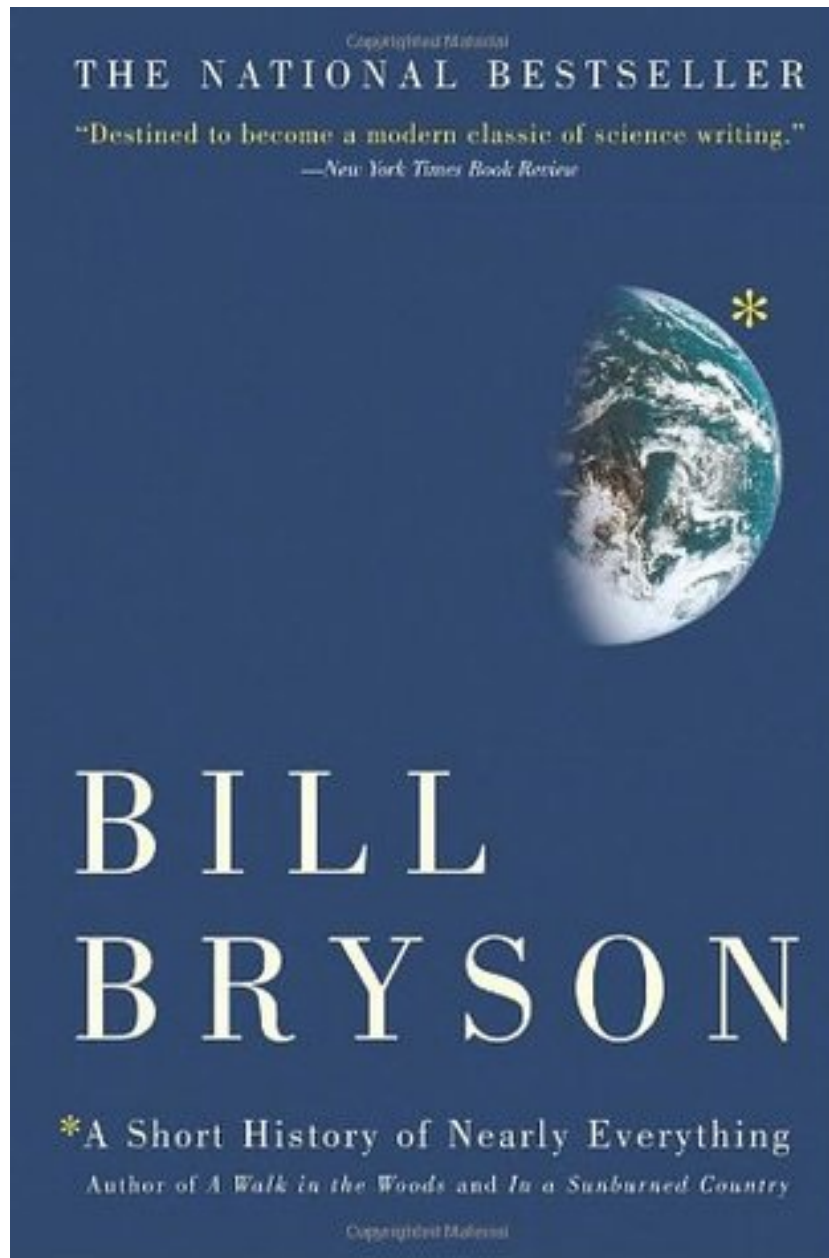


A Short History of Nearly Everything Book PDF Download



By:
Bill Bryson

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What people Say:

Manny

Surveys show that nearly 40% of all Americans believe the history of literature started in 2007, when Amazon sold the first Kindle; indeed, Amazon Fundamentalists hold it as an article of faith that Jeff Bezos actually

all the world's e-books over a period of six days. This is, of course, nonsense. It has been conclusively demonstrated that literature is far older than the Kindle; books already existed thousands of years ago, which were the direct ancestors of t

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all the world's e-books over a period of six days. This is, of course, nonsense. It has been conclusively demonstrated that literature is far older than the Kindle; books already existed thousands of years ago, which were the direct ancestors of today's e-publications. For example, careful examination reveals that

and

are primitive versions of

and

. Similar relationships have been shown to obtain for all modern books.

Problems arise, however, from the fact that these archaic protobooks still exist today; indeed, some have adapted to the e-reader environment and begun to thrive there. It is entirely too easy for an unsuspecting internet shopper to purchase a copy of

, incorrectly believing that it is part of the Twilight series. From the standpoint of formal literary theory, it is admittedly incorrect to say that

Jamie

Good grief if I had even one textbook half this enthralling in high school, who knows what kind of impassioned -ologist I would have grown up to be. I hereby petition Bryson to re-write all curriculum on behalf of the history of the world.

I would run across things half-remembered from midterms and study guides and think, "You mean is what they were talking about? You have got to be kidding me." It's never condescending, always a joy.

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In fact, what I loved most is the acute, childlike sense of wonder seeping through the pages. How fantastic little we know about the world in which we live. All the great scientific leaps fallen through the cracks, all the billions of leaps that will never be made, every scientist who with an amiable grin shrugs to say, "I don't know. We don't know. Who has any idea?" The world is a magically baffling, enchanting place, and after nearly everything there is infinitesimally more.

