

Jewish Nobel Prize Laureates

In December 1902, the first Nobel Prize was awarded in Stockholm to Wilhelm Roentgen, the discoverer of X-rays. Alfred Nobel (1833-96), a Swedish industrialist and inventor of dynamite, had bequeathed a \$9 million endowment to fund significant cash prizes (\$40,000 in 1901, about \$1 million today) to those individuals who had made the most important contributions in five domains (Physics, Chemistry, Physiology or Medicine, Literature and Peace); the sixth, in "Economic Sciences," was added in 1969.

Nobel could hardly have imagined the almost mythic status that would accrue to the laureates. From the start "The Prize" became one of the most sought-after awards in the world, and eventually the yardstick against which other prizes and recognition were to be measured.

Certainly the roster of Nobel laureates includes many of the most famous names of the 20th century: Marie Curie, Albert Einstein, Mother Teresa, Winston Churchill, Albert Camus, Boris Pasternak, Albert Schweitzer, the Dalai Lama and many others.

Nobel Prizes have been awarded to approximately 850 laureates of whom at least 177 of them are/were Jewish although Jews comprise less than 0.2% of the world's population. In the 20th century, Jews, more than any other minority, ethnic or cultural, have been recipients of the Nobel Prize.

How to account for Jewish proficiency at winning Nobel's? It's certainly not because Jews do the judging. All but one of the Nobel's are awarded by Swedish institutions (the Peace Prize by Norway). The standard answer is that the premium placed on study and scholarship in Jewish culture inclines Jews toward more education, which in turn makes a higher proportion of them "Nobel-eligible" than in the larger population. There is no denying that as a rule the laureates in all six domains are highly educated, although there are notable exceptions, such as Mother Teresa. Nevertheless, in a world where so many millions have university degrees it is difficult to see why on that basis alone Jews should prevail in this high-level competition.

Another question is why the physical sciences admired by Alfred Nobel are so attractive to Jewish scientists. Albert Einstein, the successor to Newton, Galileo and Copernicus and the greatest name in modern science, was Jewish. This is more than a matter of historic pride; it is an enormous statistical improbability. And such achievements were not always attained on a level playing field. For example, the Nazis dismissed relativity as "Jewish physics" and caused the uprooting and exile (mostly to the United States) of a generation of German scientists who happened to be Jewish.

In literature and peace as well, Jews are disproportionately represented among the winners. Jewish writers honoured include Henri Bergson, Boris Pasternak, S.Y. Agnon, Nelly Sachs, Saul Bellow, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Joseph Brodsky and Nadine Gordimer. Peace laureates include Henry Kissinger, Menachem Begin, Elie Wiesel, Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres. In economics, for which the Nobel has been awarded for only the last 44 years, 22 laureates are Jewish or 50 percent of the total, including Paul Samuelson, Herbert Simon and Milton Friedman.

But it still seems insufficient to credit all this to reverence for education, skill at theoretical thinking

or competitive instincts forged in a millennial-old struggle to survive and prosper.

Perhaps the desire to understand the world is also a strong or defining Jewish cultural trait, leading to education and careers suited to exploration and discovery. Science may have furnished an opportunity to not only understand but to lead, and to have one's work judged without bias in collegial communities that have no use for religious intolerance.

Whatever the reasons, Jewish successes in the high-stakes world of the Nobel Prize are nothing short of astonishing, and a source of understandable pride to Jews throughout the world.

World Peace Laureates

1911 - [Alfred Fried](#) and [Tobias Michael Carel Asser](#)
1968 - [Rene Cassin](#)
1973 - [Henry Kissinger](#)
1978 - [Menachem Begin](#)
1986 - [Elie Wiesel](#)
1994 - [Shimon Peres](#) and [Yitzhak Rabin](#)
1995 - [Joseph Rotblat](#)

Literature Laureates

1910 - [Paul Heyse](#)
1927 - [Henri Bergson](#)
1958 - [Boris Pasternak](#)
1966 - [Shmuel Yosef Agnon](#) and [Nelly Sachs](#)
1976 - [Saul Bellow](#)
1978 - [Isaac Bashevis Singer](#)
1981 - [Elias Canetti](#)
1987 - [Joseph Brodsky](#)
1991 - [Nadine Gordimer](#)
2001 - [Imre Kertesz](#)
2005 - [Harold Pinter](#)

Chemistry Laureates

1905 - [Adolph Von Baeyer](#)
1906 - [Henri Moissan](#)
1910 - [Otto Wallach](#)
1915 - [Richard Willstaetter](#)
1918 - [Fritz Haber](#)
1943 - [George Charles de Hevesy](#)
1961 - [Melvin Calvin](#)
1962 - [Max Ferdinand Perutz](#)
1972 - [William Howard Stein](#)

1977 - [Ilya Prigogine](#)
1979 - [Herbert Charles Brown](#)
1980 - [Paul Berg](#) and [Walter Gilbert](#)
1981 - [Roald Hoffmann](#)
1982 - [Aaron Klug](#)
1985 - [Herbert Hauptman](#) and [Jerome Karle](#)
1989 - [Sidney Altman](#)
1992 - [Rudolph Marcus](#)
1998 - [Walter Kohn](#)
2004 - [Avram Hershko](#) and [Aaron Ciechanover](#) and [Irwin Rose](#)
2006 - [Roger Kornberg](#)
2009 - [Ada Yonath](#)
2011 - [Daniel Schechtman](#)
2012 - [Robert Lefkowitz](#)

