



The Story of French

Jean-Benoit Nadeau, Julie Barlow

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Imagine a language watched over by a group of "Immortals" wearing Napoleonic hats and brandishing swords, one with rules so complex that mastery is a farce, and one whose speakers spend millions of dollars yearly to place it artfully in literature, music, and film. Now consider that this language is second only to English to the number of countries where it is officially spoken and has tripled in use in the last fifty years. Simultaneously frightening users with its delicately nuanced vowels, it is also beloved by millions for its romantic associations. The language is French, and *this*, is its story.

In a captivating narrative that spans the ages, from Charlemagne to Cirque du Soleil, Jean-Benoît Nadeau and Julie Barlow unravel the mysteries of a language that has maintained its global influence despite the rise of English. As in any good story, *The Story of French* has spectacular failures, unexpected successes and bears traces of some of history's greatest figures: the tenacity of William the Conqueror, the staunchness of Cardinal Richelieu, and the endurance of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Through this colorful history, Nadeau and Barlow illustrate how French acquired its own peculiar culture, revealing how the culture of the language spread among francophones the world over and yet remains curiously centered in Paris. In fact, French is not only thriving?it still has a surprisingly strong influence on other languages. As lively as it is fascinating, *The Story of French* challenges long held assumptions about French and shows why it is still the world's *other* global language.

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