

# Adding new dimension to age of Einstein

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## "THE STORY OF SCIENCE: Einstein Adds a New Dimension"

Joy Hakim  
 Smithsonian Books. 480 pp. \$27.95.

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### online, on tv

Joy Hakim, who lives in Virginia Beach and Denver, will be featured in a BookTV program on C-SPAN2 at 8 p.m. Saturday. It's also available online. At [booknotes.org](http://booknotes.org), find archived video and a transcript of coverage of Hakim's "Freedom: A History of US."

By Brent Andrew Bowles  
 Special to *The Virginian-Pilot*

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"When I want to learn something, I write a book."

Any middle school student will probably attest that a textbook author who starts out admitting her own deficiency of knowledge is unusual, to say the least.

When Joy Hakim confesses to writing this third in a series of science texts aimed at middle school-aged students out of a desire to fill in the gaps in her own scientific understanding – she pronounces, quite firmly, that "scientific illiteracy is no longer acceptable" – it becomes clearer why Hakim enjoyed such great success with her social studies collection "The History of US" and the previous volumes in "The Story of Science" series.

Hakim moves into the modern era with "Einstein Adds a

New Dimension," and her engaging attitude with scientific understanding crystallizes in the opening chapter, in which she nicknames (with a bit of "Harry Potter"-esque lexicon) the eponymous physicist "The Boy With Something on His Mind."

Even a cursory reading of the text reveals Hakim's capability for simultaneously demythologizing and revitalizing major scientific figures. It takes a particular gift to spend an entire chapter on the incalculable significance of Niels Bohr's early 20th century atomic breakthroughs while pointing out how his devotion to them drove him to persuade his bride to postpone their honeymoon so he could continue research.

For a generation numb to the latest advances in sci-

ence and technology – iTunes updates its software *weekly*, for crying out loud – grabbing onto the boundlessness of innovation is a challenging prospect. Hakim's book orbits the titular figure, making him a focal point for the beginning of a newer, more flexible, less dogmatic generation of scientists, and urges the integration of obscurely scientific theory with more familiar historical phenomena – from World War II to the GPS, from "Star Wars" to Stephen Hawking.

Hakim is as interested in the personal stories behind these imposing scientific personae as she is in delving into the minutiae of their discoveries' meanings. When the historical record doesn't provide an accurate glimpse – as with Einstein's condem-

nations of his theories' evolution into the hydrogen bomb – Hakim re-creates conversations in a tone that proves consistently involving and simple without sounding overtly elementary (an achievement of extraordinary significance to middle school teachers). The book is also richly illustrated, with informative photography choice, a panoply of diagramming, and other external text features.

"Einstein Adds a New Dimension" adds immeasurably to the path cut by its predecessors, "Aristotle Leads the Way" and "Newton at the Center," forming a worthwhile trilogy for young readers and, like Hakim, science students of any age.

*Brent Andrew Bowles is a middle school teacher in Virginia Beach.*