

The Nobel Prize

A Reading A-Z Level T Leveled Book
Word Count: 1,045

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.

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The Nobel Prize



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Focus Question

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

Words to Know

committees
diploma
economics
engineer
foundation

injustice
physics
physiology
scholars

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Correlation

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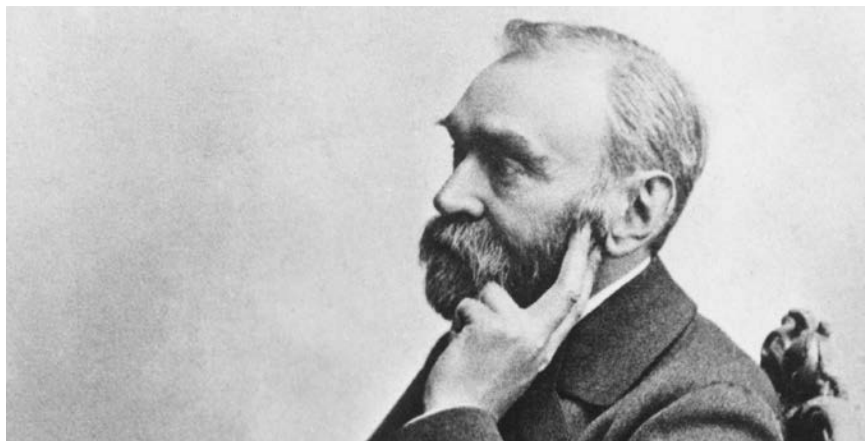


Table of Contents

The Most Famous Prize	4
Alfred Nobel's Life	5
The Nobel Prize Process	8
Famous Prizewinners	9
<i>The Sciences</i>	9
<i>Economics</i>	11
<i>Literature</i>	11
<i>Peace</i>	12
Nobel Controversies	13
The Reward	14
Conclusion	15
Glossary	16

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 was five years after 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, prizes were awarded in **physics**, chemistry, **physiology** or medicine, literature, and peace. A sixth award, for **economics**, started in 1968.

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 Sweden. His father was an **engineer** and businessman. Alfred was interested in finding ways to blast through rocks. The purpose was to make it easier to build bridges and tunnels.

By 1842, Alfred's family had moved from Sweden to Russia. There his father made explosives for the Russian navy. Alfred received an excellent education in Russia. He learned to speak Swedish, Russian, French, German, and English. He was also interested in chemistry.



