

Book Review

Women Astronomers: Reaching for the Stars

By Mabel Armstrong

When people think of famous astronomers throughout history, they probably think of names like Ptolemy, Copernicus, Galileo, and Hubble. Most of the names that come to mind are male. Local writer Mabel Armstrong has set out to change that. In *Women Astronomers: Reaching for the Stars*, she illustrates the lives and the accomplishments of dozens of women who have contributed immensely to the science of astronomy.

Armstrong begins with EnHeduanna, Chief Astronomer Priestess of Babylonia around 2350 BC, and works her way forward to the present, offering great insight into what it takes to be a female scientist in a male-dominated profession, and also delivering an exciting account of the advances each of these women has made in the field.

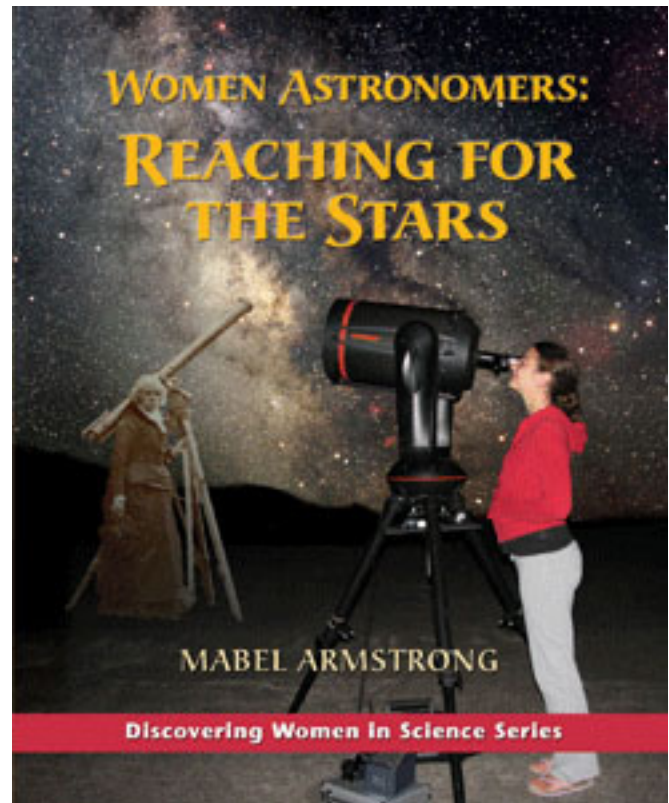
You'll find a few familiar names, such as Carolyn Herschel (discoverer of many open clusters, galaxies, and comets) and Jocelyn Bell (discoverer of pulsars), but you'll also learn about people like Williamina Fleming, the first female "computer" at Harvard University, who worked out a stellar classification system using stars' absorption spectra, and who discovered white dwarf stars. All the way to the present, you'll learn about the many vital contributions made to our field by women.

You'll also discover the degree of discrimination that these women fought just to be allowed to work in their chosen fields. Armstrong doesn't sugar-coat their experiences, many of which were brutal. But these women persevered and ultimately showed the world what they were made of — and what the universe is made of as well.



Mabel Armstrong is a lifelong resident of the Willamette Valley. She is a graduate of Cottage Grove High School, and she taught chemistry at LCC for 25 years. When looking for a cover photo for her book, she went to the EAS's very own Sam Pitts, who provided her with one of his fabulous pictures of the Milky Way. The girl stretching to reach the eyepiece of the telescope is looking into former EAS member Dave Cole's Nexstar 11 during a star party on the College Hill Reservoir.

Surprisingly, Armstrong is not an avid amateur astronomer. She is much more interested in women in science. Indeed this book is the first of a long series entitled just that: the "Women in Science" series. She started with astronomy because it begins with "A." Lucky for us, because this book is an excellent read for a cloudy night.



– Reviewed by Jerry Olton