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All The Time In The World: A Book Of Hours



Synopsis

A follow-up to her popular *Encyclopedia of the Exquisite*, Jenkins' new book offers a string of historical anecdotes structured around the hours of the day, celebrating the unusual, fantastic, and beautiful ways people have spent time throughout the ages. *All the Time in the World* proffers a miscellany of customs, traditions, and pleasures people have pursued throughout the ages. An antidote to the contemporary cult of "getting things done," the book takes its cue from the medieval books of hours, which prescribed certain readings and contemplations for various parts of the day and year. Full of witty *bons mots*, interesting etymologies, and arresting anecdotes, the book encompasses an array of cultures and eras, including ancient Greece, Renaissance Florence, 1930s Shanghai, and the Hollywood Hills of the late 1960s, and drifts through the worlds of fashion, beauty, art, food, and travel. Focusing on the glamorous, eccentric, unusual, and sublime, subjects covered include the daylong ceremony of laying a royal Elizabethan tablecloth; the radicalization of sartorial chic in 1890s Paris; Nostradamus' belief in the aphrodisiac power of jam (and the book of recipes he published the same year as his predictions); the sensuous practice of sniffing incense in fifteenth century Japan; the American fascination with flaming desserts; the short-lived artistic discipline of "lumia," or visual music; the Ottoman Empire's seventeenth-century ban on coffee; the magnetic atmosphere that fueled Parisian high life in the 1920s; Henriette d'Angleville's fearless ascent of Mont Blanc, armed with thirteen guides, twenty-four roast chickens, and eighteen bottles of wine; the elaborate treasure hunts concocted by London's Bright Young Things; and the musical revolution known as bebop. Entertaining, unexpected, and charming, *All the Time in the World* digs up the forgotten treasures of the past and inspires a passion for good living in the present.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The subtitle for this book is "a book of hours." Indeed, that is probably the closest label available, as the book is formatted into a sort of super Day Runner, with each timeslot having a brief essay on a person or event that took place at that hour. Alternatively, you can think of it as a collection of "On this day in history" articles, except it would be "on this HOUR in history." I prefer to consider it a historical smorgasbord of fascinating occurrences. There are just under 100 brief essays on various topics, most attached to a particular time such as Noon or 7:30pm. Interspersed are twelve seasonal can't-be-tied-to-a-specific-time pieces, labeled with the name of a month. As I said, MOST of the articles focus on a single event, such as 11am (when Oscar Wilde, having just arrived in the US, "takes" New York) or 1:50am ("Last Call at La Rotonde"). Some offer brief narratives outlining the development of an item (such as 7:30am's essay on looking glasses) or a concept (11:45am's essay on sun worshippers). Others, such as the 3:50am "Dreamers Take Flight" gently pinballs from ancient Greece to the Marquis Saint-Denys (probably the first person to try to "program" his dreams AND draw "the faint geometric visual hallucinations that swirl when one's eyes are closed, just on the cusp of sleep.") to psychologist Mary Arnold-Forster. The period covered ranges from the beginning of the World (at 9am naturally, at least according to Bishop Ussher's famous calculation) to a handful on the late 20th century.

This morning began chilly and gray, with a fine mist calling out for a warm cup of cocoa. I admit I wasn't in the best mood this morning having had little rest the night before due to the pelting of rain upon the roof and the querulous cries of my infant son waking up three times in the middle of the night. I was in fact incorrigible. I barked at my daughter to hurry as we were running late and quarreled with her father on the drive to her school. I felt, as I often do, that time was racing away from me. I never seem to have enough of it to do everything that needs to be done. I need more time to sleep, to clean, to work with my students, to play with my kids, and when I do have a free moment I felt drained, exhausted, unable to think of the tiniest thing to do with myself. I had forgotten how to enjoy the time that I have. Thankfully the Author, Jessica Kerwin Jenkins has reminded me of how important and wonderful my time can be. I began her book, *All the Time in the World: A book of Hours*, this afternoon beginning with a brief visit to the circus, and a short history of

hot chocolate but was soon being transported around the world with Nelly Blye. Eventually I began to relax in an Orchid Garden with Chinese poets and discovered the nuances of the glass harmonica. Jenkins's book is a collection of wondrous moments, interesting facts, beautiful vignettes and sumptuous recipes. This book is a great respite from the constant push of the modern world as the author takes the reader on a languid tour of history's most pleasurable procrastinations; from the inspiration and wonder of the Ringling Brothers Circus to the Lord of Misrule's Christmastime shenanigans. One never knows where the next entry will lead.

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