

# [PDF] Strange Beauty: Murray Gell-Mann And The Revolution In Twentieth-Century Physics

**GEORGE JOHNSON - pdf download free book**

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**Description:**

Murray Gell-Mann is a leading light in 20th-century physics, yet his name rings bells only for those interested in particle physics. Science writer George Johnson was fortunate enough to develop a friendly relationship with the great scientist, and his biography, *Strange Beauty*, glows with a rare

intimacy gained from a notoriously private and irascible man. From his childhood in New York City to his current scientific elder-statesman status in New Mexico, Johnson explores Gell-Mann's life in glorious detail. A passionate, jealous, and brilliant man, he was capable of both profound insight and bitter lifelong rivalries, but Johnson finds there's much more to the man than these two simple poles; Gell-Mann's volatile family life and deft academic maneuvering also find room in this expansive biography.

The reader finds that Johnson's careful attention to detail shows more than it tells through enlightening stories of Gell-Mann's troubled, romantic, or pretentious dealings with peers, family, and even strangers. Explaining his strange surname means investigating old phone books, scientific legend, and family history, as the scientist is unwilling to shed light on the mystery (it turns out that his father hyphenated it, and Murray dreamed up etymologies as needed--giving rise to the tangled web of myths). Johnson is up to the challenge of recording the life story of a man nearly as strange as the quarks he discovered and named, and *Strange Beauty* lives up to the promise of its title. --*Rob Lightner* --This text refers to the edition.

**From Publishers Weekly** Up, down, top, bottom, strange and charm aren't just states of mind: they're kinds of quarks, the mind-bending, omnipresent sub-subatomic particles co-discovered and named in the early 1960s by the American physicist Murray Gell-Mann. New York Times science reporter Johnson (*Fire in the Mind*) has written a brisk, accessible life of the Nobel-winning scientist, who will turn 70 next month. Gell-Mann grew up poor in New York City, the son of Eastern European Jews. Still in his teens, he attended Yale and MIT, and soon afterward won notice for his work on cosmic rays. Gell-Mann followed up his insights about quarks with important work at Caltech and elsewhere on superstrings, supergravity and mathematical complexity. His adult life has had its hardships: his daughter gave much of her life to an American Stalinist fringe group, and his wife died of cancer in 1981. (He's since remarried.) Johnson makes clear that Gell-Mann's direct, sometimes arrogant manner could make him difficult to work with; admired by physicists, he failed to achieve the wider fame of his media-friendly colleague, the late Richard Feynman. While Johnson relates such troubles sympathetically, the story of Gell-Mann's life is in large part the story of his and others' researches and discoveries. Explaining difficult fields like quantum physics, Johnson uses as many analogies, and as little math, as he can, while trying always to give some picture of what scientific problems Gell-Mann and his fellow scientists solved. The result is a careful if colloquial biography, perfect for readers who aren't or aren't yet working scientists. (Oct.)  
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