

# The Measure of All Things



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THE MEASURE OF ALL THINGS tells the story of how science, revolutionary politics, and the dream of a new economy converged to produce both the metric system and the first struggle over globalization. Amidst the scientific fervor of the Revolution two French scientists, Delambre and Mechain, were sent out on an expedition to measure the shape of the world and thereby establish the metre (which was to be one ten-millionth the distance from pole to equator). Their hope was that people would use the globe as the basis of measure rather than an arbitrary system meted out by the monarchs. As one scientist went north along the French meridian and the other south, their experiences diverged just as radically. After seven years, they received a hero's welcome upon their return to Paris. Mechain, however, was obsessed over a minute error in his calculations that he'd discovered and concealed, and which eventually drove him to his grave. His death forced his colleague Delambre to choose between loyalty to his friend and his science.

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