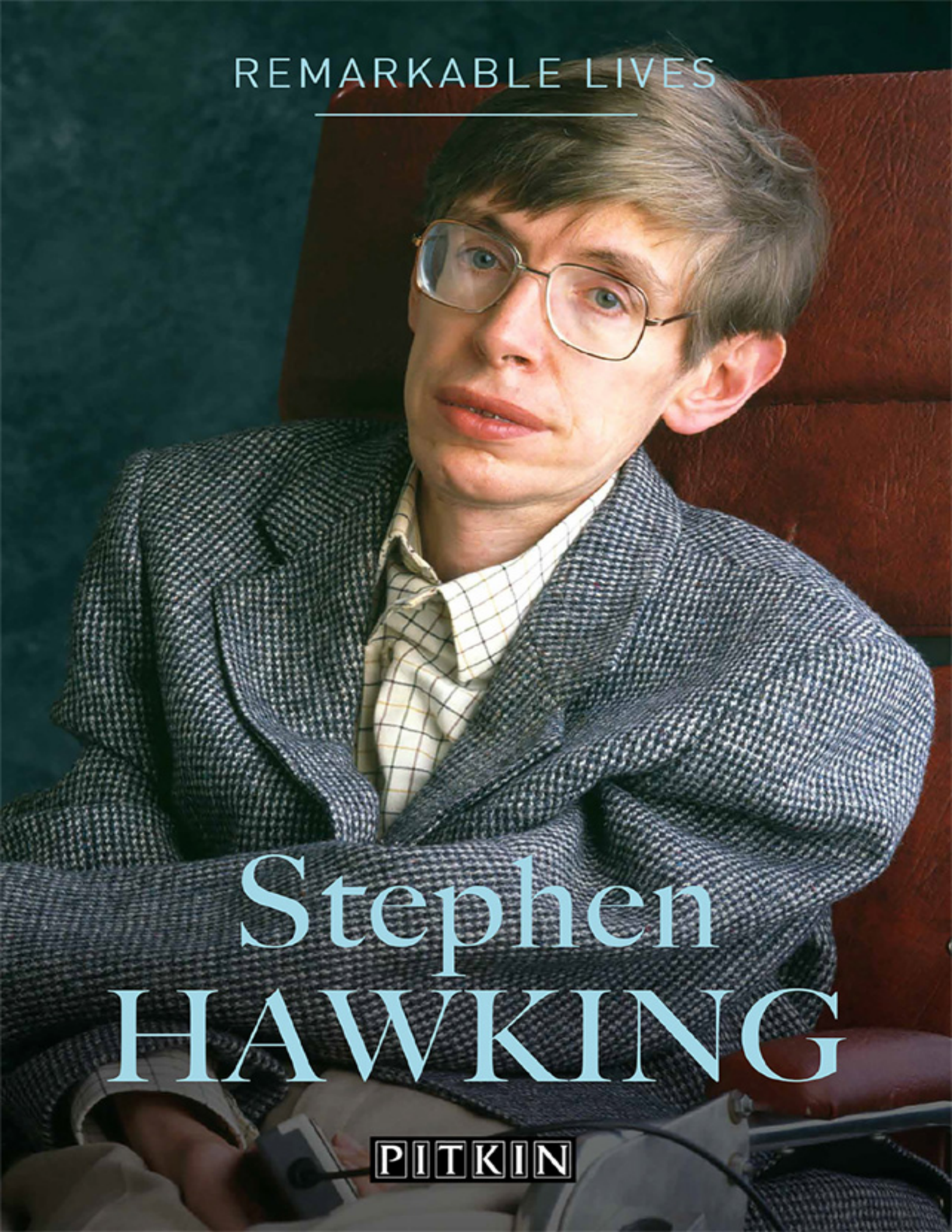
