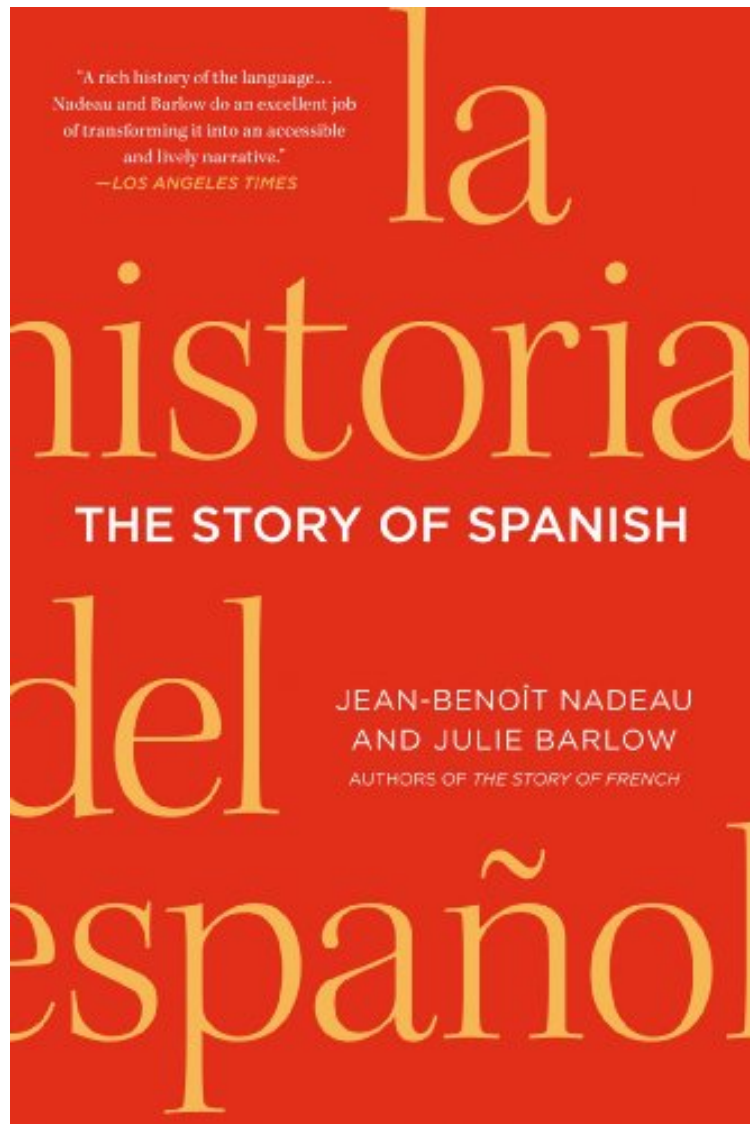


## The Story of Spanish

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

26 of 27 people found the following review helpful. Excellent primer on Spanish History By J. Smith I first heard about this upcoming release from the USA Today about six months ago, and have eagerly awaited to read this ever since. While Jean-Benoit Nadeau and Julie Barlow's research points out that while the Spanish language may suffer from a case of "low-self esteem," it is hardly down nor out. Ever since I took four semesters of Spanish at college many years ago, it's been on my mind that I should try to be more proficient at by reviewing what I know and don't

