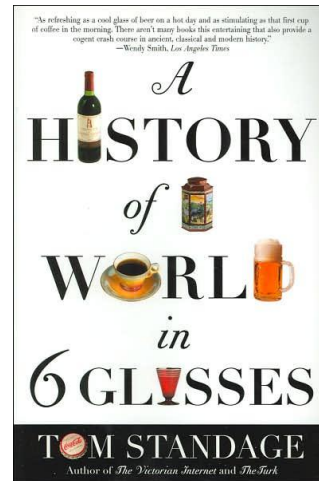


## Reading Guide:

# ***A History of the World in Six Glasses***

Tom Standage (2005)



### Thought Questions

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of Tom Standage's overall argument that world history can be divided into different periods based on dominant beverages? Did you agree? Why or why not?
2. Did you agree with Standage's arguments about the importance of the six specific beverages he discussed? How about water as the beverage representing the future? Would you have alternatives to propose?
3. Do you think all the beverages discussed had equal impact on human history? Which did you think were most and least important, and why?
4. Are there other consumer goods that could be used as reference points in the same way as beverages are in this book?
5. What is the most important or memorable thing you will take away from having read this book? What surprised you most?
6. For those who also read *At Home: A Short History of Private Life*, (the September 2011 selection), what commonalities and differences do you see between the two authors' approaches to "everyday history"? Did you feel one was stronger or weaker?
7. Are there related books, museum exhibitions, websites, or other resources that you would like to share with fellow readers of this book?

**Tom Standage's Bio** (from [tomstandage.com](http://tomstandage.com))

Tom Standage is digital editor at *The Economist*, overseeing the magazine's website, Economist.com, and its mobile-phone, tablet and e-reader editions. Before that he was business affairs editor, running the back half of the magazine (business, finance, economics, science and technology), and he previously served as business editor, technology editor and science correspondent. He has been the editor of the *Technology Quarterly* supplement, which covers emerging technology, since 2003. Tom is also the author of five history books. He writes the video-game column for *Intelligent Life*, *The Economist's* lifestyle magazine, is a regular commentator on BBC radio, and has written for other publications including the *Guardian*, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *New York Times* and *Wired*. He holds a degree in engineering and computer science from Oxford University.

**If you liked *A History of the World in Six Glasses*, you may enjoy these other books by Tom Standage:**

- ***An Edible History of Humanity (2009)*** - In this book Standage now turns his focus to the way food has acted as a catalyst for changes throughout human history, from the first instances of planned farming to the spice trade's effect on exploration to current events.
- ***The Victorian Internet: The Remarkable Story of the Telegraph and the Nineteenth Century's On-line Pioneers (1998)*** - A history of the telegraph and its effect on nineteenth century culture as the first electronic network, examined in light of its role as a precursor to a similarly groundbreaking creation in the twentieth century – the Internet.
- ***The Turk: The Life and Times of the Famous Eighteenth-Century Chess-Playing Machine (2002)*** – The story of a famous automaton created in the late eighteenth-century that could, it seemed, not only move chess pieces across a board but actually strategize and beat the humans it played against, including Benjamin Franklin. Whether it was a hoax or not, Standage explores the fascination with the Turk then and today, as it relates to current explorations in artificial intelligence.

**Related Books:**

***Cod: A Biography of a Fish that Changed the World*, Mark Kurlansky (1998)** – Kurlansky connects the history of cod fishing to other milestones in human history.

***Seeds of Change: Six Plants that Transformed Mankind*, Henry Hobhouse (1985)** – Like Standage, Hobhouse was a writer for *The Economist*. In this book, he examines the way six plants - quinine, sugar, tea, cotton, coca, and the potato – effected change in human history.

***Spice: A History of Temptation*, Jack Turner (2005)** – A look at the way a desire for spices led to Europe's efforts at exploration and expansion in the East in the sixteenth century as well as an examination of how various spices influenced Western culture – in food, in medicine, in religious ceremony and beyond.

***The True History of Chocolate*, Sophie and Michael D. Coe (2007)** – The Coes study chocolate from an anthropological perspective, from how the Maya used it in meso-America as precious currency to the industrial innovations that allowed it to become widely available beginning in the nineteenth century.