Literature

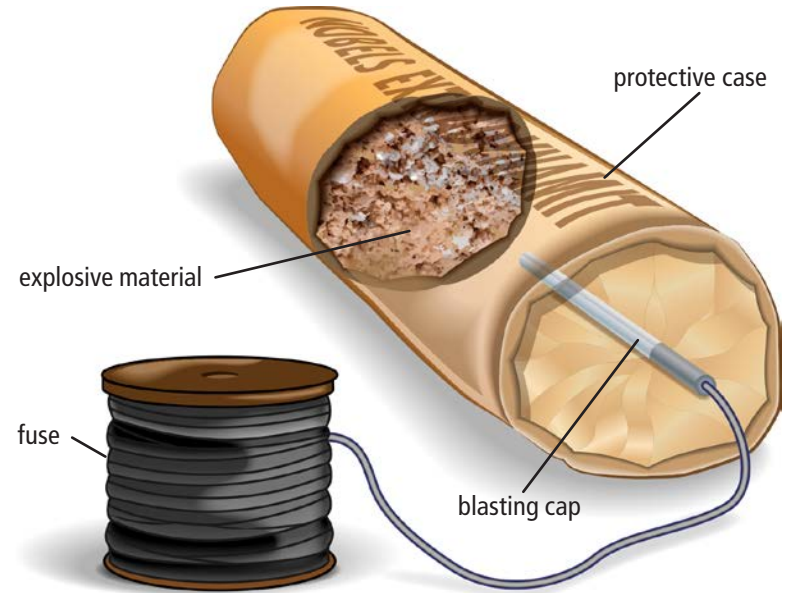


Physiology
or Medicine



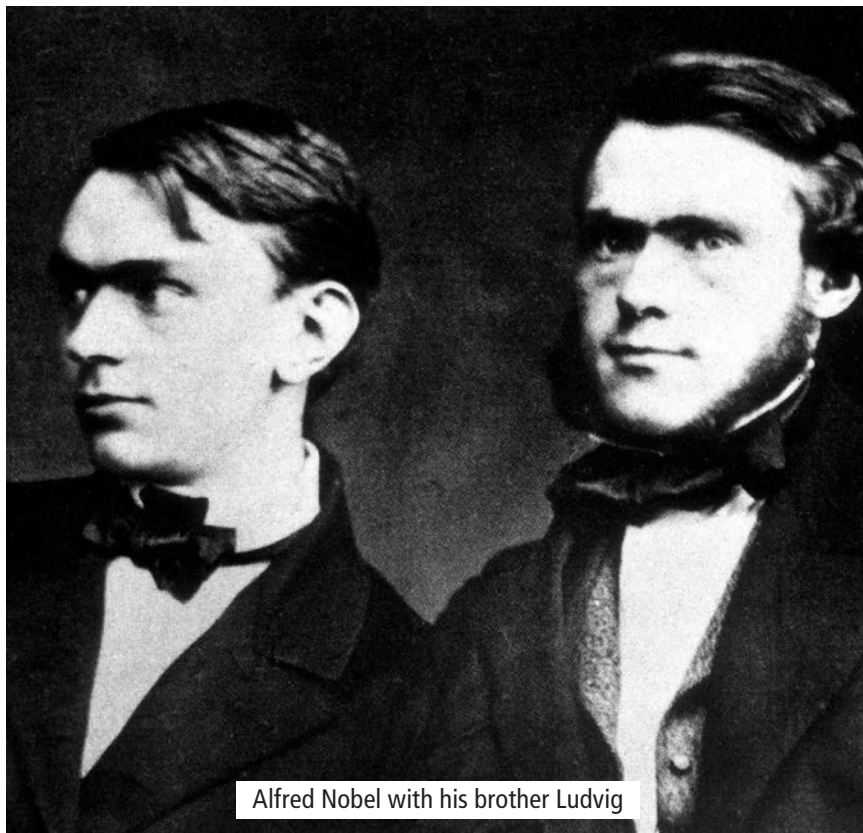
Economics

Dynamite



In 1850, Alfred was sent to Paris to study chemical engineering. He worked with a very 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 do experiments. His brother, Emil, who also experimented with explosives, was killed in a tragic accident in 1864.

