

LEVELED BOOK • W

# The Nobel Prize



Written by Evan Russell

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# The Nobel Prize



Written by Evan Russell

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## Focus Question

What is the Nobel Prize, and why  
is it important?

# Words to Know

committees  
controversy  
diploma  
economics  
engineer  
foundation

injustice  
nominate  
physics  
physiology  
radioactivity  
scholars

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## The Most Famous Prize

The Nobel Prize is the most famous honor in the world. The prizes were first awarded on December 10, 1901. That date was the fifth anniversary of the death of Alfred Nobel, the creator of the prizes. Between 1901 and 2015, 874 special individuals and 26 groups have been awarded Nobel Prizes.

For many years, five prizes were awarded annually in the fields of **physics**, chemistry, **physiology** or medicine, literature, and peace. A sixth award, for **economics**, was created in 1968.

These prizes are the result of one fascinating man, Alfred Nobel.

## The Medal

All the medals feature an image of Alfred Nobel on the front. Each individual category has a different image on the back.



Nobel Medal  
Front (all)



Peace



Physics  
and Chemistry

## Alfred Nobel's Life



Alfred Nobel

Alfred Nobel was born on October 21, 1833, in Stockholm, Sweden. He was one of four sons of Caroline and Immanuel Nobel. Immanuel was an **engineer** and businessman. He was interested in finding ways to blast through rocks to make bridges and tunnels.

By 1842, Immanuel had moved from Sweden to St. Petersburg, Russia. There he successfully made explosives for the Russian navy. Alfred received an excellent education in St. Petersburg. By age seventeen, he could speak Swedish, Russian, French, German, and English. He was also interested in chemistry.



