

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE WORLD

Storia Universale (from Favole al telefono)
by Gianni Rodari¹

In the beginning, the Earth was a complete shambles. It cost us a lot of hard work to make it more livable. Needed to cross a river? You would have been out of luck: there were no bridges. Wanted to sit down for a bit? Tough luck again. As far as the eye could see there were no benches, stools, or chairs. Needed a quick cat-nap? There were no beds, and no bedsheets. There were no shoes to keep your feet warm, nor socks for that matter. If you had blurry vision, you couldn't simply walk to the nearest optician and get two eyeglasses for the price of one. There were no volleyballs to play volleyball, and if you wanted to boil some pasta, there were no stoves. In fact, there was no pasta. There was pretty much nothing.

There were just people like you and me, with a desire to make things better. But there's still lots to be done: roll up your sleeves, there's work for everyone!

¹Unauthorized translation by Victor Elgersma. Authorized translations are often weighed down by the pressure to be literal. This version keeps the *spirit* of the original while modernizing it without introducing awkward turns of phrase.