Joseph Black Encyclopedia Article

Joseph Black

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1728-1799

Scottish chemist who was one of the pioneers in the study of gases and quantitative chemistry. Black's M.D. thesis led to a series of experiments on alkalis and "fixed air" (carbon dioxide). Further investigations established the phenomenon of latent heat (the heat necessary to produce a change of state from solid to liquid or liquid to gas). Black also established the distinction between temperature and heat and demonstrated the principle of specific heat (the relative heat capacity of substances).