Literature

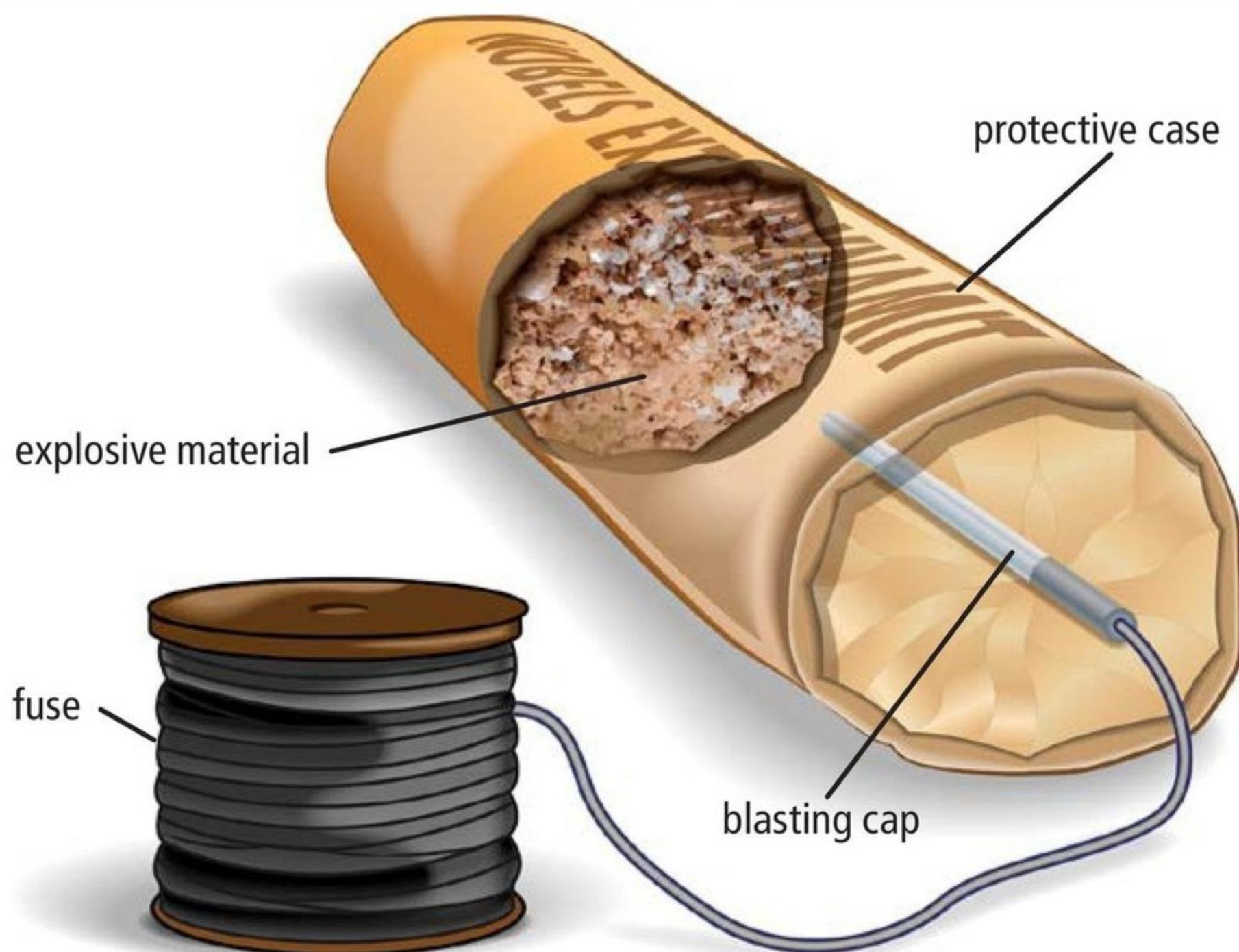


Physiology  
or Medicine



Economics

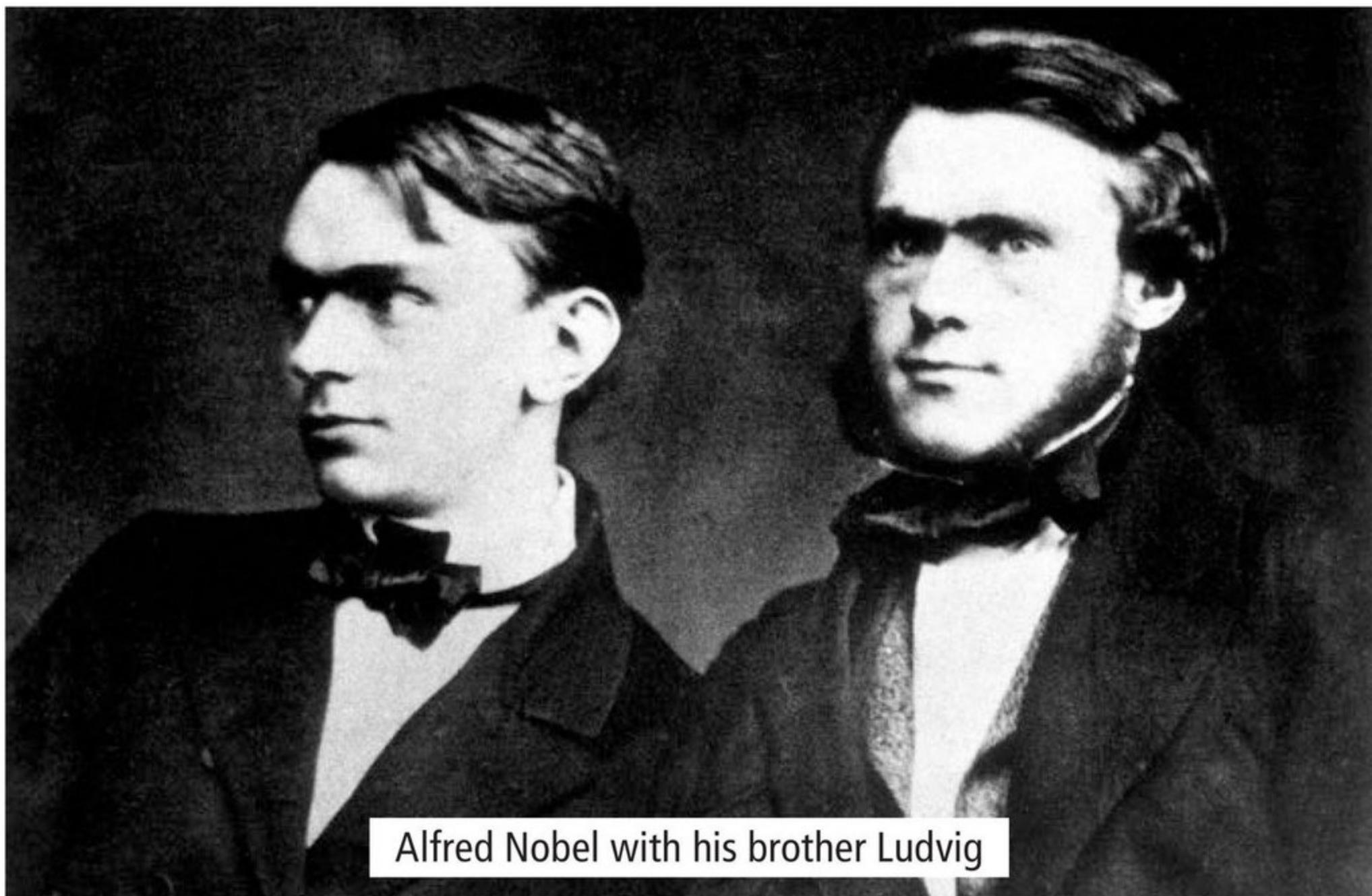
## Dynamite



In 1850, Alfred's parents sent him to Paris to study chemical engineering. He worked with a highly explosive liquid that had recently been invented. At that time, it was still considered too dangerous for commercial use. When Alfred returned to St. Petersburg, he worked with his father to try to create a commercial explosive.

In 1859, the family returned to Sweden, where Alfred continued to experiment. His younger brother, Emil, who also experimented with explosives, was killed in a tragic accident in 1864.

However, Alfred did not give up. In 1866, he invented an explosive he named *dynamite*. His invention made him rich and famous.



