

A Truly Beautiful Mind

12. Einstein's new personal chapter coincided with his rise to world fame. In 1915, he had published his General Theory of Relativity, which provided a new interpretation of gravity. An eclipse of the sun in 1919 brought proof that it was accurate. Einstein had correctly calculated in advance the extent to which the light from fixed stars would be deflected through the sun's gravitational field. The newspapers proclaimed his work as "a scientific revolution."

interpretation : understanding

deflected: changed direction because it hit something
proclaimed : declared

13. Einstein received the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1921. He was showered with honours and invitations from all over the world, and lauded by the press.

14. When the Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933, Einstein emigrated to the United States. Five years later, the discovery of nuclear fission in Berlin had American physicists in an uproar. Many of them had fled from Fascism, just as Einstein had, and now they were afraid the Nazis could build and use an atomic bomb.

emigrate: leave your country

in an uproar: express displeasure, be very upset

15. At the urging of a colleague, Einstein wrote a letter to the American President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, on 2 August 1939, in which he warned: "A single bomb of this type . . . exploded in a port, might very well destroy the whole port together with some of the surrounding territory." His words did not fail to have an effect. The Americans developed the atomic bomb in a secret project of their own, and dropped it on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945.

16. Einstein was deeply shaken by the extent of the destruction. This time he wrote a public missive to the United Nations. In it he proposed the formation of a world government. Unlike the letter to Roosevelt, this one made no impact. But over the next decade, Einstein got ever more involved in politics — agitating for an end to the arms buildup and using his popularity to campaign for peace and democracy.

missive: letter, especially long and official

visionary: a person who can think about the future in an original and intelligent way

17. When Einstein died in 1955 at the age of 76, he was celebrated as a visionary and world citizen much as a scientific genius.

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