



## Brief Histories of Everyday Objects

*Andy Warner*

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**Hilarious, entertaining, and illustrated histories behind some of life's most common and underappreciated objects - from the paperclip and the toothbrush to the sports bra and roller skates**

In the tradition of *A Cartoon History of the Universe* and, most recent, Randall Munroe's *What If?* comes *Brief Histories of Everyday Objects*, a graphic tour through the unusual creation of some of the mundane items that surround us in our daily lives. Chapters are peppered with ballpoint pen riots, cowboy wars, and really bad Victorian practical jokes. Structured around the different locations in our home and daily life—the kitchen, the bathroom, the office, and the grocery store—award-nominated illustrator Andy Warner traces the often surprising and sometimes complex histories behind the items we often take for granted. Readers learn how Velcro was created after a Swiss engineer took his dog for a walk; how a naval engineer invented the Slinky; a German housewife, the coffee filter; and a radical feminist and anti-capitalist, the game Monopoly. This is both a book of histories and a book about histories. It explores how lies become legends, trade routes spring up, and empires rise and fall—all from the perspective of your toothbrush or toilet.

## **Brief Histories of Everyday Objects Details**

Date : Published October 4th 2016 by Picador (first published 2016)

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Author : Andy Warner

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Genre : Nonfiction, Sequential Art, Graphic Novels, History, Comics, Humor

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# From Reader Review Brief Histories of Everyday Objects for online ebook

## Joseph R. says

Many common objects have interesting and unexpected histories and legends attached to them. This volume tells the stories of forty-five such items. Most tellings have some authentic history, though many items like tea and dice are so ancient as to have no definitive origin story attached. Many cultures have come up with common objects. Making a claim for uniqueness or originality is not always possible. Author Andy Warner has managed to find common threads and running gags to tie items together.

The information provided by the book is more like cocktail party trivia than in-depth history. Each item is covered in four pages through cartoons, so detailed accounts are virtually impossible. Often, entertaining stories are favored over origins or creations. The bit about barbed wire is all about the Texas cattle wars, when ranchers used the stuff to keep wandering herds off their property. The part about stamps is devoted to the guy who came up with postcards (so why isn't the four-pager called "Postcards" instead of "Stamps"?). The trivia is interesting but feather-weight. Other stories, like the origins of velcro and microwave ovens, are very familiar.

The book is entertaining, but there's a lot more sauce than meat served up. Ultimately it's not satisfying.

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## Cheshire Public Library says

Brief Histories of Everyday Objects by Andy Warner is a hilarious non-fiction graphic novel that describes how many of the items that we take for granted have interesting, unusual, and sometimes downright silly origins. The author guessed when it came down to deciding what people looked like and what they said (unless they were quoted), but the facts are all true! Once you read this book, you will never look at the things you use on a daily basis in the same way again. The next time you go to a party, you'll be able to tell people about the story behind the pull tabs on their soda cans.

Did you know that the woman who invented flat-bottomed paper grocery bags had to fight for her right to the patent when a man tried to steal it? She became the first woman to win a patent lawsuit.

Did you know that Earl Tupper invented Tupperware, but Brownie Wise made it sell? In fact, she was so successful that she became the face of the product. This greatly angered Mr. Tupper, so he fired her, sold the company, and purchased an island where he lived for the rest of his life.

Did you know that postcards were the results of an elaborate prank?

Did you know that roller skates were first invented in 1760 when John Joseph Merlin, a prolific inventor, built a pair so he could show off at a masquerade?

Genre: Non-fiction graphic novel

Setting: All over the world, throughout different times

Is this good for a book club? Only if the book club is interested in discussing previously unknown facts regarding everyday things.

How long is the book? 206 pages

Objectionable content? Barely. There are some references to bathing, bras, excrement, and violence, but there is nothing explicit. There are some illustrations of women wearing sports bras.

Can children read this? The humor and information are enjoyable for all ages, as long as they have a good vocabulary.

Who would like this? Anyone with a good sense of humor and a good appreciation for learning about how everyday objects were created.

Reviewed by Kaitlin <https://cheshirelibraryblog.com/autho...>

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### **Garrett says**

Lots of fun with a great sense of humor and exhaustively researched, this can wear on the reader after a bit, but this is, I suspect, not the fault of Mr. Warner. History can have a kind of bleak view when one backs up and looks at it, and there is a fair amount of cheating, avarice, theft and oppression in this book which even when handled amusingly, can try a person's very soul. I wouldn't have this material presented any other way, but this is a pretty sword with a sharp edge, in my opinion.

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### **Els says**

That was brilliant and quirky and hilarious.

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### **Mandy says**

Fun random trivia, aka totally my jam. I especially like all the shade rightfully thrown at all the racist and sexist aspects of the histories.

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### **Elizabeth says**

Irreverent and informative graphic novel micro-histories about everything from Velcro to paper clips. Fun factoids and odd details about various inventors' hard-luck lives and/or good fortune. Entertaining and imaginatively done.