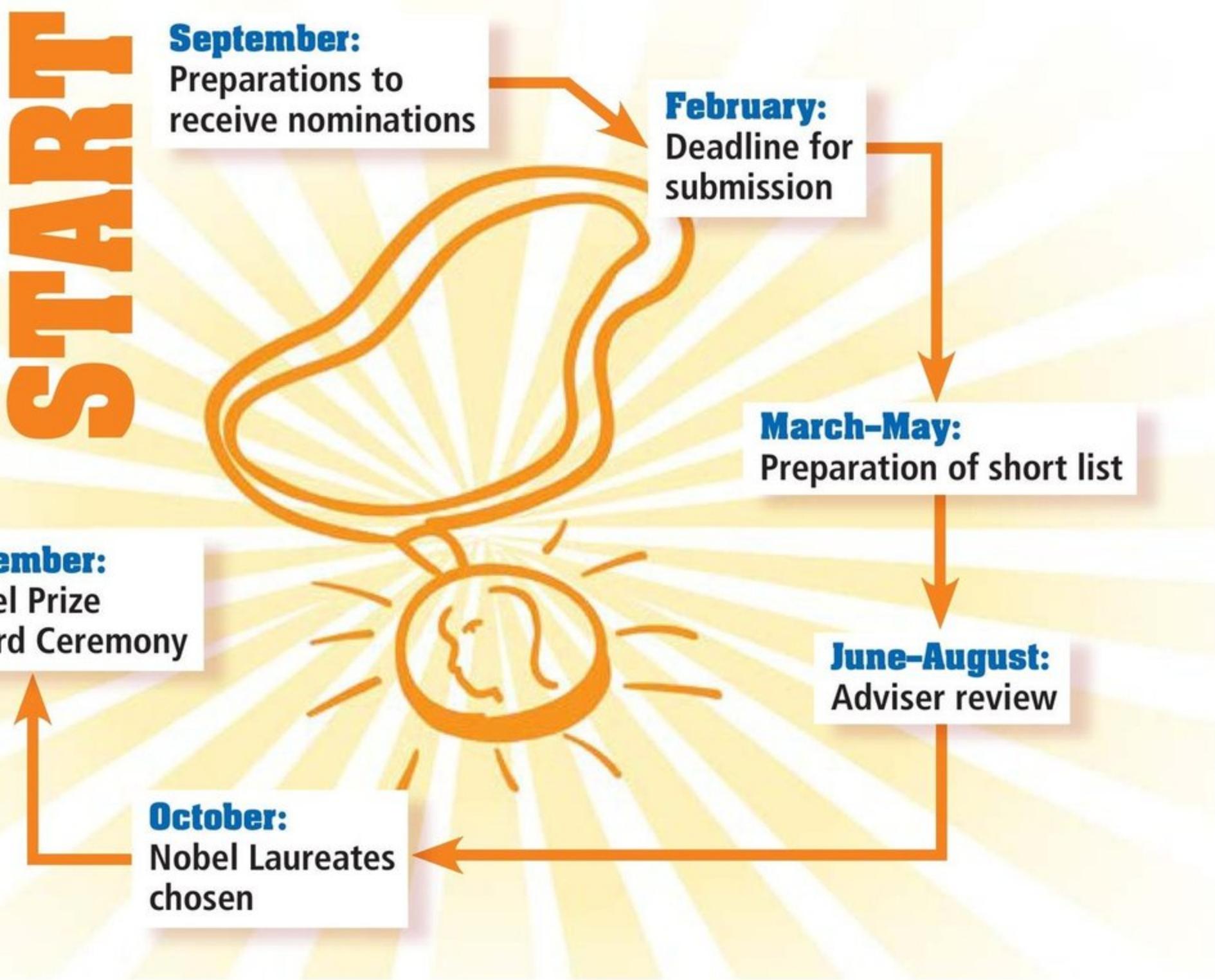
Alfred Nobel with his brother Ludvig

The invention of dynamite made the building of tunnels, canals, roads, and railways much easier and safer. However, while dynamite made engineering safer, it also changed the way wars were fought. Nobel was a peaceful man. Yet he saw his invention of dynamite also put to use in war.

The idea of the prizes was only revealed after Nobel's death in 1896. His will established the **Nobel Foundation** to manage his fortune and award the prizes.

## Why the Prizes?

No one knows *why* Nobel used his fortune to create the prizes, and Nobel didn't say. We do know that the prizes showed his lifelong fascination with the five fields chosen for the awards.



## The Nobel Prize Process

The Nobel Prizes are special because of all the research that goes into the selection process. The prize **committees** are made up of world-famous **scholars**, scientists, and former prizewinners. The committees invite leaders in each field to **nominate** candidates every year. The voting for candidates is top secret. The prizes are presented to prizewinners every year on December 10—the anniversary of Nobel's death.

Nobel prizewinners are among the most important people in modern history. Winning the award is intended to help them continue their work.

## Famous Recipients

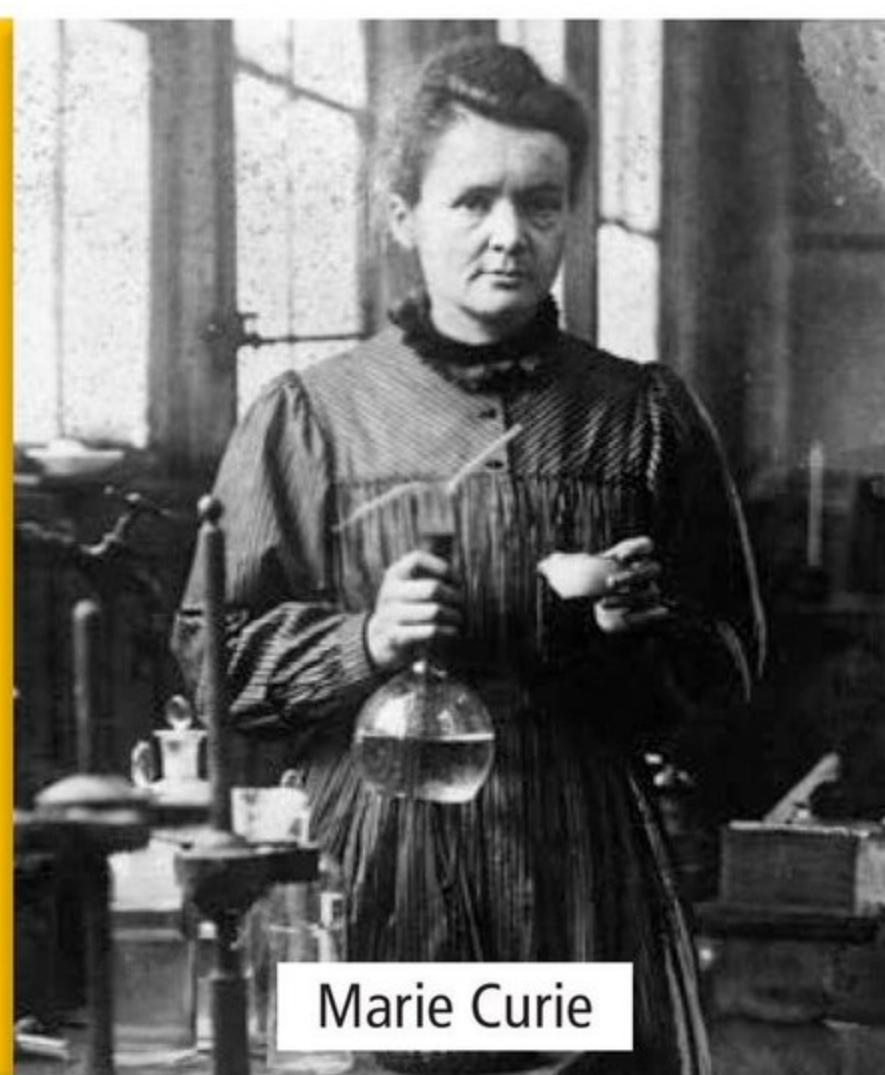
### *The Sciences*

Marie Curie was the first woman to receive the award, in 1903 in physics. Born in Poland, Curie spent most of her life working as a scientific researcher in France. She shared the award with her husband, Pierre, and Henri Becquerel for their work in **radioactivity**. The prize allowed Curie to continue her research. In 1911, she was awarded the prize in chemistry for her discovery of two new elements.

