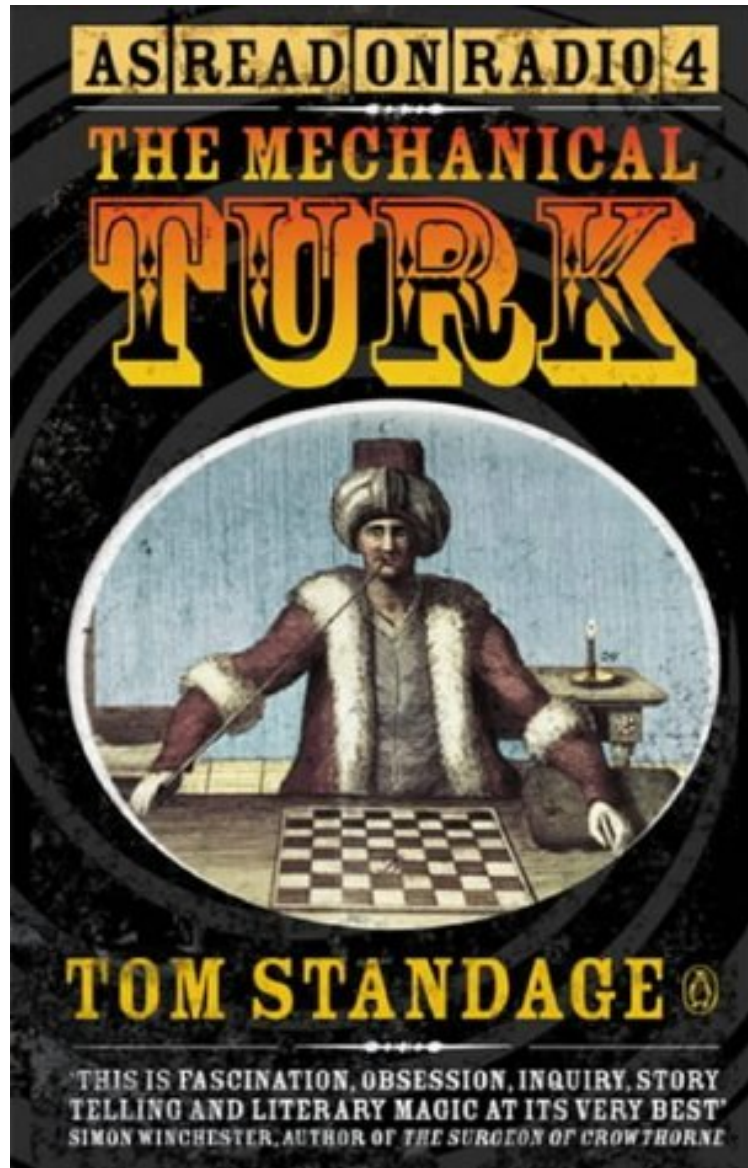


(Get free) Mechanical Turk: The True Story of the Chess Playing Machine That Fooled the World

Mechanical Turk: The True Story of the Chess Playing Machine That Fooled the World

Tom Standage

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Tom Standage : Mechanical Turk: The True Story of the Chess Playing Machine That Fooled the World before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Mechanical Turk: The True Story of the Chess Playing Machine That Fooled the World:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The mechanical TurkBy Clare O'Bearal enjoyed this book more than I'd expected. I don't play chess, but only a very basic knowledge of the game is required. At the same time those who are keen players will probably get more enjoyment out of the book than an onlooker. The craze for automata during the late 1700s and 1800s is the main theme, with lots of material for steampunk writers and fans. People wanted to see clockwork and levers; they wanted to be entertained and convinced. When the Empress of Austria commanded, one somewhat reluctant manufacturer obeyed. He genuinely did construct fantastic works, but his task was to create a convincing fake which would fool the world. In the mechanical Turk - a seated figure dressed in the Turkish garb which was then all the rage - he devised a chess-playing automaton which set out to do this. The Turk toured Europe playing all comers, mostly winning, and later went to America, with long periods of inactivity. I liked the tales of the better known people who played against or observed the Turk, and tried to deconstruct the problem. These include L'Empereur Napoleon, Babbage and Poe. Babbage was apparently inspired to start creating his own machines to perform intelligent skills, while Poe set out a case study of the mystery and all the clues he had observed. After that, I liked best the revelations at the end of how the Turk was made to perform, who was actually playing the chess games and how they were found by the master showmen who presented the attraction. This is an interesting and unusual book which throws a sidelight on aspects of the period not normally given to students, who just have to learn the wars and politics by heart and see little of the humanity. For this reason alone I commend the read. Tom Standage has written other works including *An Edible History Of Humanity*.

This title tells the true story of the Turk, the infamous 18th-century automation. The story links an unlikely cast of historical characters, from Napoleon, Beethoven and Poe to the pioneers of the computer age, and provides an accessible way of examining the complex relationship between magic, man, mind and machine, from the Enlightenment to the computer age.

About the AuthorTom Standage is science correspondent of *The Economist* in London and author of "*The Victorian Internet: the remarkable story of the nineteenth century's online pioneers*" (1998) and "*The Netune File: planet detectives and the discovery of worlds unseen*" (2000). He lives in Greenwich.