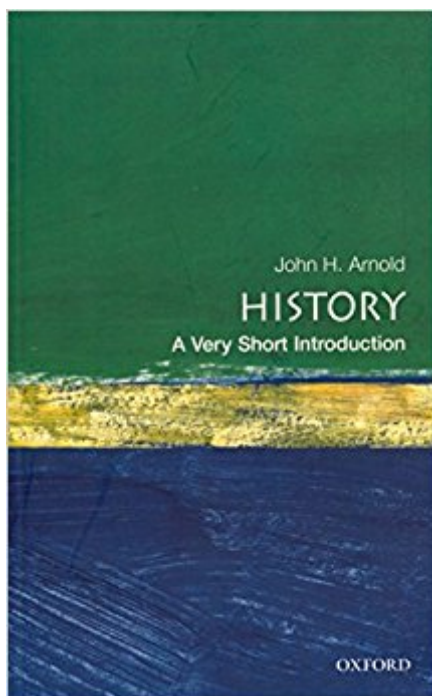


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# History: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)



## Synopsis

There are many stories we can tell about the past, and we are not, perhaps, as free as we might imagine in our choice of which stories to tell, or where those stories end. John Arnold's Very Short Introduction is a stimulating essay about how we study and understand history. The book begins by inviting us to think about various questions provoked by our investigation of history, and explores the ways these questions have been answered in the past. Concepts such as causation, interpretation, and periodization, are introduced by means of concrete examples of how historians work, giving the reader a sense of the excitement of discovering not only the past, but also ourselves. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"The past itself is not a narrative. In its entirety, it is chaotic, uncoordinated, and complex as life. History is about making sense of that mess, finding or creating patterns and meanings and stories from the maelstrom." -- John H. Arnold, HistorydescriptionA friend on Facebook introduced me to this series a couple weeks ago. I usually steer towards larger books (Diary of Samuel Pepys, The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, etc.). I like to submerge in a book, so I was initially skeptical of this format. These are short books, almost novella size (although the font being 8 or 9 point might allow Oxford's editors to squeeze a bit more in). These are books not meant for the expert, but the enthusiast. They are, as Oxford titled them, VERY SHORT INTRODUCTIONS. Perfect. There is an art to writing tight. To cutting your story, your explanation, your introduction into the fewest words possible. Things are not included, left out, obviously, but like haikus there is beauty in scarcity and there is a definite place for these books in my library. I've only finished one (This one), but I'm addicted. I loved Arnold's voice, his take, and his approach. I think he managed to engage, explain, synthesize the history of history, and did ALL of that in just under 124 pages. I just ordered World War II: A Very Short Introduction (for my son) and The American Revolution: A Very Short Introduction (for my daughter). I expect I will be buying more very shortly.

A really excellent overview of historiography and the reasons for studying or creating history, and the ways those reasons have changed and evolved to suit the needs of the society in which a history is being produced. This year I embarked on a project to read 100 books that cover the history of the world, and this was book 1 in my project and was the perfect introduction to get my brain thinking critically and studiously as I proceed through the rest of my list.

I've read a few other books of the Oxford series and this is by far the best. Such a vital topic for all literate people deserves a convincing and well-written introduction such as this.

Arnold tells us the difference between "history and "the past." Very interesting! There are different ways to interpret the same thing, and people see things that others do not. While this is obvious, Arnold tells us how this changes history, and how the story and effects are changed as well. I have read it about five times, and am looking over it again as I write my Thesis.

An appetizer to the study of history, succinct and clearly written. Makes history sound so much more exciting and interesting than names, dates and battles. History is lived by real people like you and me.

Oxford University Press has a long list of these "very short introductions" to all kinds of topics - mostly in the academic realm. However, they are intended for non-specialists, and those I've read are accessible to the general reader who wants to know more about a topic. All are written by experts, with clear, lively prose, and all have references for those who want more in-depth reading. I intend to use this one as a text for a grad school course focused on uses of history, for non-history majors.

I returned to the university classroom spring after a multi-year hiatus, and I assigned this book to my students. It is highly readable, succinct and engaging. My students enjoyed it, and it provoked wide-ranging discussions about history and its place in contemporary culture. I think teachers of advanced secondary students to graduate students would find much in this little gem that is of use.

This was a nice short summary about historiography and how one can apply it. Writing about truth was big. I was disappointed when the author mentioned he heard about homeless people sleeping among the stacks of a New York archives. That's conjecture. It may be true, but his verification is "I have been told." That shouldn't be good enough for a historian. Otherwise, a good book.

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