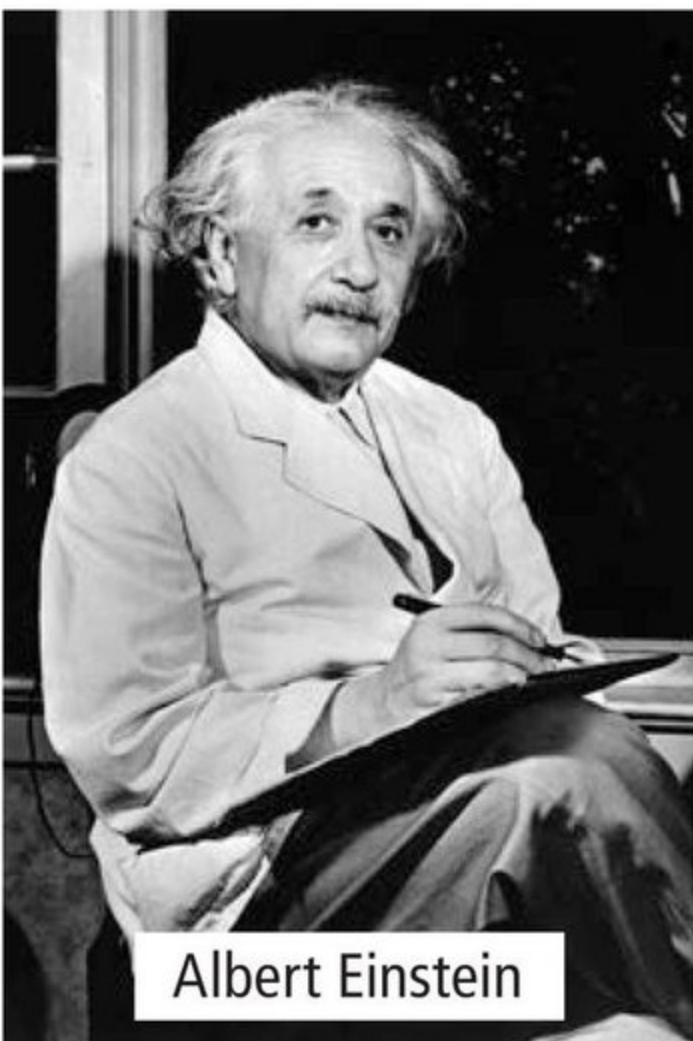
Curie is one of only two people ever to win Nobel Prizes in different areas. In 1935, her daughter Irène Joliot-Curie (ee-REN ZHOH-lyoh KYUR-ee) also won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry. Marie and Irène are the only mother-daughter pair to have won Nobel Prizes.

### Women and the Nobel Prize

Few women have been awarded Nobel Prizes, especially in the sciences. Female scientists were once rarely able to grow enough in their fields to be given awards. This is changing, though. Opportunities for women continue to improve worldwide.



