

**NAXOS**  
AudioBooks

CONTEMPORARY  
FICTION

Julian Barnes  
**A History of the World  
in 10 ½ Chapters**

Read by **Alex Jennings**



NAX45712D

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1	<b>One. The Stowaway</b> They put the behemoths...	4:40
2	In the beginning, the Ark consisted of eight vessels...	3:20
3	As far as we were concerned...	5:52
4	As the flotilla neared completion...	5:11
5	I would occasionally find the situation funny...	5:07
6	The rest of us, understandably enough, were far more concerned...	5:37
7	In fact, when we came to look back on it after the event...	6:43
8	There were other dangers on the voyage...	6:14
9	I suppose it wasn't altogether Noah's fault...	4:57
10	Which reminds me of that business with Ham's wife...	5:24
11	When the Ark landed on the mountain top...	6:47
12	Getting off the Ark, I think I told you...	6:54
13	<b>Two. The Visitors</b> Franklin Hughes had come on board...	7:54
14	The first leg of the trip...	4:32
15	The atmosphere seemed a little torpid to Tricia...	3:47
16	The visitors were late for Franklin Hughes's lecture...	7:11
17	They waited for half an hour in a silence...	4:28
18	When they were all present...	5:34
19	Late that afternoon they heard a plane fly over...	5:37
20	Franklin was put for the night in a stateroom...	7:13

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21	Back in the stateroom with the Swedes and the Japanese...	5:44
22	'I had been hoping,' he began...	5:40
23	At this moment a large, unathletic American...	3:45
24	<b>Three. The Wars of Religion</b> Source: The Archives Municipales de Besançon...	4:53
25	Know, gentlemen, what has already been put before you...	5:38
26	Plaidoyer des insectes	4:31
27	In the fourth place...	5:03
28	Replique des habitans	4:07
29	In the third place...	4:18
30	And in the fourth place...	3:26
31	Replique des insectes	3:44
32	In the third place...	4:32
33	Conclusions du procureur Episcopal	5:31
34	<b>Four. The Survivor</b> In fourteen hundred and ninety-two...	4:48
35	People couldn't understand why she got so upset...	4:50
36	I wonder what's happened to Greg.	6:52
37	She left the world behind...	5:05
38	I couldn't tell last night...	4:25
39	She thought she saw another boat on the horizon...	6:45
40	It's laughable. Listen to this dream.	4:23

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41	I'll give you an example.	6:25
42	The one I had the argument with about the gloves...	5:08
43	I knew he'd be back.	5:56
44	It was cunning of him not to contradict me entirely.	6:23
45	<b>Five. Shipwreck I</b> It began with a portent.	5:06
46	It had been intended that one of the naval officers...	6:06
47	The third day was calm and fine.	5:50
48	On the tenth day several of the men...	5:24
49	<b>II</b> How do you turn catastrophe into art?	4:31
50	Notes 1) The Medusa was a shipwreck...	6:41
51	What did he paint then?	6:26
52	Whatever we decide that the old man is thinking...	6:25
53	Truth to life, at the start, to be sure...	6:31
54	And what of that earlier catastrophe, the Flood?	5:27
55	<b>Six. The Mountain</b> Tick, tick, tick, tick.	6:34
56	Amanda did not reply...	7:50
57	It was in the autumn of 1839...	5:26
58	They remained a week in the Ottoman capital...	7:12
59	That day they encountered an Armenian priest...	5:25
60	As they approached Arghuri...	6:11

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61	That evening in their room...	5:16
62	At the first steep slope of Great Ararat...	4:21
63	They rested that night and continued climbing...	5:03
64	Miss Logan and the Kurd took turns...	5:33
65	<b>Seven. Three Simple Stories I</b> I was a normal...	4:58
66	Fifty-two years before I met him...	5:14
67	<b>II</b> What was Jonah doing inside the whale...	5:28
68	What is it about Jonah's escapade...	3:35
69	On 25th August 1891, James Bartley...	4:59
70	<b>III</b> At 8pm on Saturday 13th May...	4:53
71	Immigration, like emigration, is a process...	5:01
72	How much are refugees?	5:11
73	As the ship began its return voyage...	4:20
74	<b>Eight. Upstream!</b> Postcard c/o the Jungle	4:07
75	Letter 2. Darling – If you look in your photo album...	4:15
76	Letter 3. Hey Good Looking!	8:07
77	Letter 4. Dear Pips...	6:15
78	Letter 5. Darling – This priest outfit...	6:19
79	Letter 6. Pippa love...	8:07
80	Letter 7. Dearest Pippa...	5:58

