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## Genius and Discovery: Five Historical Miniatures

by Stefan Zweig

**Price: \$16.95**  
Published: November 14, 2017

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**From the Publisher:** One of two beautifully designed hardback gift editions of Stefan Zweig's breathlessly dramatic historical sketches, out in time for the holidays. Millions of people in a nation are necessary for a single genius to arise, millions of tedious hours must pass before a truly historic shooting star of humanity appears in the sky. Five vivid dramatizations of some of the most pivotal episodes in human history, from the Discovery of the Pacific to the composition of the Marseillaise, bringing the past to life in brilliant technicolor. Included in this collection: "Flight into Immortality": Vasco Núñez de Balboa's quest to be the first European to see the Pacific Ocean. "The Resurrection of George Frederic Handel": Handel falls into depression until a poet sends him an inspirational work. "The Genius of a Night": Captain Rouget writes La Marseillaise, the song which is to become the French national anthem. "The Discovery of El Dorado": John Sutter founds New Helvetia in western America and attempts to keep it. "The First Word to Cross the Ocean": Cyrus W. Field resolves to lay the first trans-Atlantic telegraph cable.

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### About The Author

**Stefan Zweig**  
Stefan Zweig was born in 1881 in Vienna, into a wealthy Austrian-Jewish family. He studied in Berlin and Vienna and was first known as a poet and translator, then as a biographer. Between the wars, Zweig was an international bestseller with a string of hugely popular novellas including Letter from an Unknown Woman, Amok and Fear. In 1934, with the rise of Nazism, he left Austria, and lived in London, Bath and New York--a period during which he produced his most celebrated works: his only novel, Beware of Pity, and his memoir, The World of Yesterday. He eventually settled in Brazil, where in 1942 he and his wife were found dead in an apparent double suicide. Much of his work is available from Pushkin Press. Translated by Anthea Bell.

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### What We Say

Between the two World Wars, Stefan Zweig was one of the most popular writers in the world -- admired in Austria-Hungary, Germany, the United States and pretty much everywhere outside of Great Britain, where the Viennese Zweig never caught their fancy. He disappeared from view but his novellas, memoirs, short stories, novels and more have flourished in reprints lately. Director Wes Anderson even celebrated Zweig via his cream puff of a movie "The Grand Budapest Hotel." Now here comes the reissue of a curious project: a collection of five brief essays on historic moments of inspiration and derring-do. Each essay is about 20-30 pages (maybe) and the entire slim volume flashes by in a white heat. Also out now is a

companion volume called "Triumph and Disaster." I imagined this was dredging the barrel a bit; they've run out of Zweig proper and are packaging together odds and ends? Far from it, apparently. These works he dubbed Historical Miniatures ranked among Zweig's most successful, selling millions of copies in Germany alone. You can read popular historian Simon Winchester's blurb for this collection and no wonder. Zweig combines Winchester's clear presentation of famed moments with Zweig's breathlessly enthusiastic prose style, whipping up a frenzy of excitement over the moments he pins down so neatly. Here Zweig describes Balboa's "discovery" of the Pacific in a caustic, mordant manner so amusing (Balboa was a rogue, to say the least) that you even forgive him for writing that Balboa was the first human to glimpse the Atlantic and the Pacific. (Clearly a woke Zweig would have delighted in tweaking even this presumption with the fact that the locals had done so long before.) He also captures the frenzy of Handel as the man composed "Messiah," the quickly forgotten soldier who dashed off the French anthem "Le Marseillaise" in a few hours, the bitter see-sawing fortunes of John Sutter in California and the laying of the trans-Atlantic telegraph cable. If all history books were written with such elan, it would be the favorite subject of students everywhere. Zweig is funny, sharply observant of human nature, wise, perspicacious and even kindly in a god-like manner as he observes these events from an ironic but never dispassionate distance. You can gulp down the book in a few hours. But that would be like chugging a liqueur. I preferred to read one, take a break with some other reading and then tackle the next in a day or two. They are bonbons of history, amusing and yet not quite trifles because he packs so much insight into the heart of his stories. A real treat. -- Michael Giltz

## What Others Say

"Gems of literary perfection. I felt I had never read such lucid, liquid prose" Simon Winchester, Telegraph "The perfect stocking-filler for the Europhile in your life" Philosophy Football

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