Paul Bryant

Okay, so here's my Bill Bryson story. I was in The Gladstone, a public house not too far from this very keyboard, with my friend Yvonne, who will remain nameless. We had been imbibing more than freely. A guy approached our table and asked me in a sly surreptitious manner if I was him. Him who? Was I Bill Bryson? Now it is true that I bear a very slight resemblance

but you could also say that about Bjorn from Abba

and a zillion other white guys with beards and gently rounded fizzogs. Anyway, without

Okay, so here's my Bill Bryson story. I was in The Gladstone, a public house not too far from this very keyboard, with my friend Yvonne, who will remain nameless. We had been imbibing more than freely. A guy approached our table and asked me in a sly surreptitious manner if I was him. Him who? Was I Bill Bryson? Now it is true that I bear a very slight resemblance

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and a zillion other white guys with beards and gently rounded fizzes. Anyway, without missing a beat I said yes, I was him. So the guy immediately asked me if I'd sign two of his books, and before I could say "Come on mate, I'm not actually American, can't you bleedin well tell?" he had zapped out of the pub. Only to zap straight back with two hardbacks of Bill's deathless works. What could I do? He opened them up reverentially and told me one would be for him and one for his mother. Friends, I signed them - "Best wishes, your friend Bill Bryson". He was so grateful, so very very pleased. We drank up and got the hell out of there. I look back on this disgraceful incident and shudder. That's the last time I'm impersonating a famous author.

Short note on the book in question:

There was no way our Bill could write a gently humorous book about the history of all of science without sounding like a fairly smirky know-it-all, so that's what he does sound like, which can be just a trifle wearing. LOTS of good info in here, but it's like being forced to live on Indian takeaways and nothing else, great for a while and then GET ME A SANDWICH! Or like being stuck on a long airplane ride with a very garrolous and opinionated fellow who thinks he is the very model of the modern travelling companion, regaling you with insightful and humourous anecdotes by the bucketful while you're wondering if it would be so bad if you faked a heart attack and you could whisper to the flight attendant "I'm okay really but GET ME AWAY FROM THIS GUY!"

Grace Tjan

What I learned from this book (in no particular order)

1. Phosphor was accidentally discovered when a scientist tried to turn human urine into gold. The similarity in color seemed to have been a factor in his conviction that this was possible. Like, duh. Iâ€™m no scientist, but shouldnâ€™t it be obvious enough?
2. In the early 1800s there arose in England a fashion for inhaling nitrous oxide, or laughing

gas, after it was discovered that its use was attended by a highly pleasurable thrilling. For

What I learned from this book (in no particular order)

1. Phosphor was accidentally discovered when a scientist tried to turn human urine into gold. The similarity in color seemed to have been a factor in his conviction that this was possible. Like, duh. I'm no scientist, but shouldn't it be obvious enough?
2. In the early 1800s there arose in England a fashion for inhaling nitrous oxide, or laughing gas, after it was discovered that its use was attended by a highly pleasurable thrilling. For the next half-century it would be the drug of choice for young people. How groovy is that?
3. If you are an average-sized adult, you contain within you enough potential energy to explode with the force of THIRTY very large hydrogen bombs. Assuming, that is, that you KNOW how to actually do this and REALLY want to make a point. Talk about a monstrous temper tantrum.
4. We are each so atomically numerous and so vigorously recycled at death that some of our atoms probably belonged to Shakespeare, Genghis Khan or any other historical figure. But no, you are NOT Elvis or Marilyn Monroe; it takes quite a while for their atoms to get recycled.
5. When you sit in a chair, you are not actually sitting there, but levitating above it at the height of a hundredth millions of a centimeter. Throw away those yoga mats, your ARE already levitating without knowing it.
6. The atomic particles that we now know as Quarks were almost named Partons, after you know who. The image of Ms. Parton with her, uh, cosmic mammaries bouncing around the atomic nuclei is VERY unsettling. Thankfully, that scientist guy changed his mind.

Sarah

Bryson's dead serious: this is a history of pretty much everything there is -- the planet, the solar system, the universe -- as well as a history of how we've come to know as much as we do. A book on science written by a non-scientist, this a perfect bridge between the humanities and the natural sciences. A course in the history of science should be mandatory for every teenager, and this should be the textbook.

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Yes, it's a big, chunky book. No, it can't be trimmed down any further: when you're addressing cosmology, earth science, ecology and zoology, with healthy doses of chemistry and physics, plus the historical development of each, you're going to end up with a doorstop of a text, no matter how smoothly written. The wonder of Bryson's writing is that the reader doesn't get lost in these sweeping surveys. When name-dropping, Bryson always gives a short description of the person in question; if mentioned earlier in the book, he drops in a quick reminder to the reader. This is fabulously effective at giving the names some context, not to mention a little personality.

And indeed, isn't that what science education needs most: more humanity and less intimidation? Those science-phobes out there who freely admit their near-complete ignorance of the subject should do themselves a favor and buy a copy of this book. No, don't get it from your library. There's so much here you'll want to have a copy on hand to refer to later.

To those nerds in the audience -- myself included -- don't think your degrees mean you can pass this one over. As hyper-specialized as science has become, it's refreshing as hell to step back and take a look at things with new eyes. While there's not a lot here I haven't encountered before, there's a lot of information about how our current theories were developed that I didn't know.

(Also? It's heartening to read about the social ineptitude, blind spots, and how utterly incompetent many of these scientist were in other aspects of life. Makes me feel better about never finishing that PhD -- at least I have a

.)

Thorough, humorous, engaging,

educational: what's not to like?