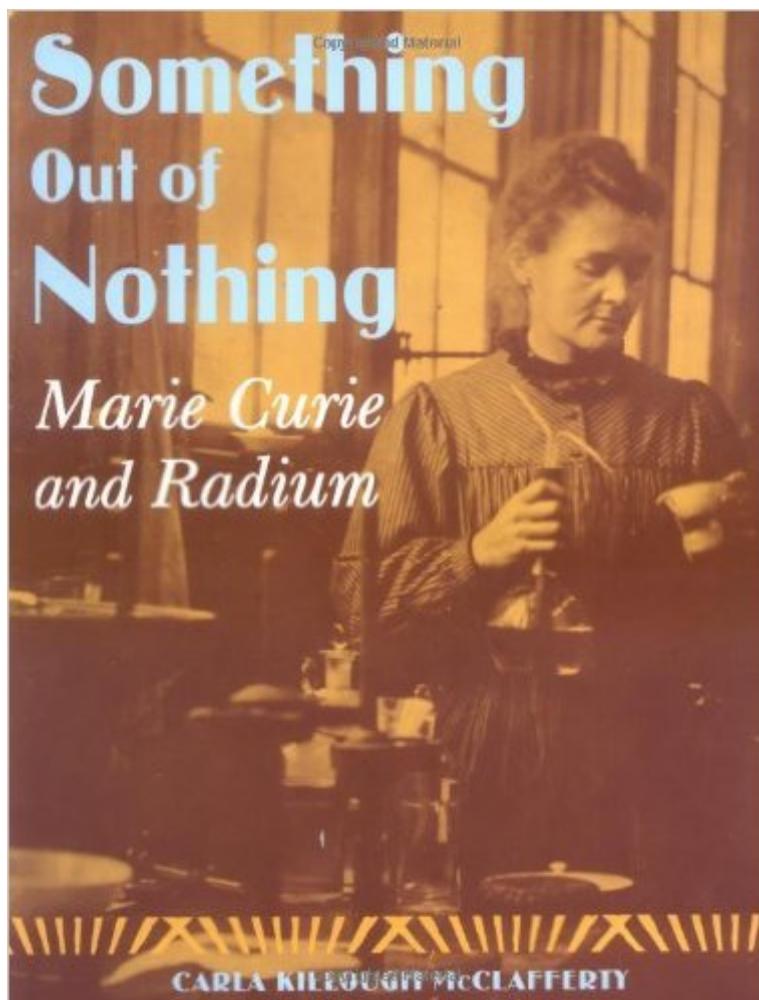


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# Something Out Of Nothing: Marie Curie And Radium



## **Synopsis**

Marie Curie's story has fascinated and inspired young readers for decades. The poor Polish girl who worked eight years to be able to afford to attend the Sorbonne in Paris became one of the most important scientists of her day, winning not one but two Nobel Prizes. Her life is a fascinating one, filled with hard work, humanitarianism, and tragedy. Her work with her husband, Pierre - the study of radioactivity and the discovery of the elements radium and polonium - changed science forever. But she is less well known for her selfless efforts during World War I to establish mobile X-ray units so that wounded French soldiers could get better care faster. When she stood to profit greatly from her scientific work, she chose not to, making her methods and findings known and available to all of science. As a result, this famous woman spent most of her life in need of money, often to buy the very elements she discovered. Marie Curie's life and work are given a fresh telling, one that also explores the larger picture of the effects of radium in world culture, and its exploitation and sad misuse.

## **Book Information**

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Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (12 customer reviews)

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Age Range: 10 - 15 years

Grade Level: 5 and up

## **Customer Reviews**

The biography for children is rarely done well, if at all. It's too easy to take the life of someone famous, slap a few facts together, and then sell copies of your newest creation to countless school

libraries around the country. When it comes to bios for small fry there are two modes of thought. Either you're going to do the least interesting, simplest biography (thereby boring both your child reader and yourself), or you're going to put some work into your creation and place the subject of your biography within the context of their times. Ms. Carla Killough McClafferty has opted for the latter. "Something Out of Nothing: Marie Curie and Radium" starts slow and then builds and builds until you find yourself in a remarkable world of radium drinks, pills, and miracle cures. McClafferty is no stranger to the world of radiation, having penned a history of the X-Ray for kids before. Now she turns her sights to one of the greatest female scientists in the history of the world. From stage frightened Polish child, to Parisian researcher, to her death at the age of sixty-six, Marie Curie's life is propped before us with just the right combination of kid appeal and facts. She was born a poor Polish girl on November 7, 1867. Smart from the start, Marie Curie, born Marya Skłodowska, dreamed of someday being given the chance to study at the University of Paris. After many years of saving and unpleasantness, she was able to come to France to fulfill this dream. While there, she met and married Pierre Curie and together the two of them set about discovering a couple elements and the true nature of that most mysterious of substances, radium.

The title, "Something out of Nothing," is truly inspired! It taps into so many layers: 1) Marie's humble beginnings and rise to greatness; 2) alchemy, and the creation of precious material from base sources; 3) the unexpected discovery of radioactivity; and even 4) the "big bang" origin of the universe. According to the introduction this book is primarily intended for juveniles (high school students, or even middle school); this is reinforced by the large type font, the large amount of white space, and the many illustrations. But this book transcends your typical juvenile book by a wide margin! It is worthwhile reading for professional scientists, as well as anyone interested in the history of science. While it can be perused in a couple of hours, there is enough material there to bring one back for a second and third readings. The book does a good job summarizing Marie's life: Her humble beginning; her pact with her older sister to obtain a good education; her move to France; courtship and marriage to Pierre Curie; choosing Becquerel's newly discovered radioactivity for her doctoral dissertation; birth of daughters; discovery of radium; Nobel Prize; fame; health problems and death. Not even the "scandal" with Langevin is left out. I was familiar with the basic biography of Marie's and Pierre's prior to reading this book. But I learned some new facts: 1) I knew that Marie had two daughters; actually bore three: the second daughter died shortly after birth; 2) I was under the impression that Pierre died in a taxicab accident. In actuality, he was run over by a horse-drawn freight wagon; 3) Marie was not originally included in the Nobel Prize of 1903 (for the

discovery of radioactivity). Originally, only Pierre and Henry Becquerel were to be awarded.

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