John Atanasoff Biography

John Atanasoff

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.

Contents

John Atanasoff Biography.....1

Contents.....2

Biography.....3

Biography

John Atanasoff is recognized as the first designer of an electronic digital computer. He was born in Hamilton, New York, into a family of mathematicians. His father was an electrical engineer, his mother a mathematics teacher. Atanasoff was raised in Florida, and he loved science and engineering as a child. He earned an engineering degree from the University of Florida in 1925, then did graduate studies in mathematics, receiving a master's degree from Iowa State College (now University) in 1926 and a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin in 1930, after which he joined Iowa State's mathematics and physics faculties. Atanasoff determined to improve computing machines so it would be easier for his graduate students to perform mathematical calculations. From the first, he wanted a digital device, but was unable to develop the concept. Then one winter night in 1937, while on a long drive to clear his mind, he stopped off at a roadside tavern. Suddenly, the entire concept came to him. He could use vacuum tubes as the computing medium, binary (base 2) numbers, serial calculation, and condensers that placed a charge on Bakelite (plastic) drums as the computer's memory. Each drum held thirty fifty-digit numbers. Punched cards provided input and output, but each step had to be hand-started. Atanasoff and a graduate student, Clifford Berry , built working portions of the A-B-C (Atanasoff-Berry Computer) over the next two years, but the university refused to patent it for him. During World War II, John Mauchly and J. Presper Eckert designed and patented the ENIAC computer, later selling their patents to the manufacturer Sperry Rand. After a bitter court battle, in 1973 Atanasoff was awarded the patent instead, on the ground that Mauchly and Eckert had knowledge of the A-B-C and used its design as the basis for theirs. Atanasoff's other interests have included acoustics detection and package-handling automation. In 1990, Atanasoff received the National Medal of Technology.