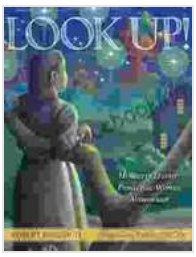
Look Up: Henrietta Leavitt, Pioneering Woman Astronomer



Look Up!: Henrietta Leavitt, Pioneering Woman Astronomer by Robert Burleigh

4.4 out of 5

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Henrietta Swan Leavitt was an American astronomer who made significant contributions to the field of astronomy. She is best known for her discovery of the period-luminosity relation for Cepheid variable stars, which is used to

measure the distance to galaxies. Leavitt was also a pioneer in the field of astrophysics and was one of the first women to earn a doctorate in astronomy. Her work has had a profound impact on our understanding of the universe and her legacy continues to inspire generations of astronomers.

Early Life and Education

Henrietta Swan Leavitt was born in Lancaster, Massachusetts, on July 4, 1868. Her father was a Congregational minister and her mother was a schoolteacher. Leavitt showed an early interest in astronomy and mathematics, and she often spent her nights stargazing.

In 1885, Leavitt enrolled at Radcliffe College, where she studied mathematics and astronomy. She graduated in 1892 with a degree in astronomy. After graduation, Leavitt worked as a computer at the Harvard College Observatory.

Work at the Harvard College Observatory

At the Harvard College Observatory, Leavitt worked under the supervision of Edward Pickering, who was the director of the observatory. Pickering was impressed with Leavitt's intelligence and dedication, and he gave her the responsibility of measuring the brightness of stars in photographic plates.

Leavitt spent the next several years measuring the brightness of stars in the Small Magellanic Cloud, a satellite galaxy of the Milky Way. In 1908, she published a paper in which she announced that she had discovered a relation between the period of a Cepheid variable star and its luminosity.

The period-luminosity relation is a fundamental relation in astronomy. It states that the brighter a Cepheid variable star is, the longer its period is. This relation can be used to measure the distance to galaxies, because the distance to a galaxy can be determined by measuring the period of its Cepheid variable stars.

Leavitt's discovery of the period-luminosity relation was a major breakthrough in astronomy. It provided astronomers with a new way to measure the distance to galaxies, and it helped to pave the way for the discovery of the expanding universe.

Later Life and Legacy

Leavitt continued to work at the Harvard College Observatory until her death in 1921. She published over 200 papers on astronomy, and she was a member of the American Astronomical Society and the Royal Astronomical Society.

Leavitt's work has had a profound impact on our understanding of the universe. Her discovery of the period-luminosity relation is one of the most important tools in modern astronomy, and it has helped to pave the way for many of the discoveries that have been made in the field of cosmology.

Leavitt's legacy continues to inspire generations of astronomers. She is a role model for women in science, and her work has helped to make the field of astronomy more inclusive and diverse.

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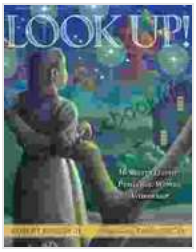
important tools in modern astronomy, and it has helped to pave the way for many of the discoveries that have been made in the field of cosmology. Leavitt's legacy continues to inspire generations of astronomers, and she is a role model for women in science.



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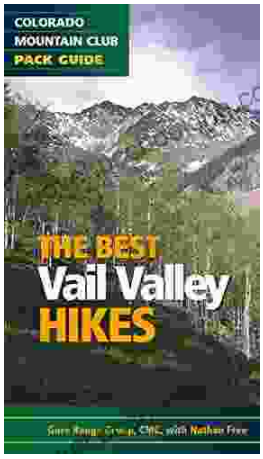

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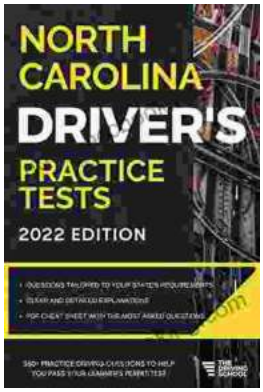

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