

The Human Story: Our History, from the Stone Age to Today

By James C. Davis

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Has there ever been a history of the world as readable as this?

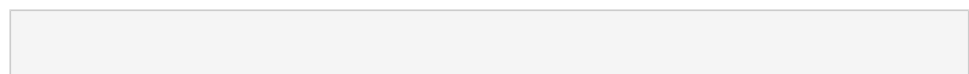
In *The Human Story*, James C. Davis takes us on a journey to ancient times, telling how peoples of the world settled down and founded cities, conquered neighbors, and established religions, and continues over the course of history, when they fought two nearly global wars and journeyed into space.

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."



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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

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.

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From [Booklist](#)

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*
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Review

"A brisk and cheerfully traditional trip through our history, from homo erectus to George W. Bush" (Kirkus Reviews)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Teresa Howard:

Nowadays reading books be than want or need but also get a life style. This reading behavior give you lot of advantages. Associate programs you got of course the knowledge your information inside the book that improve your knowledge and information. The knowledge you get based on what kind of reserve you read, if you want have more knowledge just go with education and learning books but if you want truly feel happy

read one together with theme for entertaining for example comic or novel. The The Human Story: Our History, from the Stone Age to Today is kind of book which is giving the reader erratic experience.

Ruth Barnett:

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Russell Fielder:

Is it a person who having spare time in that case spend it whole day by means of watching television programs or just lying down on the bed? Do you need something totally new? This The Human Story: Our History, from the Stone Age to Today can be the reply, oh how comes? A book you know. You are so out of date, spending your time by reading in this brand new era is common not a geek activity. So what these publications have than the others?

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