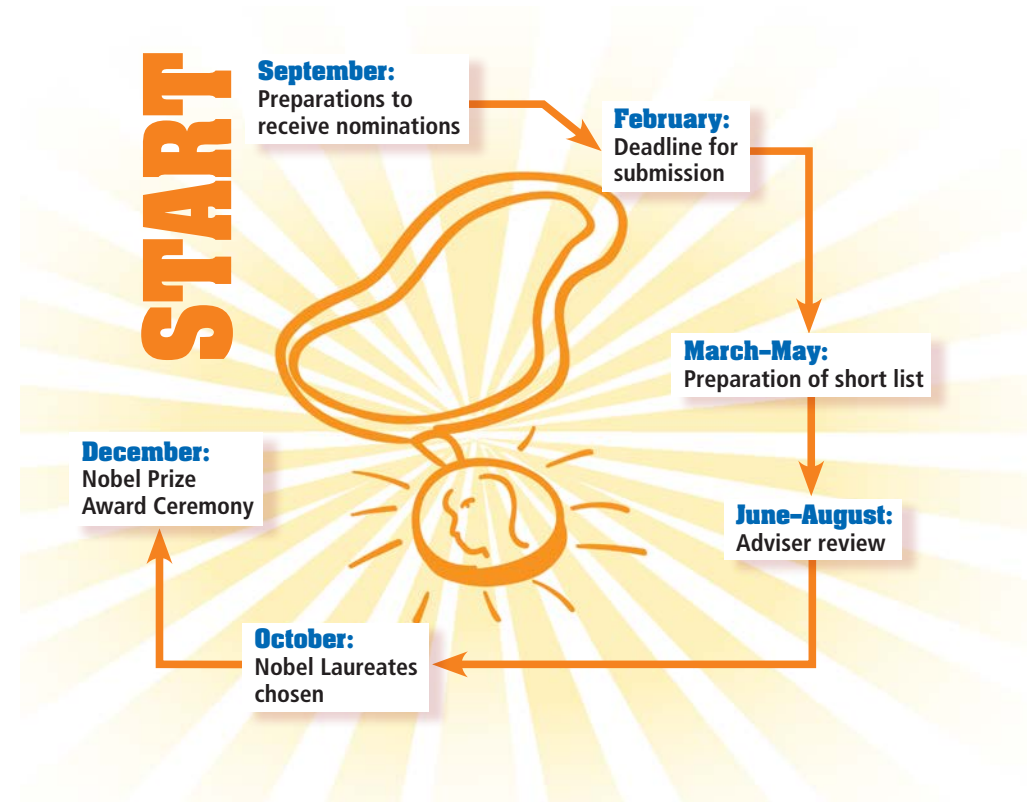


However, Alfred did not give up. In 1866, he invented an explosive he named *dynamite*. His invention made him rich and famous.

After Alfred died in 1896, all of his money went to 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

Nobel prizewinners are chosen very carefully. The prize **committees** are made up of famous **scholars** and scientists. The voting is top secret. Prizes are presented to the winners every year on December 10.

The prizewinners are some of the most important people in the world. Winning the award helps them continue their work.

Famous Prizewinners

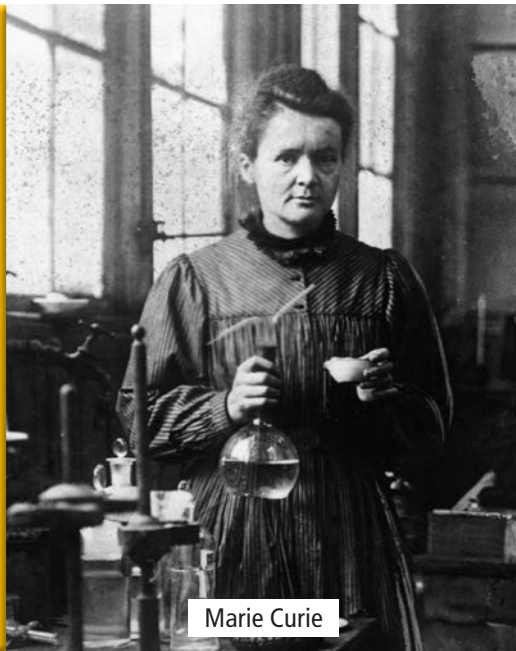
The Sciences

Marie Curie was the first woman to receive the award, in 1903 in physics. She shared the award with her husband and another scientist. In 1911, she was awarded the prize in chemistry. Curie is one of only two people ever to win Nobel Prizes in different areas.

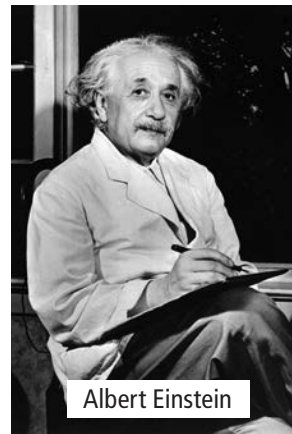
Her daughter Irène (ee-REN) also won the Nobel Prize in chemistry. They were the only mother-daughter pair to have won the prize.

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



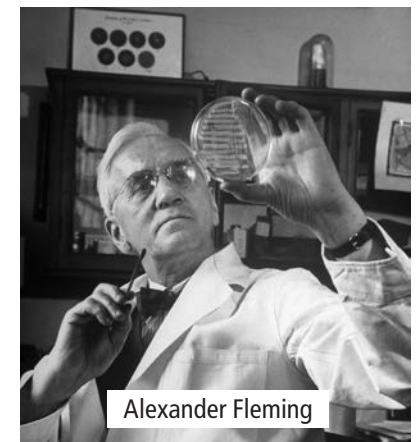
Albert Einstein

Have you heard of the famous formula $E = mc^2$? That is Albert Einstein's theory of relativity. Einstein was awarded the prize in 1921 in physics. Winning the prize allowed him to continue his brilliant career. Einstein

influenced many of the greatest scientists of the twentieth century.