Economics Laureates

1970 - [Paul Samuelson](#)
1971 - [Simon Kuznets](#)
1972 - [Kenneth Arrow](#)
1973 - [Wassily Leontief](#)
1975 - [Leonid Kantorovich](#)
1976 - [Milton Friedman](#)
1978 - [Herbert A. Simon](#)
1980 - [Lawrence Robert Klein](#)
1985 - [Franco Modigliani](#)
1987 - [Robert M. Solow](#)
1990 - [Harry Markowitz](#) and [Merton Miller](#)
1992 - [Gary Becker](#)
1993 - [Robert Fogel](#)
1994 - [John Harsanyi](#)
1997 - [Myron Scholes](#)
2001 - [Joseph Stiglitz](#) and [George A. Akerlof](#)
2002 - [Daniel Kahneman](#)
2005 - [Robert Israel Aumann](#)
2007 - [Leonid Hurwicz](#) and [Eric Maskin](#) and [Roger Myerson](#)
2008 - [Paul Krugman](#)
2010 - [Peter Diamond](#)
2012 - [Alvin Roth](#)

Medicine Laureates

1908 - [Elie Metchnikoff](#) and [Paul Ehrlich](#)
1914 - [Robert Barany](#)
1922 - [Otto Meyerhof](#)
1930 - [Karl Landsteiner](#)
1931 - [Otto Warburg](#)

1936 - [Otto Loewi](#)
1944 - [Herbert Spencer Gasser](#) and [Joseph Erlanger](#)
1945 - [Ernst Boris Chain](#)
1946 - [Hermann Joseph Muller](#)
1947 - [Gerty Cori](#)*
1950 - [Tadeus Reichstein](#)
1952 - [Selman Abraham Waksman](#)
1953 - [Hans Krebs](#) and [Fritz Lipmann](#)
1958 - [Joshua Lederberg](#)
1959 - [Arthur Kornberg](#)
1964 - [Konrad Bloch](#)
1965 - [Francois Jacob](#) and [Andre Lwoff](#)
1967 - [George Wald](#)
1968 - [Marshall Nirenberg](#)
1969 - [Salvador Luria](#)
1970 - [Julius Axelrod](#) and [Bernard Katz](#)
1972 - [Gerald Maurice Edelman](#)
1975 - [David Baltimore](#) and [Howard Temin](#)
1976 - [Baruch Blumberg](#)
1977 - [Rosalyn Sussman Yalow](#) and [Andrew V. Schally](#)
1978 - [Daniel Nathans](#)
1980 - [Baruj Benacerraf](#)
1984 - [Cesar Milstein](#)
1985 - [Michael Stuart Brown](#) and [Joseph Goldstein](#)
1986 - [Stanley Cohen](#) and [Rita Levi-Montalcini](#)
1988 - [Gertrude Elion](#)
1989 - [Harold Varmus](#)
1994 - [Alfred Gilman](#) and [Martin Rodbell](#)
1997 - [Stanley B. Prusiner](#)
1998 - [Robert Furchgott](#)
2000 - [Paul Greengard](#) and [Eric Kandel](#)
2002 - [H. Robert Horvitz](#) and [Sydney Brenner](#)
2004 - [Richard Axel](#)
2006 - [Andrew Fire](#)
2011 - [Ralph Marvin Steinman](#) and [Bruce Beutler](#)

Physics Laureates

1907 - [Albert Abraham Michelson](#)
1908 - [Gabriel Lippmann](#)
1921 - [Albert Einstein](#)
1922 - [Niels Bohr](#)
1925 - [James Franck](#) and [Gustav Hertz](#)
1943 - [Otto Stern](#)
1944 - [Isidor Issac Rabi](#)
1945 - [Wolfgang Pauli](#)
1952 - [Felix Bloch](#)
1954 - [Max Born](#)
1958 - [Igor Tamm](#) and [Il'ja Mikhailovich Frank](#)

1959 - [Emilio Segrè](#)
1960 - [Donald A. Glaser](#)
1961 - [Robert Hofstadter](#)
1962 - [Lev Davidovich Landau](#)
1963 - [Eugene Wigner](#)
1965 - [Richard Feynman](#) and [Julian Schwinger](#)
1967 - [Hans Bethe](#)
1969 - [Murray Gell-Mann](#)
1971 - [Dennis Gabor](#)
1972 - [Leon Cooper](#)
1973 - [Brian David Josephson](#)
1975 - [Benjamin Mottleson](#)
1976 - [Burton Richter](#)
1978 - [Arno Penzias](#) and [Pyotr Kapitsa](#)
1979 - [Stephen Weinberg](#) and [Sheldon Glashow](#)
1988 - [Leon Lederman](#) and [Melvin Schwartz](#) and [Jack Steinberger](#)
1990 - [Jerome Friedman](#)
1992 - [Georges Charpak](#)
1995 - [Martin Perl](#) and [Fredrick Reines](#)
1996 - [Douglas D. Osheroff](#) and [David M. Lee](#)
1997 - [Claude Cohen-Tannoudji](#)
2000 - [Zhores I. Alferov](#)
2003 - [Vitaly Ginzburg](#) and [Alexei A. Abrikosov](#)
2004 - [H. David Politzer](#) and [David Gross](#)
2005 - [Roy Glauber](#)
2011 - [Saul Perlmutter](#) and [Adam Riess](#)
2012 - [Serge Haroche](#)