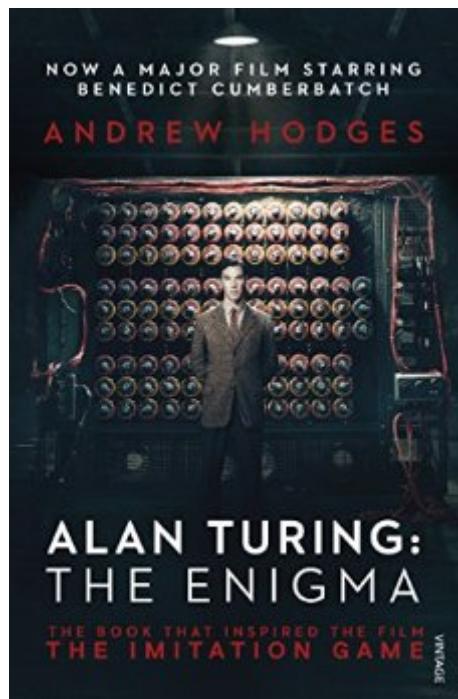


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Alan Turing: The Enigma



Synopsis

The official book behind the Academy Award-winning film The Imitation Game, starring Benedict Cumberbatch and Keira Knightley Alan Turing was the mathematician whose cipher-cracking transformed the Second World War. Taken on by British Intelligence in 1938, as a shy young Cambridge don, he combined brilliant logic with a flair for engineering. In 1940 his machines were breaking the Enigma-enciphered messages of Nazi Germany's air force. He then headed the penetration of the super-secure U-boat communications. But his vision went far beyond this achievement. Before the war he had invented the concept of the universal machine, and in 1945 he turned this into the first design for a digital computer. Turing's far-sighted plans for the digital era forged ahead into a vision for Artificial Intelligence. However, in 1952 his homosexuality rendered him a criminal and he was subjected to humiliating treatment. In 1954, aged 41, Alan Turing took his own life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Without this book, the real Alan Turing might fade into obscurity or at least the easy caricature of an eccentric British mathematician. And to the relief of many, because Turing was a difficult person: an

unapologetic homosexual in post-victorian england; ground-breaking mathematician; utterly indifferent to social conventions; arrogantly original (working from first principles, ignoring precedents); with no respect for professional boundaries (a 'pure' mathematician who taught himself engineering and electronics). His best-known work is his 1936 'Computable Numbers' paper, defining a self-modifying, stored-program machine. He used these ideas to help build code-breaking methods and machinery at Bletchley Park, England's WWII electronic intelligence center. This work, much still classified today, led directly to the construction of the world's first stored-program, self-modifying computer, in 1948. Computers were always symbol-manipulators to Alan, not 'number crunchers', the predominant view even to von Neumann, and into the 60's and 70's. He designed many basic software concepts (interpreter, floating point), most of which were ignored (he umm wasn't exactly good at promoting his ideas). By 1948 Alan had moved on to studying human and machine intelligence, as a user of computers, again with his lack of social niceties and radical thinking, some of his ideas were baffling or embarrassing until 'rediscovered' decades later as brilliant insights into intelligence. His 'Turing test' of intelligence dates from this period, and is still widely misunderstood.

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