Niels Bohr (NEELS BOR) was a Danish physicist who won the Nobel Prize in Physics the year after Einstein won. Then his 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 his discovery of penicillin. His discovery saved many lives and changed medicine forever.



Alexander Fleming

Economics

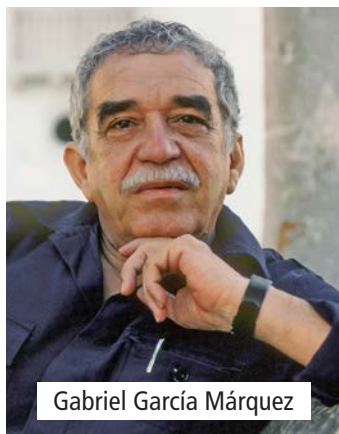
In 2003, Clive Granger and Robert Engle won the Nobel Prize in Economics. Their work showed how the world can avoid serious financial problems.



Literature

Ernest Hemingway, an American writer, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1954. He won 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, received the prize in 1982. The committee praised his



novels, where 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 Nobel Peace prizewinners were Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Teresa, and Nelson Mandela. All three worked to improve the lives of people suffering as a result of **injustice**. In 1964, the Nobel Peace Prize honored Dr. King's fight for civil rights in the United States. Mother Teresa received the prize in 1979 for caring for poor people in India. Nelson Mandela was awarded the prize in 1993 for his struggle against South Africa's unfair political system.



The youngest person to win a Nobel Prize is Malala Yousafzai (muh-LAH-lah YOO-suf-zy). She received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014 at age seventeen. In some parts of her home country of Pakistan, a political group banned education for girls.

Malala fought to change that and, in 2012, was attacked and nearly killed. She recovered and bravely continues her fight today.

Nobel Controversies

When Yasser Arafat (YAH-sur AIR-uh-fat), head of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), won the Peace Prize in 1994, many were upset. Along with Israeli leaders Yitzhak Rabin (yits-HAHK ruh-BEEN) and Shimon Peres (shee-MOHN PAIR-iss), Arafat won for his work for peace in the Middle East. The PLO was considered by some to be terrorists, but the Nobel Committee wouldn't change their minds.

Others were angry when American Secretary of State Henry Kissinger won the prize in 1973. Kissinger worked to end the Vietnam War. However, he had also been involved in attacks on Vietnam and nearby countries that killed many people.

Even President Obama's Nobel Peace Prize in 2009 was questioned. The election of an African American president filled many with hope. Yet in 2009, he had just been elected, so it was not clear what he had done to earn the prize. The award even surprised the president himself.



Barack Obama

The Reward

The Nobel **Foundation** awards cash, a **diploma**, and a gold medal to each prizewinner. The cash amount changes based on whether it is given to one individual or shared among a group of people. In 2015, the amount of an individual prize was just under one million U.S. dollars.

Then a big party is thrown in the Stockholm City Hall in Sweden. There are speeches, music, dancing, and a fancy dinner.



The Nobel Banquet at the Stockholm City Hall



The award ceremony at the Stockholm Concert Hall

Conclusion

The Nobel Prize has had a very positive influence on the entire world. The awards show the work and dreams of great minds from around the globe. The money and fame allow these amazing people to keep working. The prizes honor freedom, peace, and the goal of improving life for everyone.

Glossary

- committees** (*n.*) groups of people who consider or decide on a course of action (p. 8)
- diploma** (*n.*) a document that records a special right, honor, or achievement (p. 14)
- economics** (*n.*) the science or study of how goods and services are made, sold, and used (p. 4)
- engineer** (*n.*) a person who designs, builds, or repairs machines, buildings, bridges, or other structures (p. 5)
- foundation** (*n.*) an organization supported by donated money to help society or a particular cause (p. 14)
- injustice** (*n.*) the unfair treatment of a person or group of people (p. 12)
- physics** (*n.*) the scientific study of matter, motion, and energy (p. 4)
- physiology** (*n.*) the science or study of how living things and their parts work (p. 4)
- scholars** (*n.*) intelligent, well-educated people (p. 8)