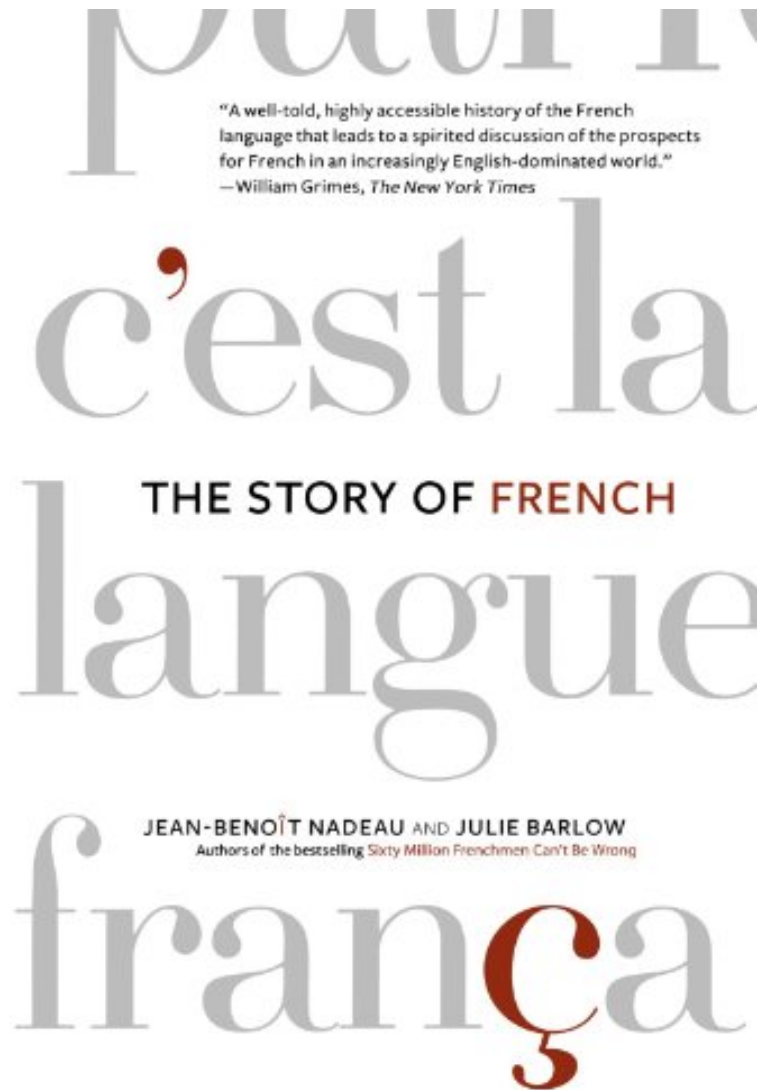


The Story of French

Jean-Benoit Nadeau, Julie Barlow

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Jean-Benoit Nadeau, Julie Barlow : The Story of French before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Story of French:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Being native French I have enjoyed this book enormouslyBy Jean-Michel. GabetBeing native French I have enjoyed this book enormously. Well researched, well documented and well written. A trove of interesting facts, particularly if you have studied Latin for 6 years, ancient Greek for 4 years and are French-English bilingual. The evolution of the language is nothing short of fascinating.4 of 4 people found the

following review helpful. Super book!By CustomerI had read one of the previous books by these authors, on France the country, and learned from it immensely. This book is as good, if not better: thorough to a fault, balanced to a fault, not afraid to state the truth or to offer a reasoned judgement. It is not an etymological study, like those available for English, but rather an examination of where French came from, how it developed and spread and the state of the language today. Detailed examination of French "outremer" (overseas), especially in Quebec and West Africa. Oh, yes, it's also very funny!1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Highly recommended for anyone interested in the history of languagesBy NickThis was a second purchase as I lost my first copy. I found this book absolutely fascinating the first time around, and the second read was an enjoyable review.Highly recommended for anyone interested in the history of languages. I especially found interesting the close relationship between French and modern English. Very readable.

Why does everything sound better if it's said in French? That fascination is at the heart of *The Story of French*, the first history of one of the most beautiful languages in the world that was, at one time, the pre-eminent language of literature, science and diplomacy. In a captivating narrative that spans the ages, from Charlemagne to Cirque du Soleil, Jean-Benoit Nadeau and Julie Barlow unravel the mysteries of a language that has maintained its global influence despite the rise of English. As in any good story, *The Story of French* has spectacular failures, unexpected successes and bears traces of some of history's greatest figures: the tenacity of William the Conqueror, the staunchness of Cardinal Richelieu, and the endurance of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Through this colorful history, Nadeau and Barlow illustrate how French acquired its own peculiar culture, revealing how the culture of the language spread among francophones the world over and yet remains curiously centered in Paris. In fact, French is not only thriving it still has a surprisingly strong influence on other languages. As lively as it is fascinating, *The Story of French* challenges long held assumptions about French and shows why it is still the world's other global language.

From Publishers WeeklyThat major historical moments affect a language's development seems to be self-evident. But in the case of French, as Canadian authors Nadeau and Barlow (*Sixty Million Frenchmen Can't Be Wrong*) exhaustively illustrate, this notion shouldn't be taken for granted, since an insistence on linguistic purity influences how French is taught, spoken and written. What began as a loose confederation of local dialects became mired in a particularly French obsession with linguistic propriety. Despite the natural development of French over time, "[in] the back of any francophone's mind is the idea that an ideal, pure French exists somewhere." Nadeau and Barlow traveled the world to research what they call "the mental universe of French speakers" from its center in France to such places as Canada, Senegal and Israel. "French carries with it a vision of the State and of political values, a particular set of cultural standards," the authors write. They have managed to corral what could be an ungainly subjectboth the history and the present dayin a clearly written, well-organized approach to the lingua franca of millions of people. Francophiles will be well-served by the care and detail with which the authors handle their subject, while English speakers will find an illuminating portrait of Gallic sensibility. (Nov.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.From BooklistThere are more French-speaking people in Israel than there are in Louisiana. The number of French speakers in the world has tripled since World War II. Nadeau and Barlow's history of French is chockablock with these sorts of intriguing facts about the language and its evolution (contrary to common belief, English was a major influence on French, not the other way around). The authors also offer fascinating commentary on the politics of language: despite the best efforts of purists, French, like other languages, is constantly changing and not just cosmetically--new and unconventional words are being adopted, as are new spellings and new grammatical constructions. From its mysterious origins as a conglomeration of other languages to the current squabble over the need to preserve its integrity, French has led one heck of an event-filled life. Sure to please fans of such language histories as Nicholas Ostler's *Empires of the Word* (2005). David PittCopyright American Library Association. All rights reserved A well-told, highly accessible history of the French language that leads to a spirited discussion of the prospects for French in an increasingly English-dominated world. William Grimes, *The New York Times*Exceptionally told, a celebration of the lasting influence of la française. Kirkus s, STARRED Excellent...An engaging and well-conceived book. Highly recommended. Library JournalFascinating . . . a fresh approach to both the language and the history. It combines a detailed and learned grasp of the evolution of the language in various parts of the Francophone world with a personal touch. Mary Ann Caws, Distinguished Professor of French, English, and Comparative Literature, City University of New York*The Story of French* hums with the spirit of a novel, the heart of a travel book and the brains of an essay. Jean-Benoit Nadeau and Julie Barlow have seized an ambitious theme and made it fascinating and easy to read. With a deft and energetic touch, the authors offer personality and wisdom in this wonderful tribute to the French language and the people who speak it. Lawrence Hill, Author of *Any Known Blood*