

THE LAST MAN WHO KNEW EVERYTHING: THOMAS YOUNG
REVISED EDITION WITH A FOREWORD BY MARTIN REES

ANDREW ROBINSON

Thomas Young elucidated the optics of the eye, the wave theory of light, the laws of elasticity, the nature of Egyptian hieroglyphic writing, and Lord knows how many other subjects. It is wonderful to have such an elegant biography of this remarkable man.

Philip W. Anderson, Nobel laureate in Physics

In his modest introduction to this fascinating story, Andrew Robinson suggests that it is impossible for one person to write a comprehensive biography of this extraordinary man. He adds that his aim is simply to introduce Young to those who are unfamiliar with him. Robinson has achieved this object brilliantly in The Last Man Who Knew Everything, offering a wonderful testimony to the heights and vagaries of human achievement.

David Weatherall, Regius Professor of Medicine, University of Oxford

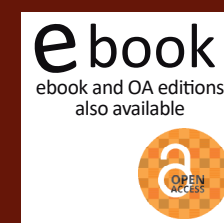
No one has given the polymath Thomas Young (1773-1829) the all-round examination he so richly deserves—until now. Celebrated biographer Andrew Robinson portrays a man who solved mystery after mystery in the face of ridicule and rejection, and never sought fame.

As a physicist, Young challenged the theories of Isaac Newton and proved that light is a wave. As a physician, he showed how the eye focuses and proposed the three-colour theory of vision, only confirmed a century and a half later. As an Egyptologist, he made crucial contributions to deciphering the Rosetta Stone. It is hard to grasp how much Young knew.

This biography is the fascinating story of a driven yet modest hero who cared less about what others thought of him than for the joys of an unbridled pursuit of knowledge — with a new foreword by Martin Rees and a new postscript discussing polymathy in the two centuries since the time of Young. It returns this neglected genius to his proper position in the pantheon of great scientific thinkers.

As with all Open Book publications, this entire book is available to download for free on the publisher's website. Printed and digital editions, together with supplementary digital material, can also be found at <http://www.openbookpublishers.com>.

Cover Image: Portrait of Thomas Young by Sir Thomas Lawrence, 1820s (copy by Henry Perronet Briggs in the Royal Society, London), courtesy of The Bridgeman Art Library, <https://www.bridgemanimages.com/en/briggs/sir-thomas-young-md-frs/nomedium/asset/5571>. Cover Design: Jeevanjot Kaur Nagpal.



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