaborators transformed our world for good and bad. Oppenheimer lived both in the glow of that success and in the shadow of the world he helped usher in for the remainder of his life. The authors present all this information with detailed accounts from Oppenheimer's life. They also relate many of the personal conflicts that Oppenheimer felt while working in one of the most promising and dangerous fields. There's plenty of excerpts from Oppenheimer's letters and comments from contemporaries he both agreed/disagreed with (Teller, Bohr, Strauss and many, many others). When Oppenheimer had his security clearance revoked and he was betrayed by rumour, poor choices and some of his colleagues, one of America's brightest and best fell from hero to possible traitor in the eyes of the American public. The controversy and circumstances were much more complex than they appeared on the surface.

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