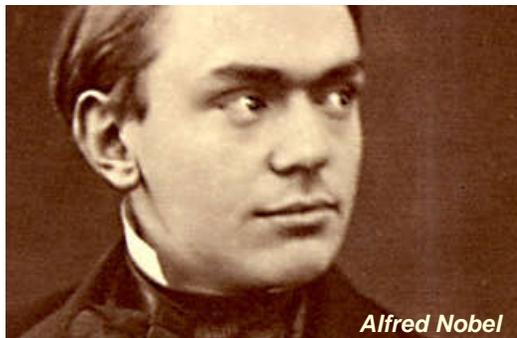


The Man Behind the Prize

All last week, day after day, we heard of new Nobel Prizes being awarded to people whose hard work has helped humanity. But how did all this get started?

Since 1901, the Nobel Prize has been honoring men and women from all corners of the globe for outstanding achievements in



Alfred Nobel

physics, chemistry, medicine, literature, and for work in peace. The foundations for the prize were laid in 1895 when Alfred Nobel wrote his last will, leaving much of his substantial wealth to the establishment of the Nobel Prize. But who was Alfred Nobel?

He was a chemist, an engineer, an innovator, and an armaments manufacturer. He held 355 different patents. Dynamite was the most famous, but smokeless gunpowder was also among his creations — and the synthetic element *Nobelium* was named after him.

Alfred Nobel (1833-1896) was born in **Stockholm**, Sweden, on October 21, 1833. His father's family was descended from Olof Rudbeck, the best-known technical genius in Sweden in the 17th century (and for whom the flowering plant *Rudbeckia* (Black Eyed Susan) is named.

When Alfred was 8, his family moved to Saint Petersburg, where his father, an industrialist who had invented modern plywood, built munitions. Alfred studied this and chemistry, and when he was 18, went to the United States to study chemistry for four years and worked for a short period under John Ericsson, who designed the American Civil War ironclad USS Monitor.

In 1859, at the age of 26, Alfred returned to Sweden, and devoted himself to the study of explosives. After an explosion in 1864 that killed his younger brother, Emil, and four other people in their family-owned factory in Heleneborg, Sweden, he sought to develop a safe way to manufacture and use nitroglycerin.

In 1866 Nobel achieved his goal: by using an organic packing material to reduce the volatility of the nitroglycerin, it could then be shaped into rods of a size and form suitable for insertion into the drilling holes in rock. Thus dynamite was created, and patented in 1867. To be able to detonate the dynamite rods, he also invented a detonator (blasting cap) which could be ignited by lighting a fuse.

This made rock mining much safer, and the market for dynamite and detonating caps grew very rapidly. Nobel also proved himself to be a very skillful entrepreneur and businessman, accumulating great wealth.

At the time of his death in 1896, Alfred Nobel controlled factories for the manufacture of explosives in many parts of the world. His will provided that the major portion of his considerable estate be set up as a fund to establish yearly prizes for merit in physics, chemistry, medicine and physiology, literature, and world peace.

Nobel considered himself a world citizen: He was fluent in several languages, and he wrote poetry and drama. He was also very interested in social and peace-related issues, and held views that — for his time — were considered radical.

—www.nobelprize.org/alfred_nobel/

—www.ideafinder.com/history/inventors/nobel.htm

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THE NOBEL MEDALS

According to the Statutes of the Nobel Foundation, given by the King in Council on June 29, 1900, "the prize-awarding bodies shall present to each prize-winner an assignment for the amount of the prize, a diploma, and a gold medal bearing the image of the testator and an appropriate inscription."

The medals for Physics and Chemistry, Physiology or Medicine, and Literature, were modeled by the Swedish sculptor and engraver Erik Lindberg, and the Peace medal by the Norwegian sculptor Gustav Vigeland. The medal for The Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel (established in 1968 in connection with the 300th anniversary of the Sveriges Riksbank), was designed by Gunvor Svensson-Lundqvist.

The front side of the three "Swedish" medals (Physics and Chemistry, Physiology or Medicine, and Literature) is the same, featuring a portrait of Alfred Nobel and the years of his birth and death in Latin: NAT-MDCCC XXXIII OB-MDCCC XCVI.

Alfred Nobel's face on the Peace medal and on the medal for the Economics Prize has

different designs.

The main inscription on the reverse side of all three "Swedish" Nobel Prize medals is the same: "Inventas vitam juvat excoluisse per artes" while the images vary according to the symbols of the respective prize-awarding institutions. The Peace medal has the inscription "Pro pace et fraternitate gentium" and the Economics medal has no quotation at all on the reverse.

On December 10, at the Prize Award Ceremony in Stockholm, King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden hands each Laureate a diploma and a medal. On the same day, the Peace Prize (diploma and medal) is presented in Oslo by the Chairman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee in the presence of the King Harald V of Norway. An important part is the presentation of the Nobel Lectures by the Nobel Laureates. In Stockholm, the lectures are presented days before the Nobel Prize Award Ceremony. In Oslo, the Nobel Laureates deliver their lectures during the Nobel Peace Prize Award Ceremony.

http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/about/medals/

The actual size of each medal is 66mm, or 2.6" in diameter, which is the circle shown here. These photos are about half of real size.



ECONOMICS