

# Stephen Hawking Comprehension

Read the text and answer the questions.

Stephen was born in 1942, during the Second World War. His parents lived in London at the time, but Stephen's mother went to Oxford to have her child in safety. Stephen's parents were well educated. They loved science and learning and had both been to Oxford University.

Stephen was the eldest of four children. When he was eight, the family moved to St Albans. Stephen did well at school and had a natural interest in science. He wanted to study maths at Oxford University, but there was no maths course at the time, so Stephen chose physics. After he graduated, Stephen went to Cambridge University to study for a PhD in cosmology.

While he was at university, Stephen's health began to deteriorate. He noticed his speech was slurring and he became clumsy. Shortly after his 21st birthday, doctors discovered he had a disease called ALS. The nerves that controlled his muscles were breaking down, and his chances of survival were slim.

Stephen felt depressed but was determined to make the most of the life he had left. He worked very hard to finish his PhD. When writing became difficult, he began to visualise and solve problems in his mind. Some people think this led to some of his greatest discoveries. Stephen had also recently fallen in love with a fellow student, Jane Wilde, which gave him another reason to live. They married soon afterwards and went on to have three children together.

Stephen's disease gradually paralysed him. He could no longer walk or talk, and was confined to a wheelchair. But, to the amazement of doctors, he survived more than 50 years after his diagnosis. Science and modern medicine also improved his quality of life. He used a computerised voice system to talk which he operated first with his finger and then, when that became impossible, a muscle in his cheek.

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Despite his disabilities, Stephen had an extraordinary research career. His studies helped to prove how the universe started, and his research of black holes and space-time theories challenged the work of other scientists. He was famous for discovering that black holes give off radiation (known as Hawking radiation), for example. Scientists used to think that nothing could escape a black hole's enormous pull of gravity, but Stephen showed that over a long period of time, a black hole will eventually evaporate and disappear. Stephen also believed that time travel is possible, and that one day people might live on other planets in the universe.

When Stephen published *A Brief History of Time* in 1988, his best-selling book brought astronomy to the lives of ordinary people. Stephen hoped to travel to space himself one day and trained with NASA. His determination in life helped him overcome the most difficult of obstacles, and he set his bars high: "My goal is simple. It is a complete understanding of the universe, why it is as it is and why it exists at all."

When and where was Stephen born?

Which two universities did Stephen attend for his studies?

How old was Stephen when he was diagnosed with ALS?

What was the name of Stephen's first wife?

How did Stephen operate his computerised voice system?

What astronomical entity is now known to have Hawking radiation?

What is the name of Stephen's first best-selling book?

What two predictions did Stephen make about the future?

Why did Stephen train with NASA?

