



Farewell to the Horse: The Final Century of Our Relationship

Ulrich Raulff, Ruth Ahmedzai Kemp (Translation)

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Farewell to the Horse is an engaging, brilliantly written and moving discussion of what horses once meant to us. Cities, farmland, entire industries were once shaped as much by the needs of horses as humans. The intervention of horses was fundamental in countless historical events. They were sculpted, painted, cherished, admired; they were thrashed, abused and exposed to terrible danger. From the Roman Empire to the Napoleonic Empire every world-conqueror needed to be shown on a horse. Tolstoy once reckoned that he had cumulatively spent some nine years of his life on horseback.

Farewell to the Horse: The Final Century of Our Relationship Details

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From Reader Review Farewell to the Horse: The Final Century of Our Relationship for online ebook

Cynthia says

I could not stay awake through this book. I opened it with great anticipation and really loved the idea of the book but it did not hold my attention. I was not able to finish it.

Donna says

An interesting look at the role of the horse through human history

Kate says

Poetic, associative and deeply informative. I checked it out of the library and am considering buying a copy. Raulff did get the color of Tom Mix's horse wrong though -- Tony was a bay.

Naomi Sunshine says

There's some really interesting material in here but it's a bit of a slog!

Joan Colby says

Translated from the German, Raulff's book is an exhaustive and intellectually brilliant study of the horse's impact on human industry, agriculture, war, art, society and pleasure. The dependence on the horse for transportation, farming, battle, racing, hunting and so on was a lengthy one that gave way in many respects to the industrial revolution and development of the machine. Numerous occupations were associated with the horse: veterinarian, farrier, equine artist, trainer, jockey, cavalryman, grower of oats and hay, breeders, bloodline experts, grooms, drivers, et al. Many of these continue to exist with the horse now primarily used for sport or pleasure. Farewell to the Horse is extensively illustrated and any equine enthusiast as well as the general reader interested in how social and economic change was affected by the horse's role will find this book a masterful accomplishment.

J M says

Excellent / Erudite

Doctor Science says

Very much a *cultural* history, really a collection of horse-related facts and thoughts centering on Europe and North America in the "Long Nineteenth Century" (1792-1914). "Farewell" because after that horses became less and less important as historical and economic actors--though they were still much more crucial on the Eastern Front in WW2 as draft animals than I had realized.

It gave me a lot to think about, but his Eurocentrism makes the history only a starting point.

Jasmin Brooks says

A well-researched and educational read. I enjoyed the breadth of knowledge found in the pages.

Unfortunately, the execution of this great history makes it all fall short. Often scattered, often repetitive, and sometimes downright dull with ramblings.

I toyed with giving this book four stars. It really did contain a good deal of captivating stories and histories about the horse. But since I had to force myself to keep reading so often throughout, I couldn't justify more than three.

Kris McCracken says

I'm not a horsey chap, but there is enough here to keep a history buff's attention. It certainly makes a strong case for the centrality of the horse in the growth of societies, and the impact of that growth on our world today.

Well worth a look.

Cecelia Conway says

Interesting premise but difficult to read

Mehrsa says

This book seems like it was a LOT of fun to write. It feels much like a conversation with a really smart and interesting person who knows everything there is to know about horses as they relate to literature and world events and man. And during this long and random conversation, there are points where you sit up and listen because you have never thought about things that way and certainly never thought to consider human history through the horse.

But just because it was fun and interesting to write does not make it fun and interesting to read. It was a slog.

I mean, the writing is beautiful and thinking in certain parts is superb, but it just doesn't come together in a way a book should. It's just random glittery objects that are interesting to look at scattered on a canvas, but that don't make a complete picture.

Mary Monro says

I've given up on this book. It is well written but the basic premise is wrong. Sure, horses no longer work but, as the author acknowledges, their numbers have increased massively in the last 4 decades as they have found a new role in the sport & leisure world. This is similar to the shipping story - overtaken as a means of transporting people and freight, ship passengers have increased from half a million in the 70s to 25 million now as the cruise market has taken off. I don't see any books titled 'farewell to the ship'.

Also, the author clearly knows nothing about horses. It would be like me writing a book about pianos, when I can't play one and know nothing about music.

Willoyd says

So disappointing. This started really well and promised much with some fascinating insight into the importance of the horse and its impact on the long nineteenth century world. However, it soon started its descent into an unstructured and verbose mess of largely unrelated mini-essays, much of which didn't even relate to the defined time span. It became harder and harder to keep reading as the book became more and more self-indulgent, until eventually I felt almost driven to give up. Utterly frustrating as this could have been such a good read.

Kate says

This cultural history intrigued me. It is in places well written, in places repetitive, in places a vivid expression of the writer's opinions. It is, after all, a cultural study, and any one of us has a set of opinions about our and others' (present and past) cultures. It does hold onto the horse as the central idea around which he explores humans and how we deal with our surroundings and our others.

He introduces, frequently throughout this book, very interesting ways of looking at concepts such as geography, pictorial art, commerce, war, power. I am glad to have read (albeit, in places, skimmed) this book.
