



## The Cartoon History of the Universe III: From the Rise of Arabia to the Renaissance (Cartoon History of the Modern World)

By Larry Gonick

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**An irreverent survey in comics spanning world history from the birth of Islam to the Byzantine Empire to the Italian Renaissance.**

Larry Gonick's celebrated series *The Cartoon History of the Universe* is a unique fusion of world history and the comics medium, a work of serious scholarship and a masterpiece of popular literature. Praised by Jonathan Spence in the *New York Times Book Review* as "a curious hybrid, at once flippant and scholarly, witty and politically correct, zany and traditionalist," Gonick's clever illustrations deliver important information with a deceptively light tone, teaching us about the people and events that have shaped our world. This long-awaited new volume covers the Middle Ages around the globe, including the multicultural Middle East, West Africa and the cross-Saharan trade, Central Asia and the Byzantine Empire, the European Dark Ages and the Crusades, the Mongol conquests, the Black Death, the Ottoman Empire, the Italian Renaissance, and the rise of Spain, leading up to Columbus's departure for the new world. Gonick offers an historical survey that is at once multicultural, humanistic, skeptical, and laugh-out-loud funny.

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### Editorial Review

#### From Publishers Weekly

The second volume of Gonick's deeply researched, lucid and hilarious overview of history was published eight years ago. Good things take time, evidently. This third installment begins in the year 395, with the closing of Europe's pagan temples, and ends in 1492, with Columbus and crew setting sail. Readers get an overview of nearly everything that occurred between those two events, from the origins of Islam to the great Chinese dynasties and the Crusades, with "flashbacks" to the rise of African culture, the Turco-Mongol tribes and more. Gonick's take on history is whip-smart, skeptical about familiar but questionable stories and absolutely in command of dozens of simultaneous historical threads. He's also very funny, even at his most respectful. (In the chapter on the life of Muhammad, for instance, he makes a running joke of keeping the prophet permanently off-panel.) Gonick is fond of wacky little digressions, and the book includes plenty of learned slapstick (one ongoing gag concerns the "amazing amount of eye-gouging" in Byzantine history). The architecture and clothes in Gonick's work are drawn with convincing realism, but the people are broad, goofy caricatures, which somehow makes the entire presentation even friendlier: in fact, the author employs a handful of walk-ons disheveled, mustachioed academic types to explain the more complicated points.

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#### From School Library Journal

Adult/High School-This clever, wickedly funny book begins with the birth of Islam, steps back for an overview of the history of Africa, jumps to Turkey and China, peeks at the Dark Ages in Europe, heads back to the Middle East for the Crusades, and wraps up with Christopher Columbus heading west. Gonick has a knack for finding intriguing bits of history that tend to be overlooked in conventional texts and reporting them with irreverent humor, as with the story of the group of Meccans who visited a cathedral in Ethiopia and left an unusual calling card. ("&\*%\$# pagans pooped in my church!" the king complains to the Islamic missionaries.) The book is a mixture of careful research and quips, often dwelling on the irony of people's actions versus their stated beliefs. The black-and-white art is energetic, sometimes spare, but generally evocative of time and place. Highly entertaining.

*Susan Salpini, Fairfax County Public Schools, VA*

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#### From Library Journal

Gonick is a veritable industry, having produced cartoon guides to such wide-ranging subjects as physics, sex, U.S. history, and two previous collections of his Cartoon History of the Universe. His work combines extensive research with two excellent teaching tools: pictures and humor. This volume begins with the founding of Islam in the early 600s and ends with Columbus's departure from Spain in 1492. In addition to covering Charlemagne, the Battle of Hastings, the Crusades, and Joan of Arc, it takes in much that is less widely known in America, including histories of the Byzantine Empire, the Turks, India, and more. Though this volume is not as funny as the previous two, Gonick maintains a light tone throughout the unending cycles of invasion, social decay, and religious warfare. As the title suggests, Gonick's figures are cartoony, but his renderings of ancient art and architecture are detailed and realistic. A long, annotated bibliography rounds out the book. The frank nature of Gonick's comments (and jokes) relating to sex make this for adult collections. An excellent example of the educative potential of comics, this history is highly recommended.

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