Marie Curie



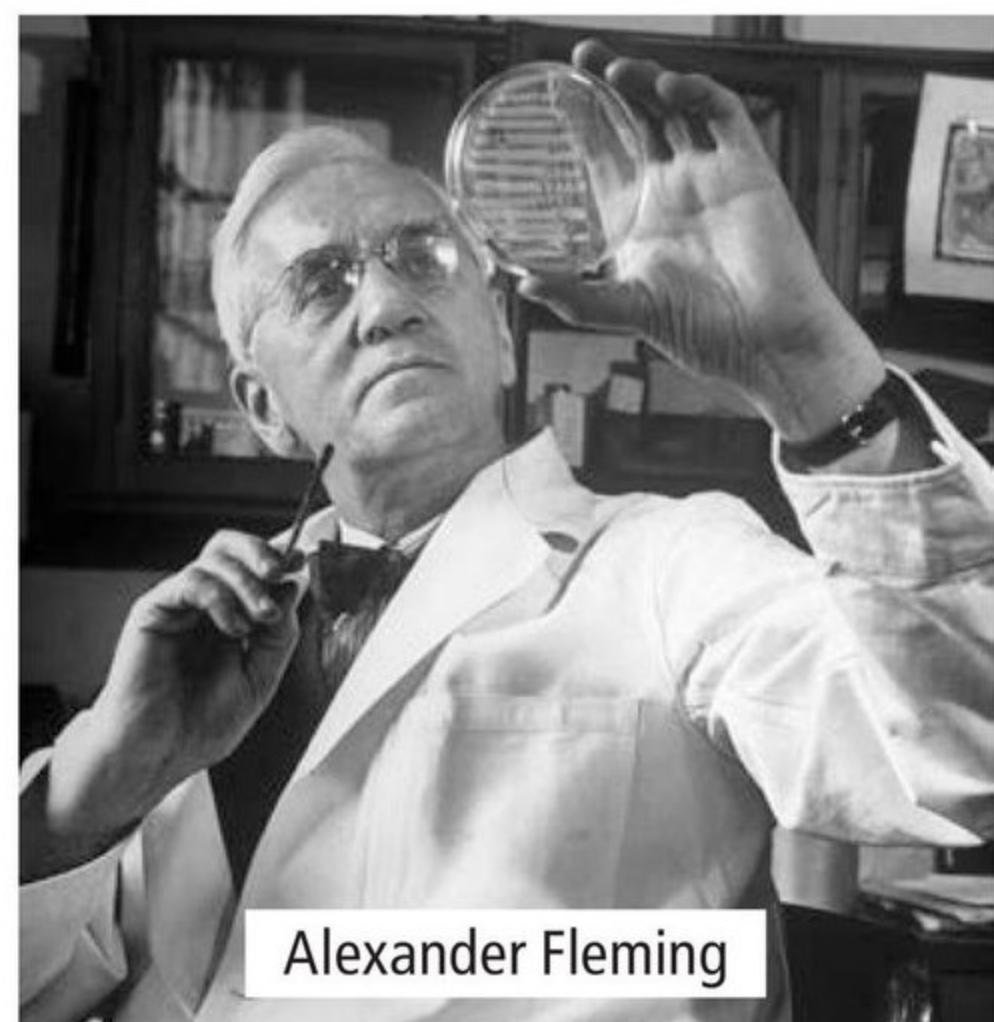
Albert Einstein

Have you heard of the formula  $E = mc^2$ ? That formula, Albert Einstein's theory of relativity, changed the way we think about physics. Einstein was awarded the prize in 1921 for his work in physics. Winning the prize allowed Einstein to continue his brilliant career. He

influenced many of the greatest scientific thinkers who followed him.

Danish physicist Niels Bohr (NEELS BOR) won the Nobel Prize in Physics the year after Einstein, in 1922. The prize was awarded for his "services in the investigation of the structure of atoms." Bohr's son Aage Bohr (OH-uh BOR) was awarded the physics prize in 1975. That made them one of six pairs of fathers and sons who have won Nobel Prizes.

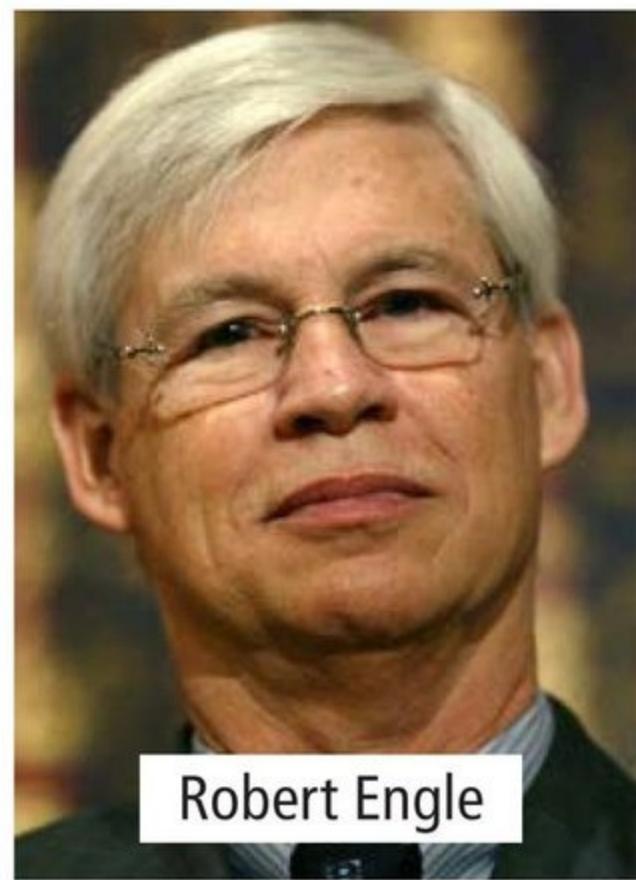
In 1945, Sir Alexander Fleming of Scotland was awarded the Nobel Prize in Medicine for the discovery of penicillin. His discovery saved many lives and changed medicine forever.