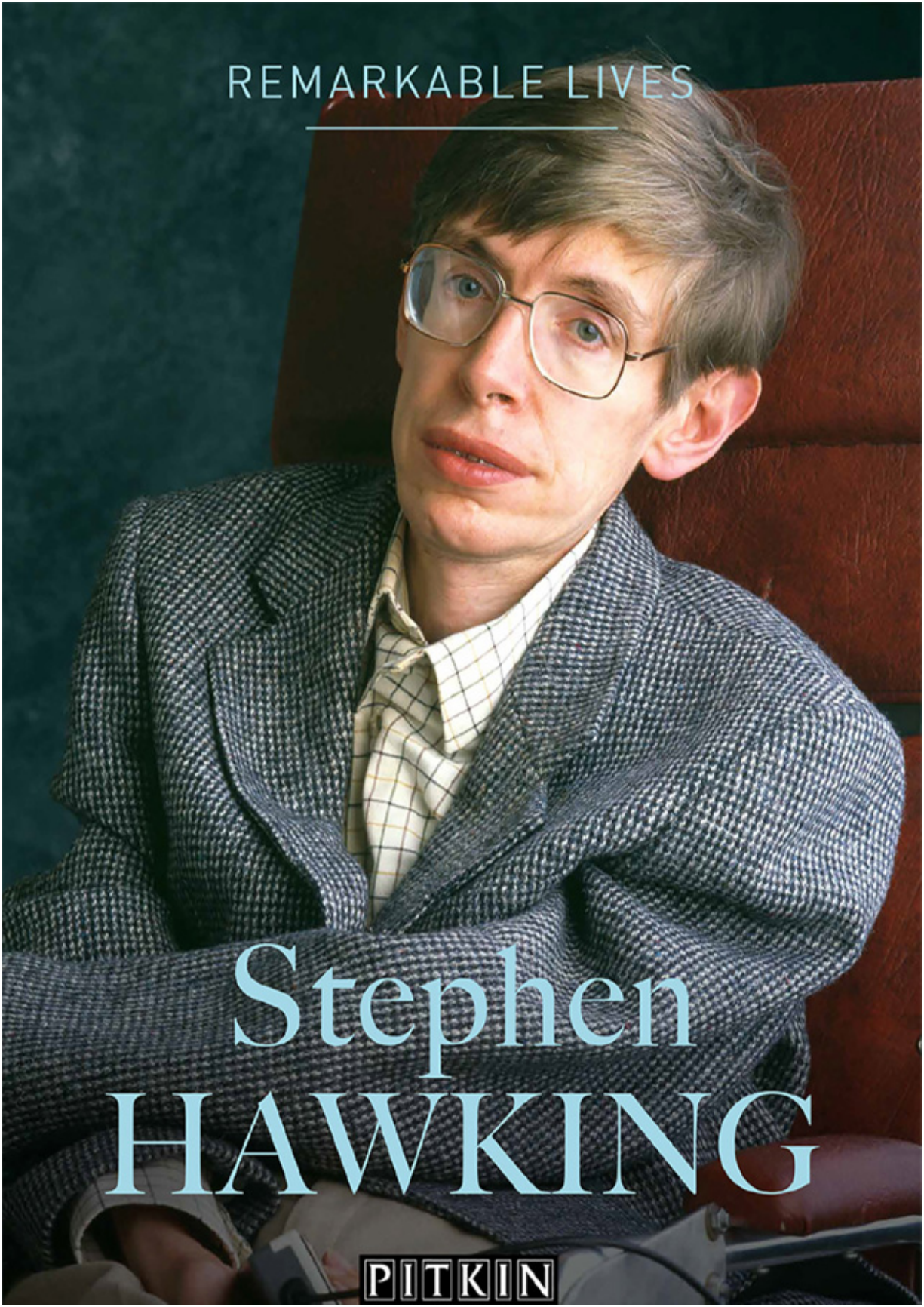