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81	Letter 8. Jesus Pippa. Jesus.	5:53
82	Letter 12. Caracus 21st July...	6:12
83	It was a bloody long wait for the copter...	5:37
84	Letter 13. Christ don't you do that to me...	4:02
85	<b>Parenthesis</b> Let me tell you something about her.	5:06
86	'I love you,' I whisper into that sleeping nape...	5:25
87	'I love you.' For a start, we'd better put these words...	5:51
88	Let's start at the beginning.	6:18
89	This is difficult territory.	5:32
90	Is this how we should think of love?	6:19
91	Do you remember that paradox of love...	5:57
92	Love and truth, that's the vital connection...	4:59
93	There's one thing I'll say for history...	5:05
94	Love is anti-mechanical, anti-materialist...	5:56
95	<b>Nine. Project Ararat</b> It is a fine afternoon	6:31
96	Spike Tiggler had not always been as popular...	5:57
97	Along with his father's car and a resentful Mary-Beth...	4:22
98	At this exact moment a voice said to him...	4:18
99	Appropriate words were pronounced...	6:36
100	The NASA psychiatrist that Betty consulted...	5:29

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101	The Moondust Diner was full that April evening...	5:57
102	A few inches in the Fayetteville Observer...	4:50
103	Some of the journalists with book-learning behind them...	5:57
104	They flew to Ankara where they had to rent tuxedos...	5:39
105	They were alone on the mountain...	4:27
106	It was during their third spell on the mountain...	5:21
107	Things were getting less clear to Jimmy now.	4:27
108	A long silence ensued...	3:57
109	<b>Ten. The Dream</b> I dreamt that I woke up.	5:48
110	After breakfast, I put the tray down...	4:57
111	As for the drinks counter...I had no idea...	5:48
112	What else did I do that first week?	6:03
113	And so life continued, as the saying goes.	4:48
114	It was about this time that I took to meeting...	6:07
115	I think it was the golf that finally made me turn to Margaret...	4:58
116	None of this meant that I stopped doing what I'd always done...	6:31
117	I slept badly that night.	5:13
118	I wasn't sure I was taking all this in.	5:20
119	For the next few centuries...	7:01

**Total time: 10:54:49**

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Julian Barnes

# A History of the World in 10½ Chapters

There is a clue in the title. But it's only a clue. *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* is not a conventional novel, in that there is no single narrative or narrator; nor is there one tale being told from different perspectives. It is not history in the conventional sense, either, which would normally entail making sense of a series of events and giving them a clear, linear meaning or interpretation. Perhaps the biggest clue to the nature of the book revealed in the title is that it is funny and intriguing, knowingly undermining its own grandiloquence. A history of the world in just ten chapters? And what's this ancillary 'half'?

The ten chapters (which is itself misleading. One chapter is divided into two distinct sections, while another is divided into three separate stories. A history of the world in 13½ chapters? Twelve chapters and three half chapters?) are relatively straightforward to summarise. *The*

*Stowaway* tells the story of Noah's Ark from the viewpoint of an uninvited burrower. *The Visitors* has a group of terrorists hijack a cruise ship. *The Wars of Religion* is a legal case fought between the sixteenth century inhabitants of a French town and the woodworm that damaged their Bishop's seat. *The Survivor* is the post-apocalyptic diary of a woman escaping the effects of war on a stolen boat in an attempt to start a fresher, purer life. *Shipwreck* is in two parts – part one deals with the wreck of the French frigate *Medusa* and the escape on a raft of its passengers and crew; part two with Géricault's painting of that escape. *The Mountain* deals with Miss Amanda Fergusson's attempt to reach the summit of Mount Ararat. *Three Simple Stories* (there's a clue there, too – but you will not be surprised to learn the stories are not that simple) tells three tales – one of a man who escaped the sinking of the *Titanic*; one a literary examination of the story of Jonah



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and the whale; and the other an account of the *St. Louis*, which set sail from Germany just before WW II with over 900 Jews on board. *Upstream!* is a series of letters from an actor to his girlfriend while he is filming an ill-fated historical drama in the jungle. *Parenthesis* (the half-chapter) is a meditation upon love. *Project Ararat* tells the story of an astronaut moved to search for the Ark on his return from space. *The Dream* is a vision of heaven as a suburban or possibly sit-com fantasy.

One or two of the linking themes become clear from this brief exposition – ships and shipwreck, Noah’s Ark, survival. One or two of the others become clear when you first get to know the book – woodworm in particular crop up a lot. But these immediate themes are themselves essentially comments, footnotes, echoes and prefigurings, hooks-and-eyes that serve to link the broader ideas that are living in the book’s intelligent, touching, humane, funny, inquisitive, complex narrative. It is not a conventional novel; but it was conceived as a whole and works as a whole because of the delicately maintained queries about man’s relationships with God, with history, with stories and with fables that occur throughout the book. In

many of the chapters, the seemingly disparate tales touch upon the reliability of history itself, how it recurs, what those recurrences might mean, how it is interpreted and remade through art and through memory.