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## **Maleficent (Chelsea) Lord says**

At first I thought this book might just be a fun and quick read...but it was so much more. I often forget about how crazy even the smallest histories are, especially concerning inventions. When you can create something that people want--God Lord--is the history behind it exciting, tragic and whatnot. Andy Warner, the author, inserts his quirky humor into things and it is a real treat. This is an excellent coffee table book and one I could easily read again.

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## **Kathleen says**

Short, silly, fun, and fast. Andy Warner has taken a large collection of everyday items, from the toothbrush to Monopoly, and created brief, three-page graphic depictions of bizarre or interesting information about their creation. For example, paper spurred the development of the Arab Golden Age, and was acquired when Arabic forces captured two Chinese papermakers who swapped the ability to make paper (at least in their style) for their lives. Warner depicts this and other tales in an engaging graphic style, with funny dialogue (made up, unless sourced) and an extensive bibliography. He also includes a short section called "Briefer Histories," which contains random but interesting facts. There's a minor running joke about inventors who failed to patent their world-changing inventions who then died poor; it's sad but entertaining the way Warner puts it, and I hope they enjoy their rent-saving house together.

In short, this is fun and fast. Don't pick this up looking for in-depth history or any analysis; it's a visual fact book, but a good one. It has some genuinely interesting and new information alongside the old stories. Definitely a recommendation for a bored afternoon when you'd like to learn something new.

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## **Beyond Book'd says**

Wow, I wish all histories could be presented in this manner to kids. As an adult, I loved learning about the histories of everyday objects. I've learned so many strange and interesting little-known facts (some speculative findings). Some of these findings can be hard to back up with evidence. I would've loved it in color.

Bathroom-toothbrushes, shampoo, razors, toilets, tubs, kitty litter

Bedroom- shoes, silk, velcro, sports bra, safety pins

Living Room - vacuum, monopoly, dice, yo-yo, slinky

Kitchen - tupperware, microwave oven, coffee filters, trash cans

Coffeeshop - tea, sweeteners, cinnamon, coffee beans

Office - paper clips, ballpoint pens, paper, pencils, post-its, stamps

Grocery store - paper bags, instant ramen, canned fruit, ice cream cones, potato chips

Bar - beer cans, toothpicks, ice, billiards,

Outside - traffic lights, roller skates, streetlights, barbed wire, kites, bikes

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## **Michelle says**

This was fun, light nonfiction. The research, comics, and humor were a great combination.

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## **Amy Beth says**

This could have been so much more. I was expecting some social history of the objects, but instead it was almost completely about the inventors or related inventions. The focus was often on the bizarre and funny instead of the meaningful. Case in point: when talking about the bicycle, Warner mentioned Susan B. Anthony's quote about how influential bicycles were for women's independence. However, he didn't follow it up with any evidence and instead only talked about bizarre bike riding clothes developed for women.

Warner does highlight the trials of inventors, especially those of women and people of color. It was clear he either set out to or quickly made a point of highlighting the diversity behind our everyday objects. (Did you know that two Syrian immigrants helped co-invent the ice-cream cone at Chicago's World Fair? Let's bring more of them into the US.)

The one thing I did learn: the Arabs captured two Chinese paper makers in battle and got them to teach them how to make paper. The new technology helped fuel the Arab golden age of learning that among other things kept science and the Greeks alive during European medieval times.

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## **Emily (Obsessed Reader) says**

It was so interesting learning the history of all of these objects that we use all the time! Also, I laughed multiple time, very funny.

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## **Chris says**

A slightly deeper and funnier book than I first expected. A simple, basic idea: short factoids about the origins and development of everyday items like the pencil or the safety pin or tea or the sports bra. And while it reads quick, the stories have a bit more substance to them. They focus on the role of non-white-European men in the development of most of these products. There is an honest look at those who weren't fast enough for history or the examples of western inventions that had been in use elsewhere in the world for years. And the writer/artist has a dark, wicked sense of humor. 3.5 stars, weighted high for the humor and the forgotten history.

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## **Sesana says**

So right up my alley. Short comics with bits of history about the development of all kinds of mundane objects. I absolutely love this kind of thing, and all the more so because it's funny as well.

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**Stewart Tame says**

Short comics that tell the stories behind the invention of, or simply associated with, various everyday objects, i.e. paperclips, potato chips, sports bras, beer cans, etc. Warner has an eye for an interesting anecdote and tells his stories with economy and good humor. He also does good research, not just accepting the first version of the story he happens to encounter. He does repeat some bogus stories, but makes it clear that they are just that: stories. Each tale is rounded out by a few one panel factoids that didn't rate inclusion into the main story. Of course there's a bibliography at the end of the book. This book is very much in the spirit of Larry Gonnick, and I enjoyed it a great deal. Hopefully, it's just the first of many.

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