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original thought in science  
in 1665-6 while at his  
parents' home in  
Lincolnshire escaping the  
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closed the

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## Newton, Peter Ackroyd

Peter Ackroyd, CBE, FRSL  
(born 5 October 1949) is an  
English biographer, novelist

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and critic with a particular interest in the history and culture of London.

[Peter Ackroyd - Wikipedia](#)

PETER ACKROYD is the biographer of William Shakespeare, T.S. Eliot,

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Dickens, Blake, and Thomas Moore, and the author of the bestselling London: The Biography. The subject of his previous Brief Life was J.M.W. Turner.

Newton: Ackroyd's Brief

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was always within the  
construct of science, says  
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Isaac Newton who formulated  
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of gravity and did  
experiments which showed  
that white light was made up

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of different coloured rays.

When Newton was not yet twenty-five years old, he formulated calculus, hit upon the idea of gravity, and discovered that white light was made up of all the

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colors of the spectrum. By 1678, Newton designed a telescope to study the movement of the planets and published Principia, a milestone in the history of science, which set forth his famous laws of motion and

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universal gravitation.  
Newton's long-time research  
on calculus, finally made  
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we know about him and describing his seminal contributions to science and mathematics. A man of wide and eclectic interests, Newton blurred the borders between natural philosophy and speculation: he was as

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somewhat puritanical man whose desire to experiment and explore bordered on the obsessive, Peter Ackroyd demonstrates the unique brilliance of Newton's perceptions, which changed our understanding of the

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world.

Isaac Newton (1642-1727),  
the English genius, made his  
greatest contributions to  
original thought before the  
age of twenty-five, while at  
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escaping the great plague of 1665. Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge, an MP, Master of the Mind and President of the Royal Society, Newton, the author of Principia, one of the most important books in the

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history of science, was fascinated by calculus, the planets and the 'laws of motion', and, in keeping with his age, blurred the borders between natural philosophy and speculation; he was as passionate about

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astrology as astronomy and dabbled in alchemy, while his religious faith was never undermined by his scientific efforts.

William Blake was a poet, painter, engraver and

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visionary. The author traces Blake's life through his childhood, apprenticeship and studies, to his full maturity when he produced his masterpieces. We see Blake in the context of his period, caught up in the

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Gordon riots, tried for  
sedition, remaining true to  
his own vision of the world.  
This biography reveals the  
true affinities between  
Blake's art and his poetry.

The story of Isaac Newton's

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decades in London - as ambitious cosmopolitan gentleman, President of London's Royal Society, Master of the Mint, and investor in the slave trade. Isaac Newton is celebrated throughout the world as a



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great scientific genius who conceived the theory of gravity. But in his early fifties, he abandoned his life as a reclusive university scholar to spend three decades in London, a long period of metropolitan

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activity that is often overlooked. Enmeshed in Enlightenment politics and social affairs, Newton participated in the linked spheres of early science and imperialist capitalism. Instead of the quiet

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cloisters and dark libraries of Cambridge's all-male world, he now moved in fashionable London society, which was characterized by patronage relationships, sexual intrigues and ruthless ambition. Knighted

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by Queen Anne, and a close ally of influential Whig politicians, Newton occupied a powerful position as President of London's Royal Society. He also became Master of the Mint, responsible for the nation's

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money at a time of financial crisis, and himself making and losing small fortunes on the stock market. A major investor in the East India Company, Newton benefited from the global trading networks that relied on

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selling African captives to wealthy plantation owners in the Americas, and was responsible for monitoring the import of African gold to be melted down for English guineas. Patricia Fara reveals Newton's life

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as a cosmopolitan gentleman  
by focussing on a Hogarth  
painting of an elite  
Hanoverian drawing room.  
Gazing down from the  
mantelpiece, a bust of  
Newton looms over an  
aristocratic audience

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watching their children perform a play about European colonialism and the search for gold. Packed with Newtonian imagery, this conversation piece depicts the privileged, exploitative life in which this eminent



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Enlightenment figure engaged, an uncomfortable side of Newton's life with which we are much less familiar.

Gothic, mysterious, theatrical, fatally flawed,

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and dazzling, the life of Edgar Allan Poe, one of America's greatest and most versatile writers, is the ideal subject for Peter Ackroyd. Poe wrote lyrical poetry and macabre psychological melodramas;

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invented the first fictional detective; and produced pioneering works of science fiction and fantasy. His innovative style, images, and themes had a tremendous impact on European romanticism, symbolism, and

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surrealism, and continue to influence writers today. In this essential addition to his canon of acclaimed biographies, Peter Ackroyd explores Poe's literary accomplishments and legacy against the background of

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his erratic, dramatic, and sometimes sordid life.