A portrait of Stephen Hawking, a man with short grey hair and glasses, wearing a grey tweed jacket over a yellow and white checkered shirt. He is seated in a red leather armchair, looking slightly to the right. The background is a dark, textured wall.

REMARKABLE LIVES

Stephen
HAWKING

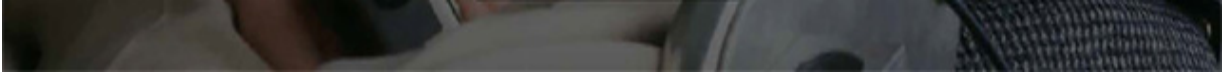
PITKIN

A portrait of Stephen Hawking, a man with short brown hair and glasses, wearing a grey tweed jacket over a yellow and white checkered shirt. He is seated in a red leather chair, looking slightly to the left. The background is dark and textured.

REMARKABLE LIVES

Stephen
HAWKING

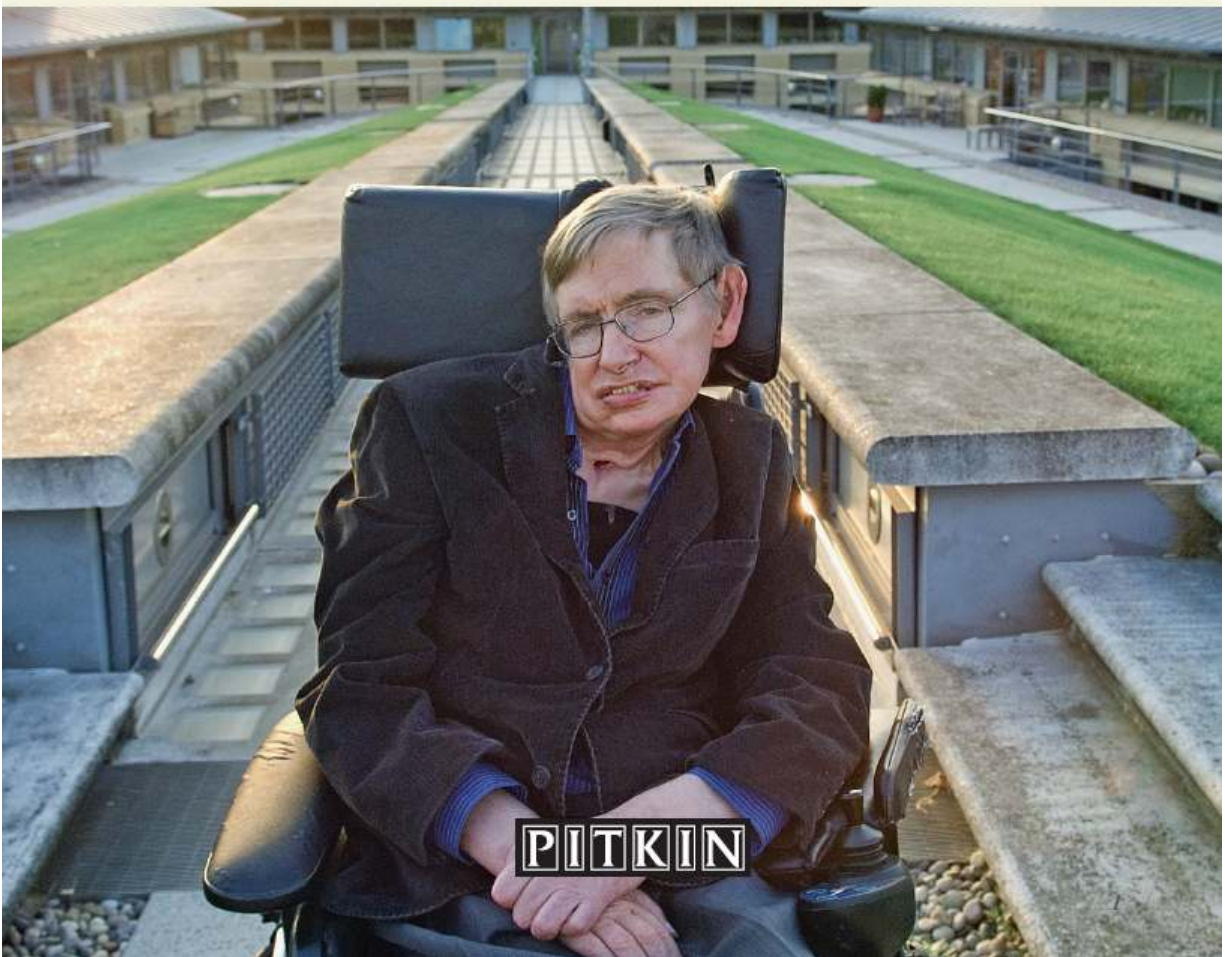
PITKIN



REMARKABLE LIVES

Stephen HAWKING

Kitty Ferguson



Introduction

In 1988, the photo of a scholarly-looking gentleman in a wheelchair appeared on the cover of a new book, *A Brief History of Time*. No one could have predicted the book's enormous success, or that the face on the cover would soon be familiar worldwide.

Stephen Hawking, whose books and documentaries would lead us into black holes and to the origin of the universe, drew multitudes to his lectures, from Beijing to Cambridge to California. Leaders of governments and science awarded him medals. The media followed him like a rock star. He suffered from a debilitating disease that is usually fatal in two or three years, yet he survived triumphantly to the age of 76. His ashes were interred in Westminster Abbey.

How did an unexceptional schoolboy from St Albans become Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge and one of the most inspiring figures of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries? How did he accomplish all he did in spite of the physical destruction of motor neurone disease, able to communicate only by choosing words from a computer screen by moving his cheek?

The story is incredible, but it isn't fiction.



In 1983, Hawking was a familiar and easily recognizable figure in the streets of Cambridge and the College courts, but he was not yet an international celebrity.

Childhood

In January 1942, with wartime bombs falling on London, it seemed wise to Dr Frank Hawking and his wife Isobel, living in Highgate, for her to move to Oxford for the birth of their first child. The son born there on 8 January was christened Stephen William. When the boy was eight, his father became head of the Division of Parasitology at the National Institute for Medical Research, and the family moved to St Albans. By that time Stephen had two younger sisters. He had not yet learned to read.

A curious child

The Hawkings spent the summers of Stephen's childhood in a field at Osmington Mills, on the Dorset coast. They travelled there in an old London black taxi cab with a table added between the back seats for the children to play games while they drove. Once arrived, they camped in a ramshackle gypsy caravan and a large tent. In what had once been smuggler territory, the children explored the rocky beach, and Stephen discovered fossils that first awoke in him a sense of wonder for life on Earth.

Far from city lights, the boy watched the stars – something he would love to do all his life. With his sisters he clambered over rocks and raced across fields and beach, with no idea that his days of climbing and running were numbered . . . no hint of the tragedy that lay ahead, or of the courage he would need to face it. Beginning in his early twenties, he would slowly but inexorably lose his ability to move or speak and be left physically helpless, silent and frozen, slumped in a wheelchair. That fragile figure is now familiar to