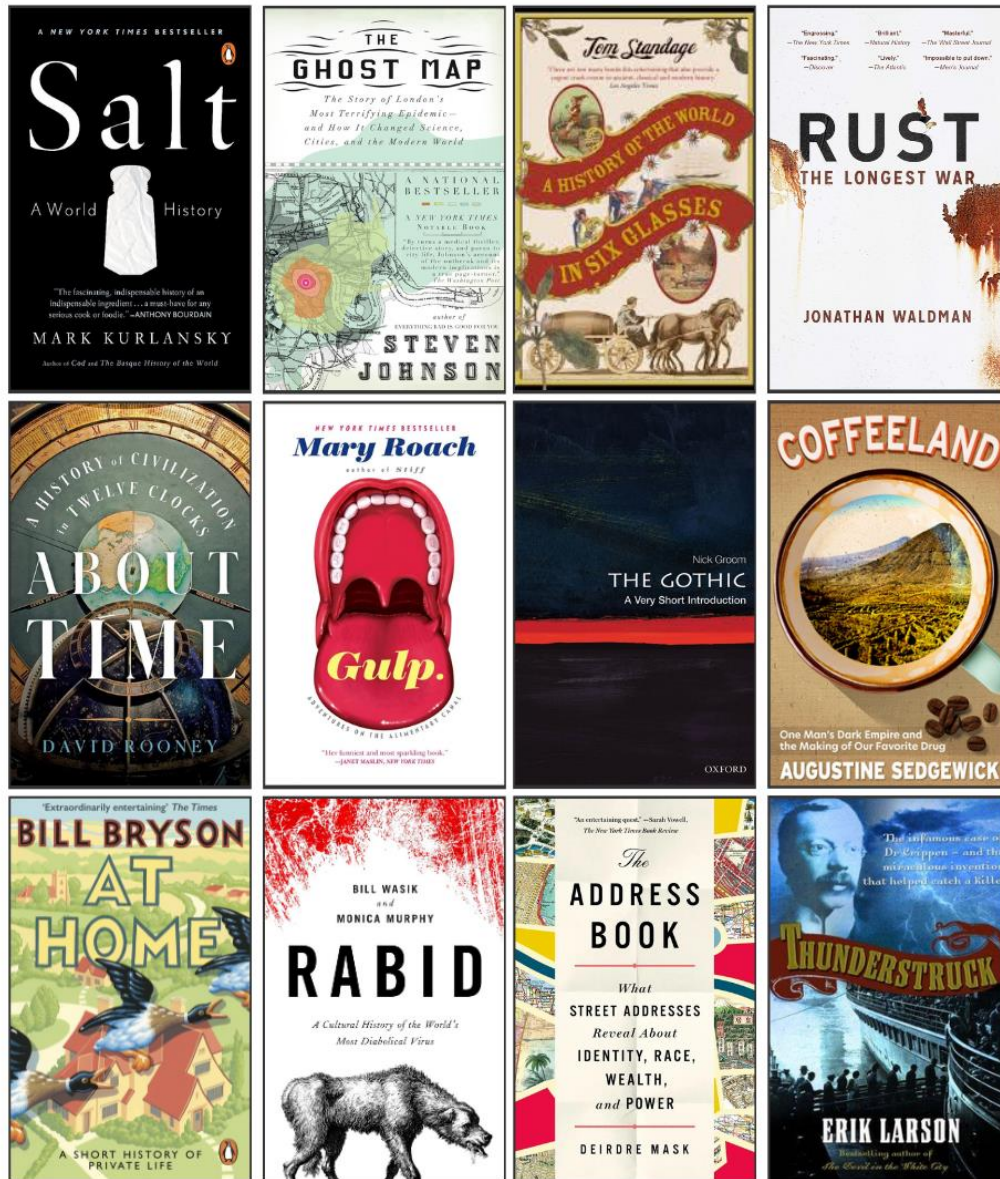


WTBBL Recommended Reads: Microhistories



Get ready to rock your next Trivial Pursuit game with the help of these recommended reads! Deep dive with us into niche captivating non-fiction and immerse yourself in learning something new from these Microhistories. If

you've never heard the term before, microhistories take a common, every-day thing, like salt, rust, your daily cup of coffee, or time itself and delve into the minutia of what makes it "it". You'll be a master of the obscure in no time!

