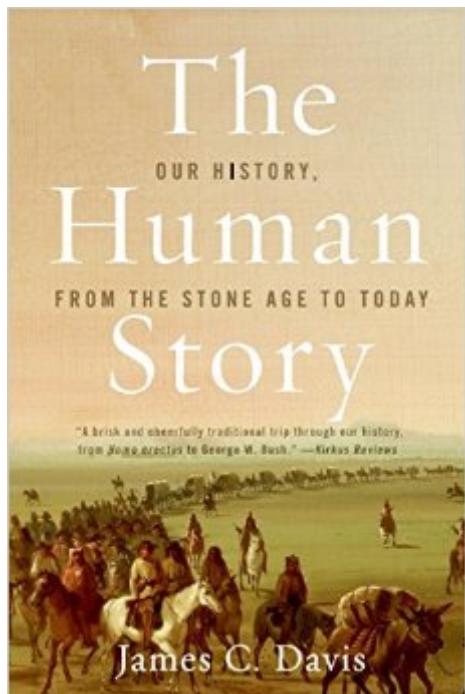


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The Human Story: Our History, From The Stone Age To Today



Synopsis

Has there ever been a history of the world as readable as this? In *The Human Story*, James C. Davis takes us on a journey to ancient times, telling how peoples of the world settled down and founded cities, conquered neighbors, and established religions, and continues over the course of history, when they fought two nearly global wars and journeyed into space. Davis's account is swift and clear, never dull or dry. He lightens it with pungent anecdotes and witty quotes. Although this compact volume may not be hard to pick up, it's definitely hard to put down. For example, on the death of Alexander the Great, who in a decade had never lost a single battle, and who had staked out an empire that spanned the entire Near East and Egypt, Davis writes: "When they heard how ill he was, the king's devoted troops insisted on seeing him. He couldn't speak, but as his soldiers -- every one -- filed by in silence, Alexander's eyes uttered his farewells. He died in June 323 B.C., at the ripe old age of thirty-two." In similar fashion Davis recounts Russia's triumph in the space race as it happened on an autumn night in 1957: "A bugle sounded, flames erupted, and with a roar like rolling thunder, Russia's rocket lifted off. It bore aloft the earth's first artificial satellite, a shiny sphere the size of a basketball. Its name was Sputnik, meaning 'companion' or 'fellow traveler' (through space). The watchers shouted, 'Off. She's off. Our baby's off!' Some danced; others kissed and waved their arms." Though we live in an age of many doubts, James C. Davis thinks we humans are advancing. As *The Human Story* ends, he concludes, "The world's still cruel; that's understood, / But once was worse. So far so good."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The cover of The Human Story asks, Has there even been a history of the world as readable as this? I cannot answer that. But I can state that reading The Human story was absolutely, completely enjoyable. I was captivated at page one, and did not experience a let down until I reached page 440, the last page of the text. One might reasonably ask, How can anyone cover world history in 440 pages and do any of it justice? Well, of the sections of history that I was familiar with, I will admit that I got the feeling: My, we certainly covered that quickly. And yet, that is not the impression one has as one reads the book. James C. Davis's brilliance shows in how he skillfully selected and wove together the important details into a fascinating narrative of human history, from pre-historic times to the present. The end result does read like a very entertaining story. I came away with a much clearer view of the big picture of how humanity has filled the earth. A lot is left out, of course. But what is striking is how much is put in. One reads about China, India, Africa, the great explorers of the world, the great conquerors and adventurers, the world wars, and much more. If you are looking for a book that gives you a good, refreshing swim in the ocean of the human story, you will not be disappointed by this work.

Before writing this review, I read through what others had already said about the book. It's odd to me that such an innocuous book would have such polarized reviews; readers either seemed to love it or hate it. As you can guess by my rating, I fall into the former category. This book is extremely readable. It's not meant for high school students, and would be a lousy first exposure to world history. The Human Story is geared for adults looking to revisit human history from a very broad perspective. As such, it breezes through time, sometimes glossing over entire centuries, sometimes examining a specific event in greater detail. The more critical reviews seem to equate time spent on an event with the author's perceived historical importance of that event. I don't really believe that was the intent at all. What The Human Story does do well is give readers a sense of what was occurring in different parts of the world at the same time. Far too many history books compartmentalize the developments of individual civilizations, as if while one was ascending, nothing was happening anywhere else. Another thing I liked was that, in addition to touching on some of the more famous key points in history, James C. Davis also spends some time on lesser-known events to those of us that slept through our history classes in high school. One of the complaints that I noticed about this book was that it was at times too remedial in tone. I think, perhaps, that if you are a serious historian, that may well be true. However, if that's the case, why would you be reading this book? It's meant to be a light read, giving the casual reader a general sense of things without barraging him with endless names and dates. For everything mentioned in

the 400 some odd pages, there are many moments in history that are skipped over entirely. Far from being a bad thing, though, The Human Story gives you just enough to whet your appetite.

I really enjoyed this book for one major reason - it really helped me put major historical events in context with the global timeline. Like many people, I have learned history generally in isolated segments. For instance, I learned the European history & Asian history independently. By going through the years quickly but with subject-related chapters, this book helped me put a lot of it together in my head in a useful way. This is not the book you would buy if you only want buy one history book. This is a book you buy to bring a lot of bits of knowledge together.

For those who didn't pay any attention in your world history classes and are looking for an overview, this is a great option. I was looking for a book that would introduce me to the people of the past and then allow me, from that intro, to choose what I'm most interested in and then dig deeper (through other books). This book does just that, and it does it at a high enough level that you don't get bogged down or lose interest half way through. I read sections out of the 20-30 odd World History books at Barnes and Noble, and this was one of the few that didn't just list out fact after fact. Another idea, is to purchase the Guide to the Mona Lisa as well and read them together - section by section - from this you'll be able to get a high-level view of art and history.

As a person interested in history, I wondered how it could be crammed into one medium sized volium. After reading about half of it, I found the answer - skip many important facts and topics, run through everything in a shallow manner and you are done. I did not learn anything new or interesting from this book, but felt frustrated and enraged at the superficial treatment history gets here. Sometimes the book sounds like a story for small children - no names, no background to explain historic developments and almost no dates. Even Gombrich's "little history" which was written for children is much better. The chapter about the ancient history of the Jews is based mostly on the Bible, without any reference to archeological or other data. Disgraceful, pretentious, inaccurate and boring.

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