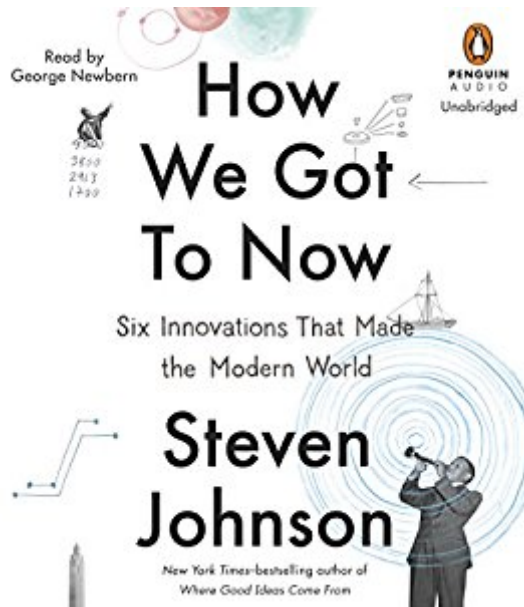


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# How We Got To Now: Six Innovations That Made The Modern World



## Synopsis

From the New York Times best-selling author of *Where Good Ideas Come From* and *Everything Bad Is Good for You*, a new look at the power and legacy of great ideas. In this volume, Steven Johnson explores the history of innovation over centuries, tracing facets of modern life (refrigeration, clocks, and eyeglass lenses, to name a few) from their creation by hobbyists, amateurs, and entrepreneurs to their unintended historical consequences. Filled with surprising stories of accidental genius and brilliant mistakes - from the French publisher who invented the phonograph before Edison but forgot to include playback, to the Hollywood movie star who helped invent the technology behind Wi-Fi and Bluetooth - *How We Got to Now* investigates the secret history behind the everyday objects of contemporary life. In his trademark style, Johnson examines unexpected connections between seemingly unrelated fields: how the invention of air-conditioning enabled the largest migration of human beings in the history of the species - to cities such as Dubai or Phoenix, which would otherwise be virtually uninhabitable; how pendulum clocks helped trigger the industrial revolution; and how clean water made it possible to manufacture computer chips. Accompanied by a major six-part television series on PBS, *How We Got to Now* is the story of collaborative networks building the modern world, written in the provocative, informative, and engaging style that has earned Johnson fans around the globe.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 6 hours and 11 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Penguin Audio

Audible.com Release Date: September 30, 2014

Language: English

ASIN: B00M8HDQ9K

Best Sellers Rank: #20 in Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Reference > Patents & Inventions #41 in Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Reference > History #42 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Specific Topics > Globalization

## Customer Reviews

I found this book to be well written, entertaining and very informative. I have not previously read any

of Stephen Johnson's books, but now I will be on the lookout for them. This book reminded me of the books by James Burke, "The Day the Universe Changed" and "Connections", which discuss the complex evolution of technology, and the interactions of events leading to our modern world. "How We Got To Here" focuses more on innovation than Burke's books, but like them it is also written for a general audience and requires little or no technical background. I recommend this book to anyone interested in history, science and technology and to anyone interested in the strange interconnected tales of how the things that we take for granted were developed. My only minor quibble is that the book is a bit light on technical details. For instance, it discusses pendulum clocks and then pocket watches, but does not describe the difference in their operation, or anything about the development of naval chronometers. I would have liked a bit more technical detail, but this was not a big enough problem to reduce my rating from 5-stars. What is in the book - The book describes six innovations that follow the author's contention that - "An innovation, or cluster of innovations, in one field end up triggering changes that seem to belong to a different domain altogether." This idea can best be understood by examining the six innovation chapters and the short conclusion chapter that make up the book. These chapters are as follows: 1. Glass - The first innovation, the development of glass and how it impacted society, starts with the natural pieces of glass found in the Libyan Desert, and goes on to how men eventually learned to make glass.

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