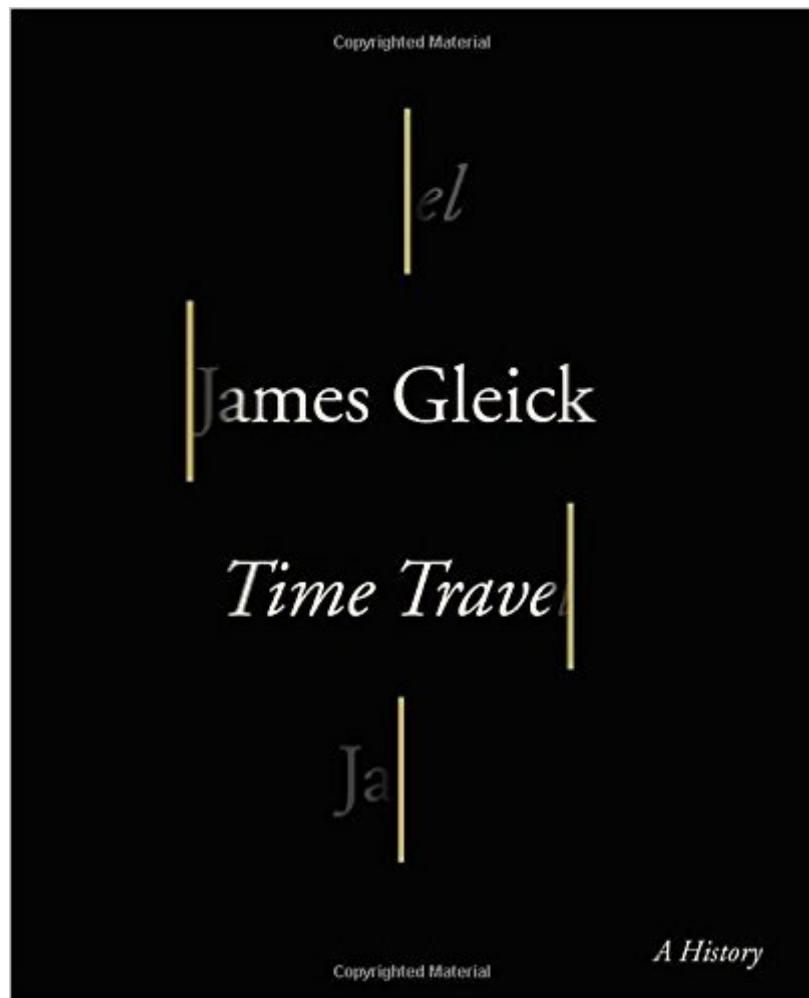


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Time Travel: A History



Synopsis

From the acclaimed author of *The Information* and *Chaos*, here is a mind-bending exploration of time travel: its subversive origins, its evolution in literature and science, and its influence on our understanding of time itself. The story begins at the turn of the previous century, with the young H. G. Wells writing and rewriting the fantastic tale that became his first book and an international sensation: *The Time Machine*. It was an era when a host of forces were converging to transmute the human understanding of time, some philosophical and some technological: the electric telegraph, the steam railroad, the discovery of buried civilizations, and the perfection of clocks. James Gleick tracks the evolution of time travel as an idea that becomes part of contemporary culture—“from Marcel Proust to Doctor Who, from Jorge Luis Borges to Woody Allen. He investigates the inevitable looping paradoxes and examines the porous boundary between pulp fiction and modern physics. Finally, he delves into a temporal shift that is unsettling our own moment: the instantaneous wired world, with its all-consuming present and vanishing future. (With a color frontispiece and black-and-white illustrations throughout.)

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Customer Reviews

This is a really interesting book that explores time travel from different perspectives, starting mostly from the short novel by HG Wells "Time Machine" that assumed time travel was possible in 1895 and then explored some of its consequences. Gleick is a wonderful writer and writes what is really a long essay about the the history of time travel in literature and pop culture (think Dr. Who), asking a

lot of questions along the way about the paradoxes of time travel. It really is quite thought provoking and engaging, appealing to a range of readers - not just sci-fi buffs but rather those interested in seeing how an interesting idea such as time travel develops in literature and culture, along with those who simply like to think about a puzzling concept that is now well within our culture. Highly recommended!

When was time travel invented? If you aren't sure, and I had no idea, Gleick argues convincingly that H.G. Well's invented the concept of time travel with his book, *The Time Machine*. The rest of this book tries to answer the question of 'why' - Why did no one think about time travel before? Why do we think about it often now? In examining time travel and the scientific, pulp, and popular response to it, Gleick sheds light on how new scientific concepts are dealt with in the modern world. Fascinating, easy to read book. You will learn a lot and enjoy yourself while you read. Highly Recommended.

The author of this book about the history of time travel does a nice job of pulling in the threads from speculative fiction writers, philosopher, and physicists on the concept of time. It all starts with H.G. Wells' very original novel *The Time Machine* and spans to today covering key thoughts and topics related to the concept of time travel. I especially enjoyed the chapter on "By His Bootstraps," a brilliant short story by Robert A. Heinlein where the protagonist meets different versions of himself through time. For fans of the concept of time travel, it's worth a read.

This is quite a clever and interesting book. As the title suggests, it is about time travel but it explores it in a very unique way through literature, science and philosophy. It is fascinating as it dives into a bit of history and pop culture. Incredibly thought-provoking and inspiring. If you are curious or interested in time travel at all, or if you are a science fiction fan that likes to question and think 'what if' or wonder of all the implications or paradoxes of time travel, you will probably be fascinated by this book.

Writing about science (and philosophy and literature, for that matter) for audiences that may not have strong backgrounds in those fields is a daunting challenge. James Gleick offers an entirely lucid, accessible, entertaining account of the history of the concept of "time," itself, and more, of the fascination that has developed among human beings with the idea of being able to "move through"

the so-called fifth dimension, whether forward to the future or backward to earlier eras. He makes clear the early philosophical efforts to explain what, exactly, "time" might be (with the frustrating, incomplete, mostly hapless results from even the greatest thinkers on the subject), and he traces the rich literary history of the "time travel" narrative, using H.G. Wells's Time Machine as a kind of pivotal point of reference, moving beyond Wells to other significant writers and their variations and deviations from the "rules" about time travel (never let the time traveler meet self, coming or going, for example, becomes a dead rule in later times, notably in David Gerrold's The Man Who Folded Himself). Gleick goes further, of course, looking carefully at the scientific context for thinking about the possibilities offered by relativity theory, black holes and wormholes, and other physical phenomena that have become staples of science fiction but also, where possible, foundations for serious scientific study. The psychology of this longing for the ability to move through time is similarly explored and explicated. On the whole, this is among my favorite recent volumes of science writing--Gleick has done it before and one hopes he will do it again--an excellent writer with a broad and humane background, making available to us the complexities and power of scientific speculation. And it should be said again, the book is very entertaining reading.

In "The Information"The Information: A History, A Theory, A FloodJames Gleick does justice to a meme that includes science, culture, and society; here Gleick deals with another meme also containing aspects of physics but further out on the stream of culture literature and fiction. In an incredibly readable and informative narrative Gleick tells a story which he begins with H.G. Wells's time traveler but within which he includes Einstein's observation: "know that the distinction between past, present, and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion". Gleick interestingly and truthfully tells an incredibly wide ranging story of time in culture, literature science and human thought.

James Gleick deftly delivers an accessible history about the concept of time and time travel. Starting with H.G. Wells, this book is an entertaining and enlightening overview of the history, philosophy, science, and human nature of time travel.

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