John James Waterston Encyclopedia Article

John James Waterston

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John James Waterston

1811-1883

English physicist and astronomer best known for his research into the relationship between molecules and temperature. Overlooked for nearly 50 years, Waterston's research provided crucial insights that helped to define temperature in terms of average kinetic energy of molecules in a substance. This "kinetic" theory of heat helped displace the competing "caloric" theory and also showed that heat and light belonged in the same family of phenomena.