know about the culture, and this text gives the reader something to think about. Some excellent stories and histories of the Spanish people are featured here. The tales of Alphonse X and El Cid are given their due. The origins of various terms, the significance of "The Land of Rabbits," pieces of eight, how Spanish had an "entropy" effect on the language of South America. Pizarro, the age of exploration, the tango, it's all here. The Spanish language has its challenges in the modern world, but it is still dominant in many countries, and will continue to have a strong influence in the twenty-first century. After reading "The Story of Spanish," I find myself even more curious about Spanish history. Just how do the people of Mexico, Spain, and South America view American culture, books, tv, and movies? How do Americans see Spanish books and movies? The chapter on "magical realism" helped, but I want to know more. This book would make an excellent addition to a Spanish language and history class taught for English speakers; however I'm not sure about some of the authors' observations on recent events in Arizona, and there is perhaps an unspoken bias in a chapter or two. Overall, "The Story of Spanish" is an enjoyable read, and it's a pretty good step in learning more about the language and culture that is still pretty important and dominant in the world. Jean-Benoit Nadeau and Julie Barlow should consider writing the Story of Latin in the future. They've already done the one for French, and now Spanish. Perhaps they should tie everything together with the language both originated from. Sincerely, JThreeWilliston NDcarolyn3@midco.net3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Nice Intro to Spanish Language By Just JeanI was about to dismiss this book on the grounds of its "Guide to Spanish Pronunciation" located on page xi. The authors state that "Consonants B, D, F, K, L, M, N, P, and T: are pronounced the same way as they are in English". Along with this and their comments on pronouncing Spanish vowels, a new speaker of the language following these directives would never acquire a Spanish accent and probably would be immediately recognized as a "gringo". But I persevered and found the book to have some redeeming qualities. The authors cover the spread of the language in almost every country. My one objection is that they slight the Philippines. The language was part of its culture for 300 years and into the 20th century was the official language of the Courts. In addition, its impact is still felt in the culture. The authors' rebuff of Alfonso El Sabio as a great ruler is somewhat puzzling. They state "he certainly did not go down in history as one of Spain's great kings". Quite the contrary, he goes down in history as a great king for laying the groundwork for a unified Spanish state. We don't remember Alfonso for his political blunders or botched wars, but for his scholastic achievements which formed his rule. His law code, as the authors point out, standardized laws and became a foundation law of the United States of America. There are some vocabulary words that the authors give English meanings that are somewhat doubtful. For example, they note that the literal meaning of "La Chingada" when applied to Dona Marina, La Malinche, means "prostitute". Perhaps they meant "figurative" and not "literal". In a literal sense it can mean "raped", " or the vulgar "f" word. In spite of these shortcomings, I found the book to be a nice introduction to the history of Spanish for students who want a start in learning something about the language's history. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A light yet illuminating look at how Spanish grew up and came to be the world's fourth major language By London RatcatchersonThe joy of this book is how it documents the growth of the modern Spanish language from its roots in the Iberian peninsula through the invasions by Roman, Visigoth and Arab conquerors and on through the Age of Exploration, when a small group of Conquistadors took over half the world and ensured that Spanish would be the language of 400 million souls. This could have been a dry read, but the authors through in delightful stories and keep it light and moving. If you're learning Spanish, this book clears up many of reasons why Spanish has ended up in its current form.

Just how did a dialect spoken by a handful of shepherds in Northern Spain become the world's second most spoken language, the official language of twenty-one countries on two continents, and the unofficial second language of the United States? Jean-Benoit Nadeau and Julie Barlow, the husband-and-wife team who chronicled the history of the French language in *The Story of French*, now look at the roots and spread of modern Spanish. Full of surprises and honed in Nadeau and Barlow's trademark style, combining personal anecdote, reflections, and deep research, *The Story of Spanish* is the first full biography of a language that shaped the world we know, and the only global language with two names: Spanish and Castilian. The story starts when the ancient Phoenicians set their sights on "The Land of the Rabbits," Spain's original name, which the Romans pronounced as Hispania. The Spanish language would pick up bits of Germanic culture, a lot of Arabic, and even some French on its way to taking modern form just as it was about to colonize a New World. Through characters like Queen Isabella, Christopher Columbus, Cervantes, and Goya, *The Story of Spanish* shows how Spain's Golden Age, the Mexican Miracle, and the Latin American Boom helped shape the destiny of the language. Other, more somber episodes, also contributed, like the Spanish Inquisition, the expulsion of Spain's Jews, the destruction of native cultures, the political instability in Latin America, and the dictatorship of Franco. *The Story of Spanish* shows there is much more to Spanish than tacos, flamenco, and bullfighting. It explains how the United States developed its Hispanic personality from the time of the Spanish conquistadors to Latin American immigration and telenovelas. It also makes clear how fundamentally Spanish many American cultural artifacts and customs actually are, including the dollar sign, barbecues, ranching, and cowboy culture. The authors give us a passionate and intriguing chronicle of a vibrant language that thrived through conquests and setbacks to become the tongue of Pedro Almodvar and Gabriel Garcia Marquez, of tango and ballroom dancing, of millions of

