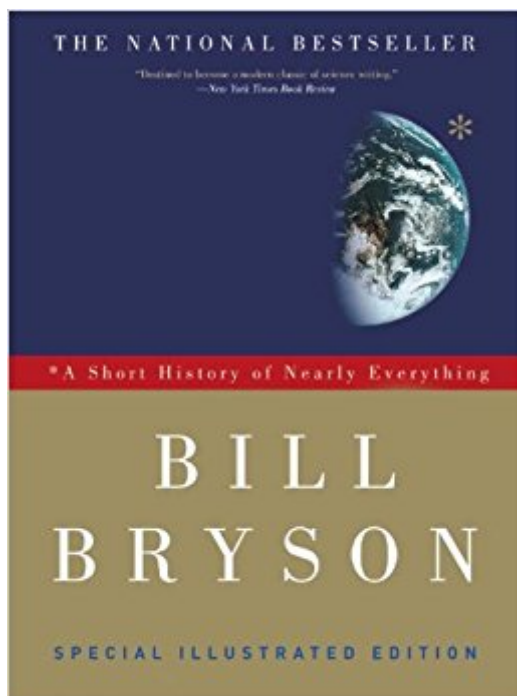


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# A Short History Of Nearly Everything: Special Illustrated Edition



## Synopsis

This new edition of the acclaimed bestseller is lavishly illustrated to convey, in pictures as in words, Bill Bryson's exciting, informative journey into the world of science. In *A Short History of Nearly Everything*, the bestselling author of *One Summer*, confronts his greatest challenge yet: to understand—and, if possible, answer—the oldest, biggest questions we have posed about the universe and ourselves. Taking as his territory everything from the Big Bang to the rise of civilization, Bryson seeks to understand how we got from there being nothing at all to there being us. The result is a sometimes profound, sometimes funny, and always supremely clear and entertaining adventure in the realms of human knowledge, as only Bill Bryson can render it. Now, in this handsome new edition, Bill Bryson's words are supplemented by full-color artwork that explains in visual terms the concepts and wonder of science, at the same time giving face to the major players in the world of scientific study. Eloquent and entertainingly described, as well as richly illustrated, science has never been more involving or entertaining.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

From primordial nothingness to this very moment, *A Short History of Nearly Everything* reports what happened and how humans figured it out. To accomplish this daunting literary task, Bill Bryson uses hundreds of sources, from popular science books to interviews with luminaries in various fields. His aim is to help people like him, who rejected stale school textbooks and dry explanations, to appreciate how we have used science to understand the smallest particles and the unimaginably vast expanses of space. With his distinctive prose style and wit, Bryson succeeds admirably.

Though *A Short History* clocks in at a daunting 500-plus pages and covers the same material as every science book before it, it reads something like a particularly detailed novel (albeit without a plot). Each longish chapter is devoted to a topic like the age of our planet or how cells work, and these chapters are grouped into larger sections such as "The Size of the Earth" and "Life Itself." Bryson chats with experts like Richard Fortey (author of *Life and Trilobite*) and these interviews are charming. But it's when Bryson dives into some of science's best and most embarrassing fights--Cope vs. Marsh, Conway Morris vs. Gould--that he finds literary gold. --Therese Littleton --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

As the title suggests, bestselling author Bryson (*In a Sunburned Country*) sets out to put his irrepressible stamp on all things under the sun. As he states at the outset, this is a book about life, the universe and everything, from the Big Bang to the ascendancy of *Homo sapiens*. "This is a book about how it happened," the author writes. "In particular how we went from there being nothing at all to there being something, and then how a little of that something turned into us, and also what happened in between and since." What follows is a brick of a volume summarizing moments both great and curious in the history of science, covering already well-trod territory in the fields of cosmology, astronomy, paleontology, geology, chemistry, physics and so on. Bryson relies on some of the best material in the history of science to have come out in recent years. This is great for Bryson fans, who can encounter this material in its barest essence with the bonus of having it served up in Bryson's distinctive voice. But readers in the field will already have studied this information more in-depth in the originals and may find themselves questioning the point of a breakneck tour of the sciences that contributes nothing novel. Nevertheless, to read Bryson is to travel with a memoirist gifted with wry observation and keen insight that shed new light on things we mistake for commonplace. To accompany the author as he travels with the likes of Charles Darwin on the *Beagle*, Albert Einstein or Isaac Newton is a trip worth taking for most readers. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A friend of mine recommended this book knowing that I like science. I'm used to reading about the sciences in single topics. This book surprised me in the amount of effort the author took to go through book after book of different sciences, both old and new, and proceeded to connect the dots into several cohesive stories about our home, planet Earth, and its residents. The biggest surprise is how little we truly know about both and just how much luck was involved that both exist in their

present form. This book is an easy read and should be understandable to anyone who has a basic interest in science. Be prepared though to being overwhelmed because there is a lot of information in this book, with references to other works. This book is best read in sections allowing yourself some time to think about what you have learned; and I'm sure you are going to learn at least a few things. I highly recommend this book to anyone who would like to understand what an amazing place our planet is and life that exists on it.

