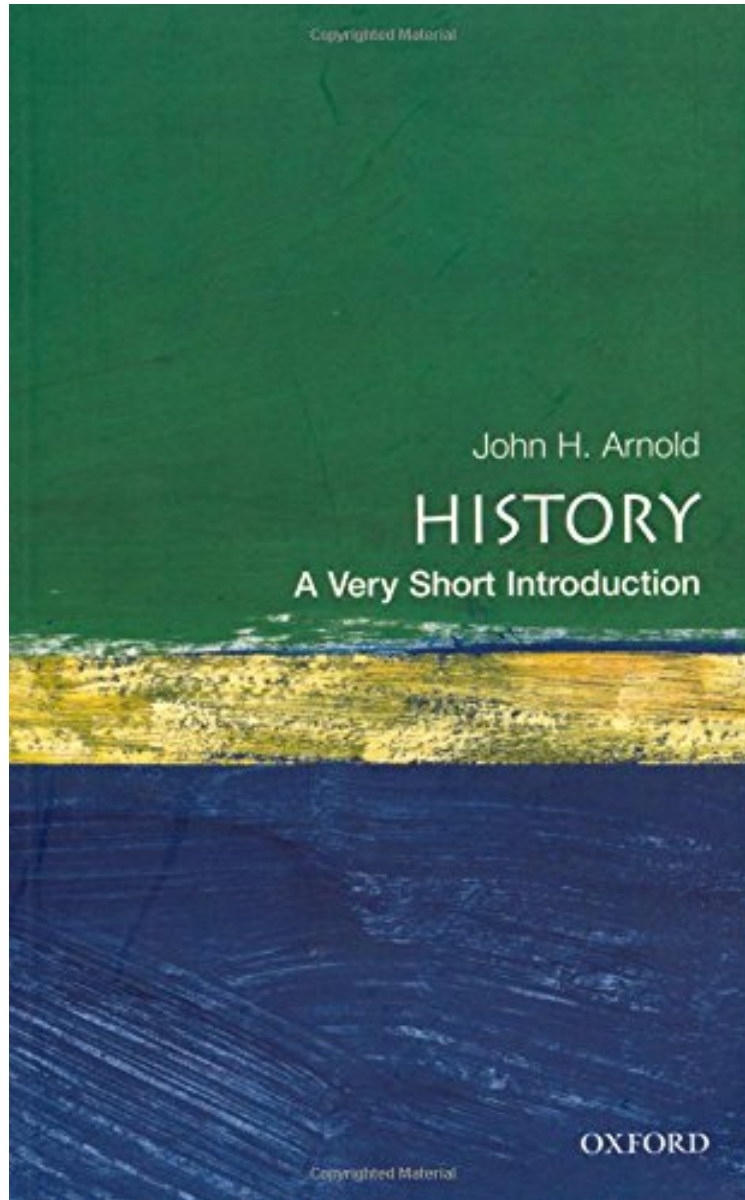


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## History: A Very Short Introduction

*John H. Arnold*

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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. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent overview of historiography By Brian Colella 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. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. An important book for all By Customer 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.

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 addition to Oxford's popular Very Short Introductions series is a stimulating essay about how people study and understand history. The book begins by inviting us to think about various questions provoked by our investigation of history, and then explores the ways in which these questions have been answered in the past. Such key concepts as causation, interpretation, and periodization are introduced by way of concrete examples of how historians work, thus giving the reader a sense of the excitement implicit in discovering the past--and ourselves. The aim throughout History: A Very Short Introduction is to discuss theories of history in a general, pithy, and accessible manner, rather than delve into specific periods. This is a book that will appeal to all students and general readers with an interest in history or historiography. About the Series: Oxford's Very Short Introductions series offers concise and original introductions to a wide range of subjects--from Islam to Sociology, Politics to Classics, Literary Theory to History, and Archaeology to the Bible. Not simply a textbook of definitions, each volume in this series provides trenchant and provocative--yet always balanced and complete--discussions of the central issues in a given discipline or field. Every Very Short Introduction gives a readable evolution of the subject in question, demonstrating how the subject has developed and how it has influenced society. Eventually, the series will encompass every major academic discipline, offering all students an accessible and abundant reference library. Whatever the area of study that one deems important or appealing, whatever the topic that fascinates the general reader, the Very Short Introductions series has a handy and affordable guide that will likely prove indispensable.

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period and the philosophy of history.