Americans and hundreds of millions of people throughout the world.

From Booklist\*Starred \* As with *The Story of French* (2006), authors Nadeau and Barlow once again present a thoroughly researched linguistic history, this time chronicling the evolution of Spanish. From its obscure roots in ancient Phoenician, to the more pronounced influence of Arabic (as in *azucar*, from *al-sukkar*, for sugar), to its spread to some 500 million hispanohablantes, or Spanish speakers, the authors cover more than 2,000 years in concise chapters with clever headings like *The Missionary Position* and *Waiting for the Godos* (a pejorative term for the less than warmly welcomed Visigoths of the fifth century CE). The influence of political figures such as the Castilian king Alfonso X, who standardized Spanish grammar, and notorious conquistador Hernn Cortes complements the distinguished literary achievements of authors like Spanish playwright Pedro Caldern, Peruvian poet Pablo Neruda, and contemporary U.S. novelist Junot Daz. And readers will enjoy exploring the similar cultural motives for political actions as seemingly disparate as the Inquisition (intended originally to root out false converts to Christianity) and Arizonas recent SB 1070, the harshest anti-undocumented-immigrant legislation in the U.S. Part anthropological study, part travelogue, this volume is an entirely compelling compendium. --Diego Bez "You don't have to know any Spanish to enjoy this charming biography of what is perhaps the world's least appreciated major language. But you will come to understand its rich history and poetic beauty--and why our children and their children will, in ever greater numbers, be dreaming in Spanish."--Donald Morrison, former editor of "Time "magazine's European edition and author of "The Death of French Culture". "A rich history of the language [...] Nadeau and Barlow do an excellent job of transforming it into an accessible and lively narrative."--"The Los Angeles Times""Part linguistic primer, part cultural history, "The Story of Spanish" zips along crisply."--"The Wall Street Journal ""Nadeau and Barlow once again present a thoroughly researched linguistic history. The authors cover more than 2,000 years in concise chapters with clever headings. Part anthropological study, part travelogue, this volume is an entirely compelling compendium."--""Booklist""An engaging mix of travel, personal anecdotes and extensive research."--"Shelf-Awareness " "You don't have to know any Spanish to enjoy this charming biography of what is perhaps the world's least appreciated major language. But you will come to understand its rich history and poetic beauty -- and why our children and their children will, in ever greater numbers, be dreaming in Spanish."--Donald Morrison former Editor of TIME Magazine's European edition and author of "The Death of French Culture". ""I believe The Story of Spanish"" can contribute to changing common perceptions of Spanish as the language of a struggling minority.... In my opinion, the fact that this book is being written in English is a great advantage...Because it is being written in English, The Story of Spanish"" has the potential to reach beyond [the Spanish-speaking] market."--Alejandra de la Paz Minister of Cultural and Educational Affairs Embassy of Mexico in the United States""The growth of the Latino community in the United States as well as the U.S.' deepening relationships with Mexico and the rest of Latin America form the backdrop of the growth and evolution of the Spanish language.""The Story of Spanish"" promises to be a very important book for the Spanish-speaking world as well as the United States, and I think it is worthy of attention and support from a wide variety of organizations and individuals."--ErikAbout the AuthorJEAN-BENOIT NADEAU and JULIE BARLOW are the authors of *The Story of French* and the bestselling *Sixty Million Frenchmen Can't be Wrong*. They live in Canada.