Einstein: His Life and Universe is a 2007 [**biography**](http://www.supersummary.com/biography/) about the famous physicist, Albert Einstein, written by journalist Walter Isaacson. It closely examines the life of Einstein, assembling numerous primary and secondary sources to explore the development of his his personality and scientific genius. At the same time, it casts him within the larger contexts of World War II, Jewish persecution, the popularization of quantum mechanics, and the invention of the atomic bomb. Isaacson makes considerable effort to debunk popular misconceptions about Einstein, showing how he was skeptical about the trajectories of the scientific community, and even those which he inspired. The biography also explores some of the unintended consequences of his genius, such as the application of nuclear physics to weapons of mass destruction. Isaacson’s book is therefore as much a literary and political appeal to reclaim Einstein’s identity from its historical misrepresentations as it is a traditional biographical narrative. For its depth and clarity of characterization, the book received a number of awards and was met with widespread readership.  
  
Isaacson first explores Einstein’s early years. Starting at the age of three or four, he began to develop a sense of scientific curiosity that, by all accounts, would endure for the rest of his life. His affinity for science was influenced by several formative events. The first known event occurred when Einstein was four. While laying in bed with a fever, his father gave him a magnetic compass. As he toyed with it in bed, he was overwhelmed with wonder at the fact that it moved according to forces that he couldn’t see with his eyes. His second childhood renaissance came from an exposure to music. His mother had him learn to play the violin, a pastime in which he learned that certain linguistically inexpressible thoughts could be encoded in the grammatically freer language of music. Later in life, while thinking about physics, Einstein would play the violin to help process his own thoughts.  
  
When Einstein was a bit older, he met a medical student named Max Talmey. Talmey became a kind of mentor for Einstein, and introduced him to great works of literature, including those of the philosopher Immanuel Kant and scientist Aaron Bernstein. Meanwhile, Einstein struggled with his Jewish identity as the sociopolitical environment of Germany became tense and anti semitic rhetoric proliferated decades before World War II. He was often an outcast in school, and dealt with it by pulling pranks. Ironically, his feelings of exclusion worked to motivate him to go down his own life path and reject sources of authority.