

MEMENTO MORI / 01

STEPHEN WILLIAM HAWKING

1942-2018 · physicist of black holes and time



Stephen William Hawking was a theoretical physicist who made black holes, time, and the early universe part of public imagination.

His life matters because he kept asking cosmic questions after a diagnosis tried to shrink his future to two years.

BEFORE / 02

A mind looking outward



At Oxford and Cambridge, Hawking turned toward cosmology: not a small problem, but the largest one—how space, time, and the universe began.

Before the hinge, the work was curiosity aiming at the whole sky.

Two years



Around his twenty-first birthday, hospital tests revealed motor neurone disease. The prognosis was brutally short: he was given only about two years to live.

The future narrowed. Then he kept working inside it.

Where time breaks



With Roger Penrose, Hawking helped show that general relativity pointed toward singularities: a beginning in the Big Bang and endings inside black holes.

The body was weakening; the questions were getting larger.

DISCOVERY / 05

Black holes glow



In 1974, Hawking argued that black holes are not perfectly black. Quantum effects would make them radiate—an idea now known as Hawking radiation.

He put the largest and smallest laws of physics in the same frame.

AFTER / 06

The universe in public



A Brief History of Time carried cosmology far beyond lecture halls. The voice became mechanical; the reach became global.

The achievement was not only survival. It was making hard thought travel.

What the shadow did not take



Hawking died peacefully at home in Cambridge on 14 March 2018, aged seventy-six. The two-year horizon had become five more decades of work.

Worth / achievement: Hawking linked singularities, black-hole physics, and quantum theory in work that reshaped cosmology, then made the universe legible to millions of non-specialists.

The prognosis was a line. He turned it into a long question about time.