



Mankind: The Story of All Of Us

Pamela D. Toler

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It takes more than 10 billion years to create just the right conditions on one planet for life to begin. It takes another three billion years of evolving life forms until it finally happens, a primate super species emerges: mankind.

In conjunction with History Channel's hit television series by the same name, *Mankind* is a sweeping history of humans from the birth of the Earth and hunting antelope in Africa's Rift Valley to the present day with the completion of the Genome project and the birth of the seven billionth human. Like a Hollywood action movie, *Mankind* is a fast-moving, adventurous history of key events from each major historical epoch that directly affect us today such as the invention of iron, the beginning of Buddhism, the crucifixion of Jesus, the fall of Rome, the invention of the printing press, the Industrial Revolution, and the invention of the computer.

With more than 300 color photographs and maps, *Mankind* is not only a visual overview of the broad story of civilization, but it also includes illustrated pop-out sidebars explaining distinctions between science and history, such as why there is 700 times more iron than bronze buried in the earth, why pepper is the only food we can taste with our skin, and how a wobble in the earth's axis helped bring down the Egyptian Empire. This is the most exciting and entertaining history of mankind ever produced.

Mankind: The Story of All Of Us Details

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Tara says

I have a confession to make. I think I've forgotten about 95% of all the information I learned during history classes in school. That's why I decided to read this book, but it didn't help much. The chapters are somewhat disjointed and rely on previous knowledge of the subject. I think this book is definitely better than others covering the same broad scope of history, but it wasn't a good fit for me.

Reiza says

Judge me, but I think this book has its kind of bias about seeing our entire history as a species. But I understand it though, for this book is made primarily for western readers.

What really caught me is the quote in the final chapter of the book:

"What happens next in the story of the human race? It's all up to us."

Kind of reminding me that history is still on progress, and that we all are the players.

Carina says

I watched the series then read the book. The book does a better job at explaining the historical significance of the side stories.

Timothy Culp says

This sat on my bookshelf for a long time because I had watched the mini series on the History Channel. I would have rated it 5 except there were numerous typographical errors in the text and the transition of the sections were sometimes haphazard. The layout also did not work well reading on my phone or tablet.

That aside, what I like about the book is it's a look at history based on how technology and advances in science affected mankind's evolution. Most history books only talk about how people changed history; this is a look at how information transformed us (domestication of wheat, discovery of iron, tracking diseases to patient zero, invention of rubber, etc.).

Full of tons of interesting trivia...it's a fun read.

Ariel Lynn says

I think this book was a really fantastic undertaking - from The Big Bang up until recent years & major advances. That said, I wish they had taken more care to make sure that they edited it properly & took the time to double-check everything.

Some issues I found w/this book include:

- In some instances, there are charts alongside the text. In at least one or two instances, these sources of information don't match. For example, at one point, the text says 100+ million people were killed by the plague - which sounds pretty fantastic a number - & the chart says fewer than 75 million died.

- Spelling & grammar errors. These irritate me, as a reader & as an English major/writer. Some are simply slip-ups, like adding an "m" to a word where it shouldn't be, or a "-" out of place, but I think the worst was on a map where "Chile" was spelled "Chili."

My subjective issues w/this book include:

- There's no mention of the Great Wall of China. Not word one. Considering the Asian cultures are a significant subject covered, I found this ... just really weird!! I mean, you can see the wall from space!!

- The "eye-witness" or "Creative Nonfiction" sections, which appear on a sort of goldenrod paper to show it's different from the regular text; I take issue w/these sections b/c they're mostly made up, w/some support from historical documents, but that information is withheld until the very last page before the book's index. I think this information really would have been better placed in the beginning so that a reader knows what he/she can expect.

- The amount of attention given to different cultures & religions is very lop-sided, to say the least. Muslim culture, which, clearly, gave the most to the development & furtherance of the human culture, was given significant space. Christianity received at least a few pages, perhaps 3-5. Judaism, however, was hardly touched on - it received fewer than 2 pages. It didn't seem appropriate, considering the New Testament & its codification of laws played a significant role in future laws, including those in the U.S. I really felt it deserved ore attention.

Alexfunghi says

I like this book, because I like reading history book as if it is a extra extra long story book, about the past. Why do I want to know about the past? To learn from mistakes people had made through all those centuries and decades, and also see how people changed from apes to Neanderthals, to modern human beings, and as well as how Earth changed and cause huge changes from a split second to cause humans to be successful. Its complicated and there are many more examples, one of those examples are: if there ancient humans did not discover fire, they might be more dumb, because if they need to digest raw food, they will need a larger digestive system to digest the raw food, this will take up more space so their brain and skull will shrink smaller (aka. gets dumber) And if they got smarter, they will start to use and make new tools, start trades, build... etc. Why did I enjoy it? I enjoy it because I like reading about my favorite empires the Polynesians, the Romans, the Greeks, and reading about my favorite time periods, the ice age, the medieval and the renaissance. Sometimes I just read it though the night, its so interesting, I can't stop reading, even though I finished it a several times. I recommend this book to people who love reading their history book from school

in their free time, I am sure you will not put this book down until you finish it up, but make sure get enough sleep.

Jennifer Bieniek says

Can't get enough of this book! The story itself plus the sidebars are truly fascinating. A must-have for any history buff!

Uluwehi Hopkins says

This is a good book for world history classes in which you need to cover all of human history in just a few weeks. It is a very easy read, and insets smaller stories here and there that help give context to the bigger story being told.

