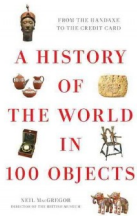


Dory L.'s blog

A History of the World in 100 Objects



What a cool idea for a book. Telling the history of the world by looking at museum

artifacts. To make it even more interesting, these descriptive reports of jewelry, mummies, pottery, coins, art, textiles, etc. were written by experts for radio. Luckily, for us we get to view the pictures also, hundreds of them.

A History of the World in 100 Objects is no coffee table book but a book to be read end to end. The entries for each of the objects (that range in date from 2,000,000 B.C. to 2010 A.D.) describe not only the artifacts themselves but what they teach us about history and about humanity. For example of silver bowl full of coins from around the year 927--shows that already England was well on its way to becoming a monarchy. Inscribed on one coin is *Athelstan Rex totius Britanniae* or Athelstan, King of All Britain.

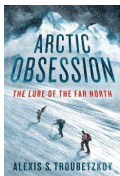
Other items found in this same buried stash were arm bracelets from Ireland, Viking coins, and others from as far away as Afghanistan. A Viking stash of coins showed that they were becoming Christian--engraved on several was St. Peter's name (Petri), but also inscribed was the hammer from Thor, the old Norse god. [Read more »](#)

[For the Love of Reading Information, Answers & Reviews A history of the world in 100 objects Art History Nonfiction](#)

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Arctic Obsession: the lure of the Far North



One of the earliest historical reports of a far northern, snow-covered place was by

Pytheas who sailed out of what is now Marseilles in 325 B.C., and discovered a place he called Ultima Thule, a six day journey north of Britain. No one knows exactly where his ship landed but people believe that it may have been Iceland, Greenland, Norway or the Shetlands. Pytheas described the remarkable midnight sun and reported that the sea surrounding Thule was "neither sea nor air but a mixture like a sea-lung that binds everything together."

In the following centuries the Romans and medieval scholars called the Far North "the kingdom of the dead" where the Cyclops lived "in a place of chaos, the abysmal chasm." In those days scholars also believed that the North Pole was a "gigantic metallic rock rising out of the ocean."

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New Poetry Books for the New Year



Here are a couple more poetry books that I've been enjoying lately.

Jane Hirshfield's [Come, Thief](#) is an inviting and intriguing book by one of our best poets. Her poems are on the small side with lots of white space but they are packed with so much insight and punch, that they more than satisfy. To her poems Hirshfield brings an eye for nature, wisdom for relationships and a Zen philosophy. Here's the beginning of "Fourth World."

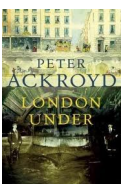
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London Under



As someone who has explored sewers as a kid--they were in a new subdivision; it was on a dare--I totally understand the appeal of life underground. Who hasn't dug in their yard and hoped to find arrowheads or pottery from thousands of years ago?

[Ackroyd](#), who wrote a book about the above-ground city several years ago, now dives underneath to recount the other world under busy streets, cathedrals, government buildings, and flats.

It's fascinating stuff. In the 19th century workmen excavating before constructing new buildings discovered huge chunks of the Roman wall that surrounded the city about two millenia ago. Other builders during that same time period found a stairway down to a brick-walled room with a spurting spring that they believed was used as a baptismal font during medieval times.

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Recent New Poetry



Over New Year's I found a few interesting new poetry collections. What better way to start the new year then by sampling and diving deep into new poems? I'll introduce two of these now and more later as I slowly read through them.

Things to Say to a Dead Man: Poems at the End of a Marriage and After

I had no idea that [Jane Yolen](#), who is primarily a juvenile fiction and young adult author, wrote poetry. And what a wonderful collection this is. Because of the topic, it's a sad collection; in it she records her experiences taking care of her sick husband and then the months of her new widowhood. To round out the book, she added several memorial poems about her husband who was an expert on avian song. Birds also figure in some of these poems.

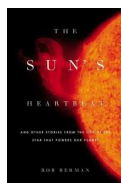
Despite the main topic the poems are uplifting. All are good; some are absolutely stellar. Here's a few lines from "Sorry for Your Loss." [Read more »](#)

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The Sun's Heartbeat



Browsing the new science books, I came across [The Sun's Heartbeat](#). I picked it up expecting a rather dry collection of facts and was immediately engaged by a chapter titled "The Wild Science of the Bearded Men."

Not only can Bob Berman write but he also has that gift shared by all the best science writers: the ability to translate complex scientific terms into language that anyone can understand.

