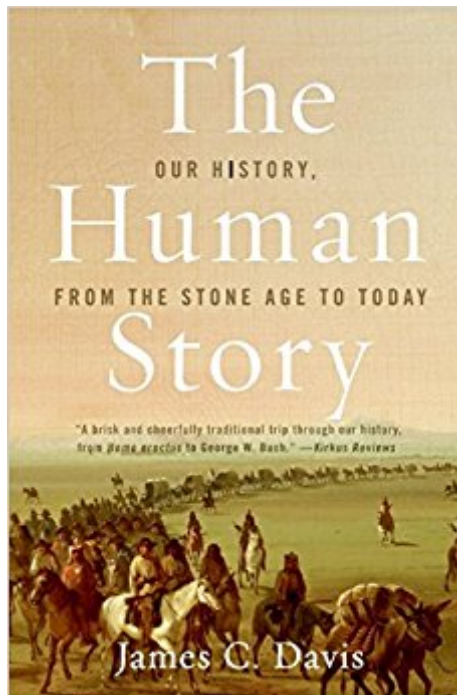




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The Human Story: Our History, From The Stone Age To Today



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

Paperback: 480 pages

Publisher: Harper Perennial; Reprint edition (July 26, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0060516208

ISBN-13: 978-0060516208

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 1.1 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 5.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.5 out of 5 stars 32 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #124,372 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #104 in [Books > Reference > Encyclopedias & Subject Guides > History](#) #117 in [Books > History > Historical Study & Educational Resources > Reference](#) #397 in [Books > History > World > Civilization & Culture](#)

Customer Reviews

Davis, who taught history at the University of Pennsylvania, has taken on an unusual project — to relate all of human history in the simplest terms possible for the broadest audience possible. The chapter titles illustrate his method of abstracting large themes from a multitude of events — "The richer countries grab the poorer," for example, isn't a bad summary of 19th-century imperialism, but it does risk seeming remedial. At his best, Davis does for human history what Stephen Hawking did for the atom and the universe — take a step back from the details and translate them into common terms. But human history lacks the elegance of subatomic particles, so the book constantly flirts with a kind of riotous overgeneralization, treating immensely complex entities like "England" or "workers" as much as possible like single individuals in psychological terms. The method works better for events that are known widely but not in detail — an example is Stalin's purges — for which Davis can bring the reader a smattering of pungent details and move on. For more familiar subjects, the reader may feel the author is being glib. Davis elevates thinkers above leaders, devoting far more space to Newton and Darwin than to Napoleon and Caesar. It is refreshing to have a treatment of human life at once learned and optimistic, and one that so forcefully focuses on the primacy of ideas in our triumphant story. 9 maps, 4 line illus. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Metahistories of humanity are in vogue. Davis' offering marks at least the third gallop from the ice age to the atomic age to be published recently. Like Geoffrey Blainey (*A Short History of the World*, 2002) and Michael Cook (*A Brief History of the Human Race* [BKL S 15 03]), Davis is an academic historian reaching for a mass readership. And, like them, he adopts a plan to appeal to it by illustrating a general point with a human-interest example and using direct and simple sentences. However, there's nothing simplistic about his prose style. Every average reader of Davis' survey will likely have detailed familiarity with some subject and will sense that the author's grasp of it (whether of the history of health, religions, or empires) reveals him to be a reliable pathfinder to the central facts and narrative of unfamiliar terrain as well. Regarding history as a progressive process overall, Davis' reconnoitering of humanity's record of depravity and enlightenment is a wise choice as an introduction to world history. Gilbert Taylor Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I am a high school history teacher who has taught World History for over twenty years. Every few years I conduct a search for a narrative history that I could use to replace my \$100 plus college level

text with. Last year I found the Human Story. After reading the book I asked myself these questions: does it cover everything in the regular textbook (yes and more), does it cost less (yes, 1/10th as much), does it read more like the text book or a novel (while it is non-fiction, it does read more like a novel. The author is an awesome story teller), does it have a kindle edition (yes, many textbooks don't and all of my students have I-Pads and prefer reading on them), and finally is the author a reasonable historian or does he express a bias? Beyond telling a story that is somewhat influenced by who he is the author is fair and balanced. I would recommend this book to someone looking to read history for pleasure or to someone looking for a better option for a textbook.

Even without the author warning us that he would not be able to / and is not going to cover every important event in the World history, we are already psychologically prepared for that. The author rushes through the earlier periods, but his account of the world in the 20th century is very nicely done. I would recommend it.

As an anthropology student I found this book to be quite accurate with regards to the major theories of human movement. I found Davis's writing to be captivating and funny while conveying a great overview of world history. He makes the trends that impacted our world obvious and easy to understand. I would recommend this book to anyone and everyone.

History is interesting and engaging! This book makes history boring and dull.

Are you interested in purchasing this book, but hesitating because of the five (or so) one-star reviews? I just finished reading it, and here's what I think. The one-star reviewers seem to me to have failed to consider the audience that Davis has in mind. He's not writing for graduate students in history, or even history majors or history buffs. He's writing for the sort of person who is fairly bright and aware of what's going on in the world, but a bit embarrassed about his lack of knowledge of history. Such a person has to start somewhere, and this book is an excellent place to start. I suppose I should also warn, for those who care about such things, that Davis's book is a traditional history: it is somewhat Euro-centric, and it's not revisionist, or post-modern, or PC. If that offends you, don't buy it. You may also wish to check out David Fromkin's "The Way of the World." It's another sort of "universal history" which has been widely praised, and is perhaps written for a slightly more sophisticated audience. (I haven't read it yet, so I'm just pointing it out, not recommending it.)

Great book!

I am not a fan of history but this was assigned to me for my AP world civilization class. It talks about civilization with interesting mini stories, I just wish there wasn't so much about war and conquering, but war isn't James C. Davis's fault.

as advertised

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