Alexander Fleming

## *Economics*

In 2003, Clive Granger and Robert Engle were awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics. Their research showed ways to avoid serious global financial problems.

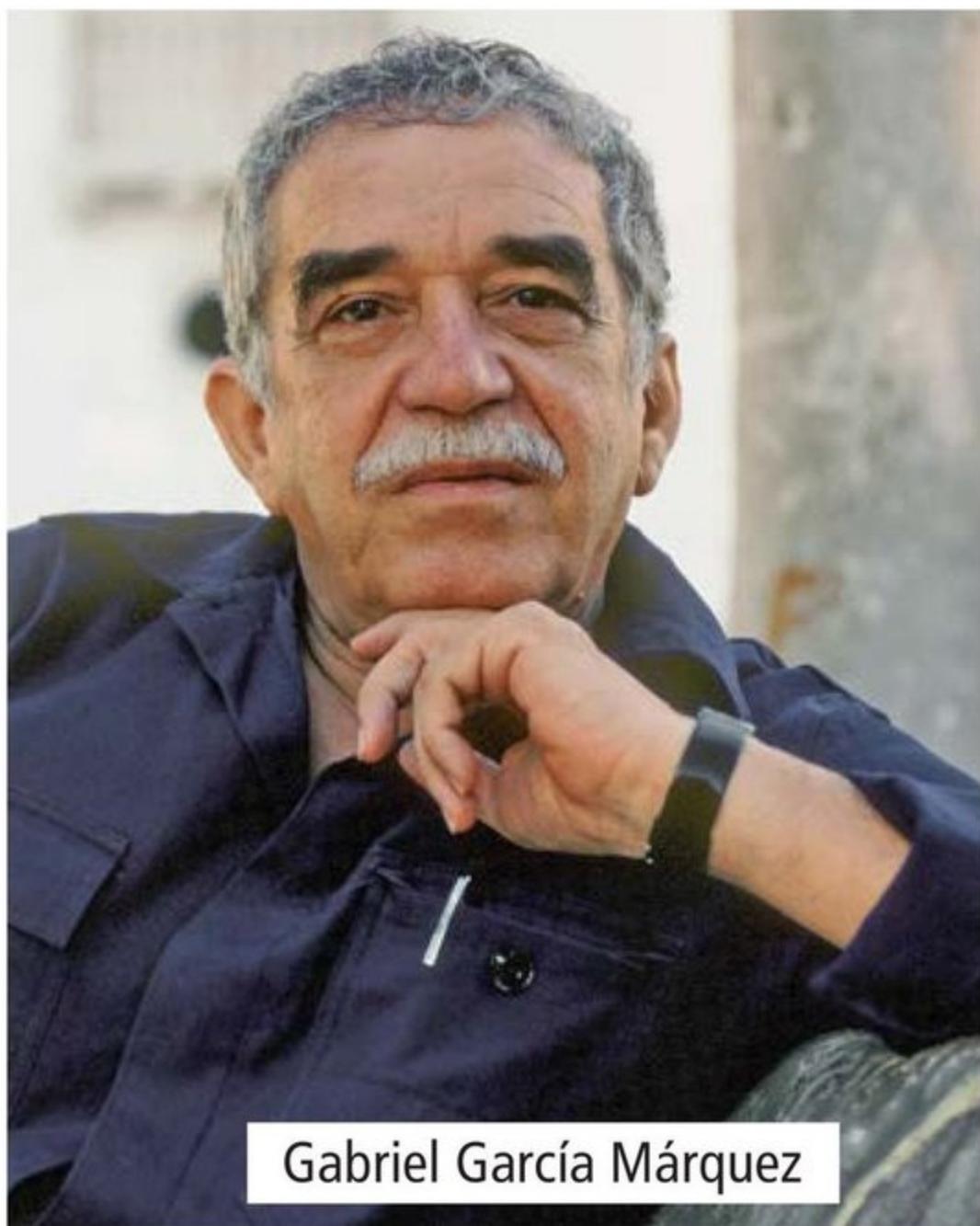


Robert Engle

## *Literature*

Ernest Hemingway, an American writer, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1954. The prize was awarded for “his mastery of the art of narrative . . . and for the influence . . . on contemporary style.”