This book provides a compelling overview of several thousand years of sun research including the great sunspot controversy of the 17th century. The invention of the telescope in 1608 spurred a race to discover facts about the sun. Johannes Fabricius and his father discovered little spots on the sun and excitedly watched them for days until they burnt out their retinal cells. An English astronomer who had voyaged to Roanoke with the English explorers also began

recording sunspots. And Galileo himself entered the fray. In fact, Galileo engaged in a decades-long fight with the German professor Christoph Scheiner over sunspots. Over who discovered them first--in fact, neither had, over whether the sun has an atmosphere, and many other topics.

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[For the Love of Reading Information, Answers & Reviews Nonfiction Science The sun's heartbeat : and other stories from the life of the star that powers our planet](#)

Posted by Dory L. on Jan 5, 2012 [Add new comment](#)



[China in Ten Words](#)



Although I've spent some time in Asia, I never visited China, so when I came across this

personal narrative that combines essays on life in modern China with growing up during the Cultural Revolution, I couldn't resist. Through the focus of ten simple words, contemporary novelist Yu Hua presents a vivid picture of how Chinese life has changed in many ways, yet in others remained the same for over fifty years. With humor and an incisive take on his own culture, Hua shows how conformity vies with individuality in his country and how conformity often wins.

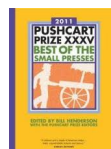
The chapter titled "Leader" focuses on the era of Mao Zedong. Although Yu was only a boy when Mao was Chairman, Yu entered the spirit of things by writing big-character posters. These were signs that were put up in all public place: movie theaters, schools, stores, and outside people's houses. In these anonymous signs, people criticized their neighbors for being landlords or for not following the precepts of the little red book. Yu Hua himself wrote many about his teachers and parents. In fact, he traces his love of writing from this childhood activity. **[Read more »](#)**

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[Pushcart Prize XXXV, Best of the Small Presses](#)



Enjoy discovering new authors? Or finding new work by favorite ones? Or just checking

out what kind of fiction, poetry, and nonfiction shorts the vibrant American small press movement is publishing? This anthology, edited by Bill Henderson, manages to seek out the best new work in American literature year after year.

It opens with a short story by Anthony Doerr titled "The River Nemunas." It's about a 15-year-old with no parents and a poodle named *Mishap*. Because he has no relatives in the U.S., the boy is

sent to live in his grandfather's homeland of Lithuania. For the first time, the teenager sees a place that in the past meant no more to him than a pink spot on the world map. It's a lovely story about an orphan finding a new home after a tragedy. Another interesting story is the funny "Frost Mountain Picnic Massacre" by Seth Fried; it depicts a Revolutionary War Massacre reenactment that turns out badly.

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Next to Love



Babe Huggins is one of those young women (my mother was one also) both lucky and unlucky enough to come of age at the start of World War II. She lives in a small New England town and because the men have left to fight overseas, she scores a department store job, and then later, interesting work at Western Union. She loves being the pulse of news in the town, but a big negative is that she is the first to discover which family has lost a young son or a new spouse.

Next to Love gives a vivid portrait of the war at home in America during WW II as lived by three friends who have known each other since first grade. Both Babe and Millie come from poor families on the wrong side of Sixth Street, whereas Grace's family lives in one of the town's mansions.

The novel chronicles the marriages of each of the three women, and shows how it either destroys or strengthens those unions. At the start of the war, there's one giddy summer when the number of marriages skyrockets--a combination of the men responding to the knowledge of their own mortality and the sheer lust for life-- seize this moment because no one knows how long it will last.

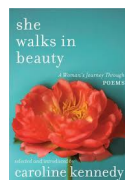
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[For the Love of Reading Information, Answers & Reviews Fiction Historical Next to love : a novel Romance World War II](#)

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She Walks in Beauty: a Woman's Journey through POEMS



Following in her mother's footsteps, Caroline Kennedy has always had a passion for books and literature. After being first lady, Jackie Onassis edited books on art and culture, but

she also had a great love for poetry.

Caroline's latest anthology [She Walks in Beauty: a Woman's Journey through POEMS](#) is a collection geared more for women than for men, although the poems themselves are written by both sexes.

The book includes very large sections on "Marriage" and "Growing Up and Growing Old" as well as sections on "Love" in all its aspects--falling, making, and breaking up. She also has gathered poems on "Work," "Friendship," and "Beauty, Clothes, and Things of This World." Two of my favorite sections are somewhat unexpected; they include "Silence and Solitude" and "How to Live." The latter compendium does what poetry does best, shows us what elements are truly important in our lives.

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[For the Love of Reading Information, Answers & Reviews Poetry She walks in beauty : a woman's journey through poems](#)

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