However, it was badly edited - there are a lot of typos as well as some factual errors. It also plays right into the western dominance of academia by only paying attention to European and American histories. There's some of Asia in there, but only China, Japan, and the Mongols. Native Americans, Polynesians, and other indigenous groups are practically absent, just like any other world history textbook.

Finally, there are definite biases embedded in the text. For some reason the author seems to think very lowly of Venus figurines, thinks that civilization is owned only by western peoples, and does seem to celebrate all technological advances. And, the fact that the book's title is "Mankind" instead of "Humankind" should not be overlooked.

Corinne Edwards says

What this book is, simply, is a book about the history of humanity, from our first societies until the present day. It focuses on major themes and turning points that have changed things so drastically that civilization was never the same. From the Ice Age to the first farmers, the history of weaponry and wars, food production, trade and communication, revolutions and explorations - Mankind reads chronologically but draws grand comparisons. It's a very colorful volume, visually, the text is very accessible to non-historians. There are many small vignettes throughout, giving a personal-type narrative to how a certain event or period would be reflected in the life of a singular person's experience. There are also maps and text-boxes that give in-depth descriptions of different terms and concepts.

I found it fascinating. I would carry this giant book around in my bag and read it whenever there were spare moments (and it's a heavy one!). I feel so much better informed about the history of the world. I loved the part about exploration and how it affected both native cultures and the larger globe. My only complaint, and why I am giving it four stars instead of five, is that while throughout the entire book we really got a world-wide history, the last bit of the book is heavily western-hemisphere and USA-based. It kind of petered out and got a bit muddled at the end without wrapping up in the grand way I'd imagined based on the quality of the rest of the text. It didn't spoil it, I just expected more.

If you have any passing interest in world history, this gave me a lot to think about and I feel like a better

informed global citizen.

Eric Zulueta says

A very interesting - and quite readable - book on the history of the world. The author follows the same tact as the tv series with more information in the form of sidebars thrown in..

The book deals with links between events - so those looking for huge sections dealing with the world wars will be sorely disappointed. :)

Highly recommended!

Jo * Smut-Dickted * says

This is a fascinating series running currently on The History Channel. My daughter and I are addicted. The book is a great companion - and we've been reading pieces as we go along. It provides more depth to what is shown in the series - and it's the kind of book that you can pick up and read parts without any issue. There are lots of pictures. It is not dry at all and was a great purchase!

John Pyrcce says

A breezy overview of all of human history. A short read, with some things I didn't know. Obviously with the scope of the subject there is a great deal of editorial judgement in deciding what to include and what not to include. Some profiles are for extremely minor characters. There are some notable omissions, like all of the religious wars in Europe. I didn't realize how cold Europe was in the Ice Ages: the same as modern day Antarctica! Fun and fast, but maybe the author is a bit religious.

Andi says

This is our story, our legacy. After I read this book, I realize that we do not inherit our civilization from our ancestor, unless we borrow it from our children.

Al Bokolor says

Excellent easy to follow history book with lots of interesting side bars.

Henry Martin says

A fairly breezy fly-by look at the evolution of mankind beginning with the early days when humans roamed the grasslands of Africa, then jumping to the ice age, immediately followed by the establishment of first societies and the transition to farming. From that point on, the path is more concise, covering the major (and only the major with a capital M) developments in humanity.

Since the subject topic is so vast, it is understandable that a feat of this magnitude cannot be accomplished in a single volume. However, seeing that this book was released in conjunction with the History Channel mini series of the same name, one must realize that History Channel is not exactly the right source to seek enlightenment. Rather, as the channel itself caters to the lowest common denominator and attempts to keep the viewer interested with sensationalism, this has to be taken into account when considering this book as a whole.

So, did I learn anything new? Not really. But the book provided an opportunity to share a journey with my child, and for that I am grateful.

The chapters in this book are fairly short, fairly educational, and fairly entertaining. They allowed me to share the milestones in mankind's development with my child, have conversations about topics we read about, and, hopefully, entice a further future explorations into the complicated history of humanity.

As with any work of this kind, one must realize that history, in general, is written by the victors. Thus, the topics covered in this book were in line with that approach, highlighting the successes and disregarding the disasters. It was to be expected. Aside from a brief cautionary chapter following the story of Hiroshima, there was hardly any exploration of the darkness of the human soul, or the simple fact that history, as we know it, repeats itself. The book, nevertheless, provided me with an opportunity to discuss the fact that empires rise and fall, and that nothing is to be taken for granted.

The book suffers from the same 'being politically correct' expectations so many books suffers from today, as it attempts to have an almost universal appeal. One exception was the chapter on Congo and the terrors committed there. The distant past, however, was almost romanticized. Likewise, the not so distant past, especially the industrial revolutions and the agricultural 'revolution' failed to depict the evil the so called 'visionaries' committed along their path of greed. The chapter on agricultural revolution could have been better if the benefits of GMOs were discussed against the dangers associated with the practice, for example.

Overall, even though I cringed every now and then, it was a read I enjoyed, if for no other reason than to spend a time with my child. That is priceless.

One major caveat is the poor editorial input. The book contains many typographical errors, and the chapters are often interrupted by separate stories which is distracting.

I don't think I can recommend this to history buffs, but I would recommend it as a gateway to start talking about history with those unfamiliar with the story of mankind.
