

**Volume 6**

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**Alan Turing I**

**Lead: Brilliant and eccentric, English mathematician Alan Turing helped crack the Enigma Code during World War II, conceived of the modern programmable computer, and dreamed of artificial intelligence.**

**Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: Alan Mathison Turing was born in London in 1912. His father was a functionary of the British Civil Service in India. Turing's parents considered life on the sub-continent unsuitable for their boys**

**and left their raising to the care of relatives in England. Eventually, Alan was sent to boarding school, Shelbourne in Dorset, where a speech impediment and lack of proper training in Latin grammar made him the target of much cruel humor by the other boys. He was a loner and at Shelbourne first came to recognize and accept his homosexuality. He also showed an extraordinary capacity for mathematical reasoning and, perhaps because of his long periods of loneliness, began a lifelong fascination with the human mind and with what he considered its limitless capacity to create imagination, wonder, and beauty in the middle of an emotionally barren landscape.**

**One of the few students at school that accepted Alan was an older boy, Christopher Mormon, who encouraged Turing's interest in math and astronomy. Mormon's early death from bovine tuberculosis devastated Turing and shattered his rather conventional faith. He therefore entered young adulthood a creative and convinced atheist.**

**After study at King's College, Cambridge, he took a Ph.D. at Princeton and returned to Cambridge as a Fellow. In a footnote to paper presented to the London Mathematical Society in 1937 he described in theory an automatic machine, later called the Turing Machine, that he believed could solve**

**any math problem if it were given the correct input or instructions. Without realizing it he had described the modern computer. Next time: the absent minded professor and Hitler's codes.**

**At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

## Resources

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