Colombian-born Gabriel García Márquez, a very different type of writer, won the prize in



Gabriel García Márquez

1982. The committee praised his writing, in which fantasy and reality “are combined in a richly composed world of imagination.” These are just two examples of award winners in literature who have influenced writers for years to come.

## *Peace*

Three very famous medal winners were Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Teresa, and Nelson Mandela. These three individuals fought to improve the lives of people all over the world who were suffering from **injustice**. In 1964, the Nobel Peace Prize honored Dr. King's fight for civil rights in the United States. Mother Teresa was awarded the prize in 1979 for caring for poor people in India. Nelson Mandela was awarded the prize in 1993 for his lifelong struggle against South Africa's unfair political system.



Nelson Mandela



The youngest winner is Malala Yousafzai (muh-LAH-lah YOO-suf-zy), who received the prize in 2014 at age seventeen. In some parts of her home country of Pakistan, a political group banned education for girls. They also destroyed hundreds of schools. Malala fought back for equal educational opportunities for women. In 2012, she was attacked and nearly killed. Malala recovered and bravely continues her fight to this day.

## Nobel Controversies

Some prizewinners cause **controversy**. When Yasser Arafat (YAH-sur AIR-uh-fat), the leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), won the prize in 1994, many people were surprised. Arafat was awarded for his work towards peace in the Middle East. He shared the award with Israeli leaders Yitzhak Rabin (yits-HAHK ruh-BEEN) and Shimon Peres (shee-MOHN PAIR-iss). The PLO was considered by some to be a terrorist group. The Nobel Committee refused to change their minds.

Others protested when American Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was awarded the prize in 1973. Kissinger worked to end the war in Vietnam. However, he had also been involved in deadly attacks on Vietnam and nearby countries.



Even President Barack Obama's Peace Prize in 2009 caused controversy. The election of an African American president filled many people in the world with hope. Yet in 2009, he hadn't done much more than get elected. The announcement of Obama's award surprised many, including the president himself.

## The Reward

The Nobel Foundation awards cash, a **diploma**, and a gold medal to all prizewinners. The amount of the prize depends on whether it is given to an individual or a group. In 2015, the amount of an individual prize was eight million Swedish kronor (just under one million U.S. dollars). If the prize is shared among two or more people, the award of eight million kronor is divided equally.

Then the guests are taken to the Nobel Banquet at the Stockholm City Hall. A big party with speeches, dancing, a concert, and a fancy dinner takes place there.





The award ceremony at the Stockholm Concert Hall

## Conclusion

The Nobel Prize has had a major influence on the entire world. The awards show the work and dreams of great thinkers from around the globe. The fame and cash prizes allow these brilliant individuals to keep working. The prizes honor freedom, peace, and the commitment to improving humankind.

## Glossary

<b>committees</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	groups of people who consider or decide on a course of action (p. 8)
<b>controversy</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a disagreement over an idea or issue (p. 13)
<b>diploma</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a document that records a special right, honor, or achievement (p. 14)
<b>economics</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the science or study of how goods and services are made, sold, and used (p. 4)
<b>engineer</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a person who designs, builds, or repairs machines, buildings, bridges, or other structures (p. 5)
<b>foundation</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	an organization supported by donated money to help society or a particular cause (p. 7)
<b>injustice</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the unfair treatment of a person or group of people (p. 12)
<b>nominate</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	to name someone as a candidate for a job, award, or position (p. 8)
<b>physics</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the scientific study of matter, motion, and energy (p. 4)
<b>physiology</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the science or study of how living things and their parts work (p. 4)
<b>radioactivity</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the release of radioactive waves or particles; the property of emitting radioactive waves or particles (p. 9)
<b>scholars</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	intelligent, well-educated people (p. 8)

# The Nobel Prize

A Reading A-Z Level W Leveled Book

Word Count: 1,283

## Connections

### Writing

Write a historical fiction story from Alfred Nobel's point of view. Explain why you created the Nobel Prizes and what you hoped they would do for society.

### Social Studies

Write a biography about the life and achievements of a Nobel prizewinner. Include how his or her work continues to make an impact.

The logo for Reading A-Z features the word "Reading" in a large, bold, red sans-serif font. The letter "R" is stylized with a small sun-like icon above it, consisting of several short yellow lines radiating upwards. To the right of "Reading" is a large, bold, red capital letter "A-Z".

Reading A-Z

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