Salt : A World History by Mark Kurlansky, 2002. ([DB055857](#))

Best-selling author Mark Kurlansky turns his attention to a common household item with a long and intriguing history: salt. The only rock we eat, salt has shaped civilization from the very beginning, and its story is a glittering, often surprising part of the history of humankind. A substance so valuable it served as currency, salt has influenced the establishment of trade routes and cities, provoked and financed wars, secured empires, and inspired revolutions. Populated by colorful characters and filled with an unending series of fascinating details, Salt is a supremely entertaining, multi-layered masterpiece. – Book Description from the Publisher

The Ghost Map by Steven Johnson, 2006. ([DB064203](#))

It's the summer of 1854, and London is just emerging as one of the first modern cities in the world. But lacking the infrastructure-garbage removal, clean water, sewers-necessary to support its rapidly expanding population, the city has become the perfect breeding ground for a terrifying disease no one knows how to cure. As the cholera outbreak takes hold, a physician and a

local curate are spurred to action-and ultimately solve the most pressing medical riddle of their time. In a triumph of multidisciplinary thinking, Johnson illuminates the intertwined histories of the spread of disease, the rise of cities, and the nature of scientific inquiry, offering both a riveting history and a powerful explanation of how it has shaped the world we live in. – Book Description from the Publisher

A History of the World in Six Glasses by Tom Standage, 2005. ([DB061242](#))

Beer, wine, spirits, coffee, tea, and Coca-Cola: In Tom Standage's deft, innovative account of world history, these six beverages turn out to be much more than just ways to quench thirst. They also represent six eras that span the course of civilization—from the adoption of agriculture, to the birth of cities, to the advent of globalization. *A History of the World in 6 Glasses* tells the story of humanity from the Stone Age to the twenty-first century through each epoch's signature refreshment. As Standage persuasively argues, each drink is in fact a kind of technology, advancing culture and catalyzing the intricate interplay of different societies. After reading this enlightening book, you may never look at your favorite drink in quite the same way again. – Book Description from the Publisher

Rust : The Longest War by Jonathan Waldman, 2015
([DBC03279](#))

It is the hidden enemy, the one that challenges the very basis of civilization. This entropic menace destroys cars, fells bridges, sinks ships, sparks house fires, and nearly brought down the Statue of Liberty's torch. It is rust—and this book, full of wit and insight, disasters and triumphs—is its story. – Book Description from the Publisher

About Time by David Rooney, 2021. ([DB106780](#))

For thousands of years, people of all cultures have made and used clocks, from the city sundials of ancient Rome to the medieval water clocks of imperial China, hourglasses fomenting revolution in the Middle Ages, the Stock Exchange clock of Amsterdam in 1611, Enlightenment observatories in India, and the high-precision clocks circling the Earth on a fleet of GPS satellites that have been launched since 1978. Clocks have helped us navigate the world and build empires, and have even taken us to the brink of destruction. Elites have used them to wield power, make money, govern citizens, and control lives—and sometimes the people have used them to fight back. Through the stories of twelve clocks, *About Time* brings pivotal moments from the past vividly to life. Historian and lifelong clock enthusiast David Rooney takes us from the unveiling of al-Jazari's castle clock in 1206, in present-day Turkey; to the Cape of Good Hope observatory at the southern tip of Africa, where nineteenth-century British government

astronomers moved the gears of empire with a time ball and a gun; to the burial of a plutonium clock now sealed beneath a public park in Osaka, where it will keep time for 5,000 years. Rooney shows, through these artifacts, how time has been imagined, politicized, and weaponized over the centuries—and how it might bring peace. Ultimately, he writes, the technical history of horology is only the start of the story. A history of clocks is a history of civilization. – Book Description from the Publisher

Gulp : Adventures on the Alimentary Canal by Mary Roach, 2013. ([DB076624](#))

The alimentary canal -- the much-maligned tube from mouth to rear -- is as taboo, in its way, as the cadavers in *Stiff*, and as surreal as the universe of zero gravity explored in *Packing for Mars*. In *Gulp* we meet the scientists who tackle the questions no one else thinks — or has the courage — to ask. How much can you eat before your stomach bursts? Why doesn't the stomach digest itself? Can wine tasters really tell a \$10 bottle from a \$100 bottle? Why is crunchy food so appealing? Can constipation kill you? Did it kill Elvis? We go on location to a pet food taste-test lab, a fecal transplant, and into a live stomach to observe the fate of a meal. Like all of Roach's books, *Gulp* is as much about human beings as it is about human bodies. – Book Description from the Author's Website

The Gothic : A Very Short Introduction by Nick Groom, 2012. ([DB086444](#))

The Gothic is wildly diverse. It can refer to ecclesiastical architecture, supernatural fiction, cult horror films, and a distinctive style of rock music. It has influenced political theorists and social reformers, as well as Victorian home decor and contemporary fashion. This Very Short Introduction captures the history of the Gothic from ancient times to the present. It covers the sack of Rome by the barbarian tribes, mediaeval architecture, popular culture in the sixteenth century (including ballads and Revenge Tragedy), political theories of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the rise of the Gothic novel, the Victorian Gothic Revival, and the influence of Gothic culture on film, music, and fashion. It includes familiar Gothic novels such as Frankenstein and Dracula, while also covering Gothic gardening, slasher movies, and the current Goth scene. It is the only account of the Gothic that describes the entire history of the term, presenting it in all its richly complex and perversely contradictory glory. – Book Description from NLS

