Brief Answers To The Big Questions Summary

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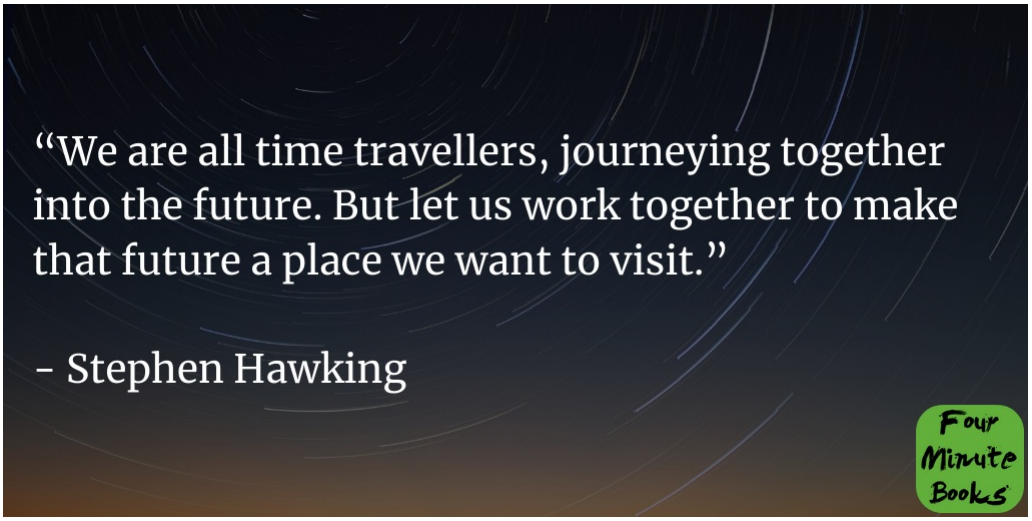
1-Sentence-Summary: *Brief Answers To The Big Questions tackles some of the universe's biggest mysteries, as Hawking explores the laws that govern the cosmos and the future of humankind.*

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



I'm something of a stargazer. Every time I'm on a camping trip or in some remote country area, far away from the noise of city lights, I always find some time to step out at night. I usually recruit others to join me, as we let our eyes acclimate to the pitch blackness, marveling at the star canopy and the awesome cosmos surrounding us.

It's a captivating sight and I can watch the sky show for hours. It never fails – the same questions always seem to come up. Do you think there's other life up there? How did we get here? Do you believe in a creator, or is this all just a random accident?

In his final book, *Brief Answers to the Big Questions*, Stephen Hawking once again displays his trademark ability to seek answers to questions regarding space and time. He also looks at the current state of humanity and the implications of technology and social issues.

Here are 3 lessons I've learned while pondering some of life's big questions:

1. There's no definitive answer when it comes to the question of alien life.
2. We need to take immediate action to sustain our survival on the planet.
3. We need to be wary when it comes to keeping AI in check.

Let's learn from the brilliant mind of Stephen Hawking!

Lesson 1: **When it comes to extraterrestrial lifeforms, there are a lot more questions than answers.**

Aliens have always been a fascination for us earthlings. That's why so many Hollywood films have cashed in on the extraterrestrial invasion theme. A good portion of video gaming is designed with the objective to kill space invaders.

What are the chances that intelligent life actually exists beyond Earth? Chances are pretty good when you consider that at the time our little blue planet was formed our universe was celebrating its seven billionth birthday. **So it's not inconceivable that multiple alien civilizations could have risen and colonized their region of space before we even discovered fire.**

It's even more of a possibility when you consider that approximately twenty percent of all stars have planets that fall into what's referred to as the "Goldilocks Zone". This is an area capable of sustaining life since it is neither too hot, or too cold. So with roughly 200 billion stars in our Milky Way galaxy, this translates to about forty billion planets that have ideal, earth-like conditions.

This does not necessarily imply that this alien life is all intelligent. Life might be common, but beings with heightened intelligence is likely to be very rare. Our planet Earth is also overdue for a devastating interstellar collision. Other life-sustaining planets might not have been so lucky.

Lesson 2: **Surviving on Earth will require immediate action and cooperation form all of its inhabitants.**

Now let's bring this next topic a little bit closer to home and turn our attention to life on planet Earth.

The truth is that our planet is faced with numerous threats and the chances of long-term sustainability look bleak. These threats can be divided into those that we can control, and those that we can't.

ned in the last lesson, our planet is way overdue for an asteroid collision. This is obviously a cataclysmic event where we have no control, at least not at this time, given our limited technology to divert such a catastrophe.

We should then focus our energy on threats that we can control, like climate change – our most immediate threat. Our current state of global emissions is unsustainable, but there's much more that threatens our life as we know it.

Rising ocean temperatures will cause our polar ice caps to melt. These smaller ice caps will, in turn, reduce the amount of solar energy reflected back into space, further heating the planet and eventually leaving behind an Uninhabitable Earth.

In the planets present state, it's a good bet the Earth will be devastated by either a nuclear war or some environmental disaster within the next thousand years. Hopefully, by that time humanity will have the technology to escape the planet and survive.

Lesson 3: **AI has the power to improve nearly all aspects of human life, but what happens if it's allowed to surpass human intelligence?**

How wary do we need to be of runaway artificial intelligence (AI)? Can AI eventually outsmart us? There's a story that echoes all too real:

People asked a computer, "Is there a God?" and the computer responded, "There is now," and fused the plug.

Recent AI landmarks such as self-driving cars, or computers winning at the game of Go, are only a few signs of what is in store as enormous levels of investment are pouring into this technology.

There's actually a law: Moore's Law, which suggests that computers can double their speed and capacity about every 18 months. If Moore's Law continues to pace this way, **AI may surpass human intelligence within this current century. That could make the possibility of a self-aware Skynet scenario all too real.**

At least we as humans are aware of this danger, which is encouraging news. In 2015, Stephen Hawking, Elon Musk and several other AI experts signed an open letter on artificial intelligence, calling for serious research into its impact on society.

And now AI ethics is a quickly growing field of academic study. Let's just hope it grows faster than AI's capability to advance. We must ensure machines will always be in the service of humans and not the other way around.

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Brief Answers To The Big Questions Review

Brief Answers To The Big Questions is a great book and a fast read, considering its rather heavy subject matter. I like that the book also covered multiple topics that we often question such as, time travel, space colonization, black holes and predicting humanity's future. There's also a cool Foreword by Eddie Redmayne, the actor who portrays Hawking in the movie, The Theory of Everything.

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Who would I recommend the **Brief Answers To The Big Questions** summary to?

The 27-year-old software developer, the 36-year-old astronomy professor and anyone who's ever questioned the meaning of life.

What do you need help with at the moment?

I want to form better habits. 🛌 I want to live a happier life. ☺ Something else.I want to get rich. 💸
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