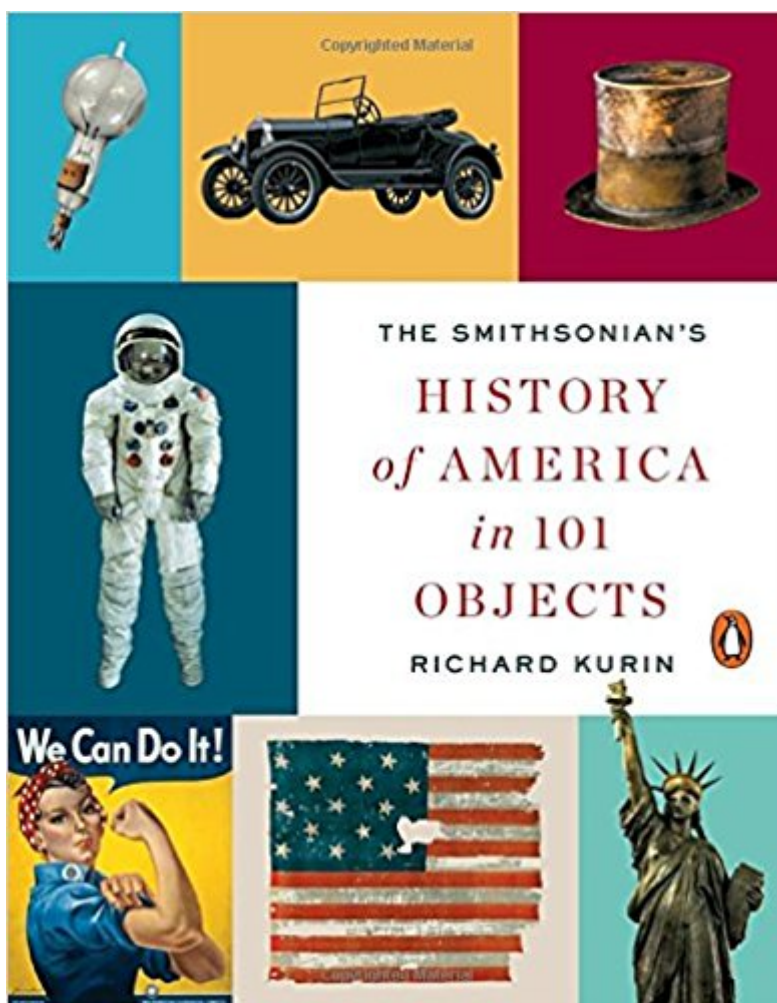


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# The Smithsonian's History Of America In 101 Objects



## Synopsis

The Smithsonian Institution is America's largest, most important, and most beloved repository for the objects that define our common heritage. Now Under Secretary for Art, History, and Culture Richard Kurin, aided by a team of top Smithsonian curators and scholars, has assembled a literary exhibition of 101 objects from across the Smithsonian's museums that together offer a marvelous new perspective on the history of the United States. Ranging from the earliest years of the pre-Columbian continent to the digital age, and from the American Revolution to Vietnam, each entry pairs the fascinating history surrounding each object with the story of its creation or discovery and the place it has come to occupy in our national memory. Kurin sheds remarkable new light on objects we think we know well, from Lincoln's hat to Dorothy's ruby slippers and Julia Child's kitchen, including the often astonishing tales of how each made its way into the collections of the Smithsonian. Other objects will be eye-opening new discoveries for many, but no less evocative of the most poignant and important moments of the American experience. Some objects, such as Harriet Tubman's hymnal, Sitting Bull's ledger, Cesar Chavez's union jacket, and the Enola Gay bomber, tell difficult stories from the nation's history, and inspire controversies when exhibited at the Smithsonian. Others, from George Washington's sword to the space shuttle Discovery, celebrate the richness and vitality of the American spirit. In Kurin's hands, each object comes to vivid life, providing a tactile connection to American history. Beautifully designed and illustrated with color photographs throughout, *The Smithsonian's History of America in 101 Objects* is a rich and fascinating journey through America's collective memory, and a beautiful object in its own right.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Publishers Weekly **★** (starred): "Kurin [has] done a masterful job. Even well-known items have surprising and significant back stories. Unexpected selections make the book even more engrossing, and can make for some emotional reading. Kurin does a terrific job of expanding upon the story of each object, whether it's a pair of slave shackles or a damaged door from one of the New York City fire trucks that responded to 9/11. This humanistic approach to storytelling makes for immersive, addictive reading." • Kirkus

Reviews: "Smithsonian Undersecretary Kurin's tales are abundant, so much so that it seems almost a shame to stop at a mere 101 items.... A well-conceived and well-illustrated pleasure to read, combining narrative history and keepsake volume." • Library

Journal: "A guide like this is all the more useful since such a small percentage of the Smithsonian's holdings can ever be on exhibit. The book is much more descriptive than analytical, as Kurin sets each object, beautifully photographed, in its historical and institutional context." •

Richard Kurin serves as the Smithsonian Institution's Under Secretary for History, Art, and Culture, with responsibility for most of its museums and many of its educational programs. He is an anthropologist and cultural historian, a former Fulbright fellow with a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. He is the author of several books, including *Hope Diamond: The Legendary History of a Cursed Gem*, and his scholarship and museological work have been recognized by the International Council of Museums, UNESCO, and Harvard's Peabody Museum. Awarded the Smithsonian Secretary's Gold Medal for Exceptional Service, he represents the Smithsonian on the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, the White House Historical Association, and numerous other boards.

This is an extremely fun coffee-table book that's not just for history buffs! It's an accessible look into American History that's perfect for teens through adults. My 7-year-old nephew even loves it - there are certain portions he's asked us to read to him more than once. Though I bought it for myself, it would also make a great gift. As I have this book sitting out, a multitude of family and friends (and friends of friends, etc.) have leafed through it and all of them have liked it, so it would even be a good gift for some you don't know all that well! Highly recommended!

Kurin has written a very interesting series of articles about these 101 objects and how they relate to the history of America. It's a brilliant and engaging analysis, well worth the cost and the strength to hold it in your lap.

I am about halfway through the book and am enjoying it very much. However, it is not just the history. I realize that it gives an emerging description of the American Character like no other book I have ever read. You can gaze at each object in detail, consider the respective narrative, and what comes through is a value base--i.e., what is held dearly-- which is distinctly American. I think this is shaped not only by what is gained ("manifest destiny") but by what is lost (the passenger pigeon and near-extinction of the buffalo).

I bought this book as a gift, but from my sneak peak I think this will be an interesting as well as an entertaining book to read.

An excellent book: One of the best put out by The Smithsonian. Anyone, with an interest in American history, will find reading this book a real treat.

What is not to love about anything Smithsonian? It is a coffee table book. Contents remind me of my many fond visits to the Smithsonian and Washington DC. Great glossy photos... Nice descriptions of artifacts.

Love it

This book will spark the interest of just about anybody. There are so many articles displayed in this book including the history behind the articles that it will occupy much of your time and reading enjoyment. Its a book you can place on a table top, and read at your pleasure or skip through and find a certain object in no particular order. I've had this book for about a week now and I've read just read about 2 objects. I've put the book aside for now, and the next day I want to sit and relax and learn a little something more about our history I will pick this book up and continue my read. I look forward to that very much. I will note that the photographs are very well presented, as also the text. Job well done Mr Kurin!

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