Coffeeland : One Man's Dark Empire and the Making of Our Favorite Drug by Augustine Sedgewick, 2020. ([DB099500](#))

Coffee is an indispensable part of daily life for billions of people around the world. But few coffee drinkers know this story. It centers on the volcanic highlands of El Salvador, where James Hill, born in the slums of

Manchester, England, founded one of the world's great coffee dynasties at the turn of the twentieth century. Adapting the innovations of the Industrial Revolution to plantation agriculture, Hill helped turn El Salvador into perhaps the most intensive monoculture in modern history—a place of extraordinary productivity, inequality, and violence. In the process, both El Salvador and the United States earned the nickname “Coffeeland,” but for starkly different reasons, and with consequences that reach into the present. Provoking a reconsideration of what it means to be connected to faraway people and places, Coffeeland tells the hidden and surprising story of one of the most valuable commodities in the history of global capitalism. – Book Description from the Publisher

At Home : A Short History of Private Life by Bill Bryson, 2010. ([DB072121](#))

“Houses aren't refuges from history. They are where history ends up.”

Bill Bryson and his family live in a Victorian parsonage in a part of England where nothing of any great significance has happened since the Romans decamped. Yet one day, he began to consider how very little he knew about the ordinary things of life as he found it in that comfortable home. To remedy this, he formed the idea of journeying about his house from room to room to “write a history of the world without leaving home.” The bathroom provides the occasion for a history of hygiene; the bedroom, sex, death, and sleep; the kitchen, nutrition and the spice trade; and so on, as Bryson shows how each has figured

in the evolution of private life. Whatever happens in the world, he demonstrates, ends up in our house, in the paint and the pipes and the pillows and every item of furniture. – Book Description from Goodreads

Rabid : A Cultural History of the World's Most Diabolical Virus by Bill Wasik & Monica Murphy, 2012. ([DB075472](#))

A maddened creature, frothing at the mouth, lunges at an innocent victim—and with a bite, transforms its prey into another raving monster. It's a scenario that underlies our darkest tales of supernatural horror, but its power derives from a very real virus, a deadly scourge known to mankind from our earliest days. In this fascinating exploration, journalist Bill Wasik and veterinarian Monica Murphy chart four thousand years in the history, science, and cultural mythology of rabies. The most fatal virus known to science, rabies kills nearly 100 percent of its victims once the infection takes root in the brain. A disease that spreads avidly from animals to humans, rabies has served as a symbol of savage madness and inhuman possession throughout history. Today, its history can help shed light on the wave of emerging diseases—from AIDS to SARS to avian flu—with origins in animal populations. From Greek myths to zombie flicks, from the laboratory heroics of Louis Pasteur to the contemporary search for a lifesaving treatment, Rabid is a fresh, fascinating, and often wildly entertaining look at one of mankind's oldest

and most fearsome foes. – Book Description from the Publisher

The Address Book : What Street Addresses Reveal about Identity, Race, Wealth, and Power by Deirdre Mask, 2020. ([DB100696](#))

In many parts of the world, your address can reveal your race and class. In this wide-ranging and remarkable book, Deirdre Mask looks at the fate of streets named after Martin Luther King Jr., the wayfinding means of ancient Romans, and how Nazis haunt the streets of modern Germany. The flipside of having an address is not having one, and we also see what that means for millions of people today, including those who live in the slums of Kolkata and on the streets of London. Filled with fascinating people and histories, *The Address Book* illuminates the complex and sometimes hidden stories behind street names and their power to name, to hide, to decide who counts, who doesn't—and why. – Book Description from Goodreads

Thunderstruck by Erik Larson, 2007. ([BR016792](#), [DB063094](#))

The saga of how the lives of the inventor of wireless and of Britain's second most famous murderer (after Jack the Ripper) intersected during one of the greatest criminal chases of all time. The inventor was Guglielmo Marconi, the young Italian genius; the killer was Hawley Harvey Crippen, who murdered his overbearing wife and fled Britain with his mistress, unaware that Scotland Yard

was hot on his heels. The book—an instant New York Times bestseller—brings to life a host of forgotten characters, including spirit mediums, ghost-hunting physicists, Scotland Yard inspectors, and one of the great pioneers of forensic science. The climax occurs during a trans-Atlantic chase which, thanks to the miracle of Marconi's invention, was followed by millions of people around the world—with Crippen and his mistress completely unaware. – Book Description from the Author's Website