Ackroyd chronicles Poe's difficult childhood, his bumpy academic and military careers, and his complex relationships with women, including his marriage to

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his thirteen-year-old  
cousin. He describes Poe's  
much-written-about problems  
with gambling and alcohol  
with sympathy and insight,  
showing their connections to  
Poe's childhood and the  
trials, as well as the

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triumphs, of his adult life. Ackroyd's thoughtful, perceptive examinations of some of Poe's most famous works shed new light on these classics and on the troubled and brilliant genius who created them.

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In Civil War, Peter Ackroyd continues his dazzling account of England's history, beginning with the progress south of the Scottish king, James VI, who on the death of Elizabeth I



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became the first Stuart king of England, and ends with the deposition and flight into exile of his grandson, James II. The Stuart dynasty brought together the two nations of England and Scotland into one realm,

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albeit a realm still marked by political divisions that echo to this day. More importantly, perhaps, the Stuart era was marked by the cruel depredations of civil war, and the killing of a king. Ackroyd paints a vivid

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portrait of James I and his heirs. Shrewd and opinionated, the new King was eloquent on matters as diverse as theology, witchcraft and the abuses of tobacco, but his attitude to the English parliament sowed

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the seeds of the division  
that would split the country  
in the reign of his hapless  
heir, Charles I. Ackroyd  
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military leader and  
England's only dictator, who  
began his career as a  
political liberator but  
ended it as much of a despot  
as 'that man of blood', the  
king he executed. England's  
turbulent seventeenth

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century is vividly laid out before us, but so too is the cultural and social life of the period, notable for its extraordinarily rich literature, including Shakespeare's late masterpieces, Jacobean

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backdrop of constant  
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history, beginning with the progress south of the Scottish king, James VI, who on the death of Elizabeth I became the first Stuart king of England, and ends with the deposition and flight into exile of his grandson,

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James II. The Stuart dynasty brought together the two nations of England and Scotland into one realm, albeit a realm still marked by political divisions that echo to this day. More importantly, perhaps, the

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Stuart era was marked by the cruel depredations of civil war, and the killing of a king. Ackroyd paints a vivid portrait of James I and his heirs. Shrewd and opinionated, the new King was eloquent on matters as

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diverse as theology,  
witchcraft and the abuses of  
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the English parliament sowed  
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in the reign of his hapless  
heir, Charles I. Ackroyd

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Charles's nemesis Oliver  
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military leader and  
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ended it as much of a despot as 'that man of blood', the king he executed. England's turbulent seventeenth century is vividly laid out before us, but so too is the cultural and social life of the period, notable for its

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extraordinarily rich literature, including Shakespeare's late masterpieces, Jacobean tragedy, the poetry of John Donne and Milton and Thomas Hobbes' great philosophical treatise, Leviathan. Civil

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War also gives us a very real sense of the lives of ordinary English men and women, lived out against a backdrop of constant disruption and uncertainty."  
-- Page 4 of cover.



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When Isaac Newton died in 1727 without a will, he left behind a wealth of papers that, when examined, gave his followers and his family a deep sense of unease. Some of what they contained was wildly heretical and

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alchemically obsessed,  
hinting at a Newton  
altogether stranger and less  
palatable than the one  
enshrined in Westminster  
Abbey as the paragon of  
English rationality. These  
manuscripts had the

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potential to undermine not merely Newton's reputation, but that of the scientific method he embodied. They were immediately suppressed as "unfit to be printed," and, aside from brief, troubling glimpses spread

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across centuries, the papers would remain hidden from sight for more than seven generations. In *The Newton Papers*, Sarah Dry illuminates the tangled history of these private writings over the course of

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nearly three hundred years,  
from the long span of  
Newton's own life into the  
present day. The writings,  
on subjects ranging from  
secret alchemical formulas  
to impassioned rejections of  
the Holy Trinity, would

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eventually come to light as they moved through the hands of relatives, collectors, and scholars. The story of their disappearance, dispersal, and rediscovery is populated by a diverse cast of characters who

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pursued and possessed the papers, from economist John Maynard Keynes to controversial Jewish Biblical scholar Abraham Yahuda. Dry's captivating narrative moves between these varied personalities,

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depicting how, as they chased the image of Newton through the thickets of his various obsessions, these men became obsessed themselves with the allure of defining the "true" Newton. Dry skillfully



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accounts for the ways with which Newton's pursuers have approached his papers over centuries. Ultimately, *The Newton Papers* shows how Newton has been made and remade throughout history by those seeking to reconcile

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an extraordinarily complex  
man.

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