A phenomenal book. Like the title suggests, it touches upon a little of everything. As someone with a broad interest in almost all subjects, reading this book was an absolute joy and Bill Bryson's delightful wit is an added bonus. He has a way of making the driest of subjects seem interesting and you find yourself flipping page after page, totally absorbed by the topics he presents. LOVE this book- do yourself a favor and get it!

This is a very informative and interesting book that summarizes the origins of the universe in an intelligible way. A college education with some knowledge of the sciences would be helpful, but aren't an absolute requirement. (My three degrees are in Economics and it's been 50+ years since I have taken any science courses, but for the most part I was able to follow along.) I even understand The Big Bang Theory TV show a bit better now.

Just little outdated for today's science progress (especially in physics), but many fundamental theories and history are solid (especially in biology and chemistry) and well explained. Only problem is that I bought a kindle version and whenever the book tries to use tenth to the power to describe very small number (decimal), there is no negative sign (eg to describe a fraction of a second the book uses  $5 \times 10^{1,000,000}$  second instead of  $5 \times 10^{-1,000,000}$ )

ABSOLUTELY GREAT BOOK!!! And I don't read books. I Keep buying up every hard cover I can find as everyone I've given as gift wants to know where to get one to give as gift. I think I've given 50 or more of these as client gifts. Cool thing is you don't read front to back...just read the interesting chapters/topics. super easy and entertaining read filled with facts you will try to remember so you can impress your friends,,,and YOU WILL! Can read over and over and understand topics like genetics, DNA, the moon, our country, wars, desalinization of oceans etc. not a green peace book just VERY WELL WRITTEN and best book of my life,

Most of Bill Bryson's books - usually involving travel - are a delight. But I have the idea he must be proudest of this one in praise of science rather than corruption politicians or unproveable gods. For we ordinary people who have no idea how a television works let alone an atom, we get a glimpse of the way both the universe and our planet really works. I had no idea that my body - and yours too - contains trillions of atoms and even more smaller things such as protons and quarks. Collectively they enable us to live for a certain amount of time and then - all too soon - they ruthlessly leave us and find something else to make. We are all a product of our universe, the same stuff of our stars and galaxies. Here today and gone tomorrow. "Out Out Brief Candle" as Shakespeare so elegantly wrote. You should buy this book for your children and grandchildren and even your best friends who may still be wondering why we are here -and be thankful for it.

This book is quite different from Bryson's usual fare. Here Bryson steps out of his usual travel and language focus to write about science. The product is an interesting combination of the social history of science, biographies of famous scientists, and discussion of significant scientific discoveries in very accessible language. What science does Bryson cover, you might ask? This is where "everything" comes in to the picture. Bryson has chosen a wide range of scientific discoveries, from working out the theory of evolution to discovering the size and shape of the earth. Mostly, Bryson focuses on the largest and smallest things in the universe. He looks at galaxies and volcanoes, but also DNA and atoms. Truly, this book is expansive. For the lay reader, it becomes clear that there's a tremendous amount of knowledge tied up in this book, and it's amazing just how much Bryson had to learn to write it. For the non-scientist, this book manages to create a sense of awe, wonder, and fear, all at the same time. Bryson does an excellent job of highlighting just how surprising and contingent the fact of our existence is, and how complicated it was to get here. He creates amazement as the reader is forced to consider almost unfathomable dimensions, both gargantuan and tiny. Contingency is clearly the most significant theme that emerges from the work. Bryson also paints an interesting portrait of the practice of science, scientific culture, and a sense of just how difficult and tenuous some conclusions are. While it's amazing just how much scientists have discovered, it's even more daunting to consider how much remains inconclusive. Overall, this is an extremely accessible discussion of some difficult topics, infused with Bryson's humor and style. It's a long read, but well worth the effort.

The bonus to reading this book is you get to learn a lot about human limitations and potential. As a species we have a lot to be ashamed of but a lot to be proud of as well. There's a lot of ground

covered here. I was only able to get through one or two chapters at a time but I always looked forward to picking it up again.

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