It is knowingly literary in its narrative manner. Several chapters (or parts of chapters) take as their basis genuine historical events and retell them, sometimes in the style of an essay, sometimes as a story. This is done with an eye to making a point about the nature of history and how we can or don’t learn from it, or how fables become fact, or how we are determined to believe there is a pattern to the past. But can we be sure that what purports to be actual history actually is? On the other hand, some of the stories are entirely fictional, but are used to much the same purpose in the book – are these tales less convincing because they are fictional? Especially when the book makes the point that art is about truth, whereas history is about stories. Some chapters are told through fully imagined characters; some with an objective narrator; others are apparently in the voice of the author. But one can never be sure whether the author is actually Julian Barnes or someone he has

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invented – something he himself (which may mean Julian Barnes or some other personality) alludes to directly in *Parenthesis*.

This, however, is not just intellectual posturing, or self-conscious literary game-playing, however much the author is aware of what he is doing, and however entertaining that can be. It works on a more profound, less guarded level because Barnes unveils and examines profundities by approaching them from an unexpected angle rather than head on. Even when apparently approaching them head on. *Parenthesis* appears to be a kind of confessional – touching, heartfelt and personal (we think) – about love; about why it's crucial; about how it can make you a better human being (though not necessarily in the ways you might imagine). At the same time, the chapter is again filled with those deft allusions to the rest of the book that link it to the main narrative, give it a greater depth and validity than if it were simply a confessional. Love and its relationship to the history of the world itself is the vast subject for this apparently intimate memoir.

There is a genius of implication throughout this book that builds from the

first chatty opening lines through the dissertations and legalese, essays, reminiscences and short-story narratives of the others, that catch us wondering how it is we believe what we believe, why we believe it, whether even our own testimony is valid. *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* ranges in stories and styles from the elegantly objective to the brilliantly inventive, from deadpan to exuberant, from myth to fiction to history. In doing so, it illuminates humanity with a rare combination of precision and sympathy, literary neatness and a kind of restrained but limitless compassion. It is not a conventional novel.

### **Notes by Roy McMillan**

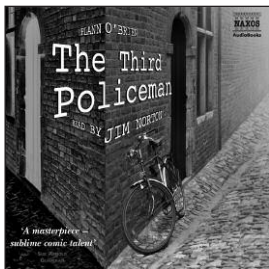


**Alex Jennings** trained at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre Company and has played numerous leading roles for Royal Shakespeare Company productions including *Hamlet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Measure for Measure*, *Richard III*, *Peer Gynt*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. His film credits include *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Derek Jarman's *War Requiem* and *The Wings of the Dove*. He has also read *The Sonnets*, *The Psalms* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* for Naxos AudioBooks.

**Julian Barnes** has published nine other novels, *Metroland*, *Before She Met Me*, *Flaubert's Parrot*, *Staring at the Sun*, *Talking It Over*, *The Porcupine*, *England, England*, *Love etc*, and *Arthur & George*; two books of short stories, *Cross Channel* and *The Lemon Table*; and also two collections of essays, *Letters from London* and *Something to Declare*. His work has been translated into more than thirty languages. In France he is the only writer to have won both the Prix Médicis (for *Flaubert's Parrot*) and the Prix Fémina (for *Talking It Over*). In 1993 he was awarded the Shakespeare Prize by the FVS Foundation of Hamburg. He lives in London.

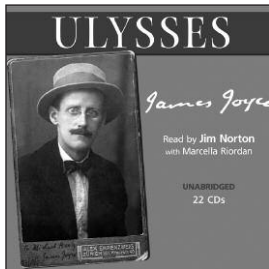
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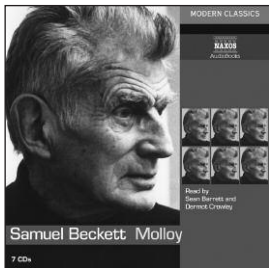


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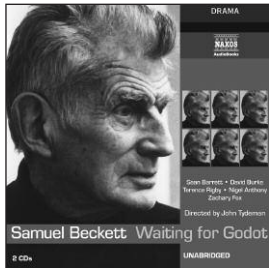
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# Julian Barnes

# A History of the World in 10 1/2 Chapters

Read by **Alex Jennings**

*A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* tells a series of apparently unconnected stories ranging from a woodworm's-eye-view of the journey on Noah's Ark to an astronaut's quest for its final resting place. There is pastiche and learned disquisition; there is heart-stopping documentary and heart-lifting revelation.

But these stories are not separate. They are all linked by a complex weave of inquiry into history itself, into love, myth and fabulation. It's about everything that matters, told with brilliant imagination, intelligence and humour.

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Total time  
10:54:49