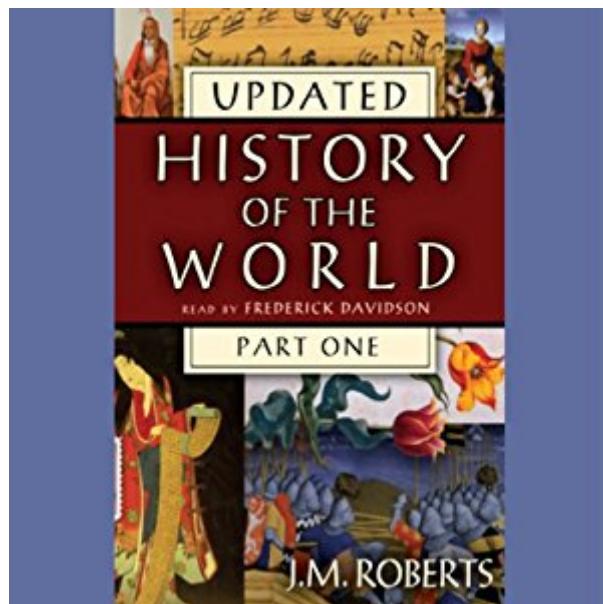


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History Of The World, Updated



Synopsis

In the History of the World, Updated, J. M. Roberts has revised his monumental previous work, History of the World, taking into account the great range of discoveries that have altered our views on everything from early civilizations to post-Cold War globalism. Large portions of text have been rewritten, addressing events as recent as the relationship between the Arab and Western worlds in the wake of the September 11 attacks. As in his previous work, this is also a book of extraordinary ambition, clarity, and style that follows the central notion that human history is the story of change, a deliberate shaping of experience and environment. Among the elements that have made the book uniquely appealing are its powerful vision and voice. Roberts's book is exceptional in its genuinely global and comprehensive nature, showing the development of different civilizations through the ages, from our origins on the African savannah to A.D. 2002. Like no other book, it succeeds in conveying the staggering diversity of the human experience across a vast range of circumstances and habitats. If there is one book anyone truly interested in history should hear, this is it.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As far as general surveys of world history go, this book is excellent. Roberts doesn't deluge you in events, dates, places, names, nor does he overindulge in anecdotes or generalizations. Rather he lays out the major trends and happenings in history, examining the important events, causes, and consequences of each. He does a good job of tying the history together, which helps enormously in making it interesting. It's long enough to not have to gloss over many important developments without being (too) imposing. And the style is intelligently readable, neither too scholarly nor too chatty. If you're interested in how the world came to be what it is today, and want to give yourself a

comprehensive overview of history, this is a great book to read. Chances are you'll become fascinated with some era or event and want to learn even more about it. The first and worst of its minor problems is that this book won't help you learn more. There are no references, citations, recommended readings, or bibliography. Roberts didn't research all of history himself; I'm certain he knows of many, many great resources, and it would have been helpful for him share them with us. The 2000 multivolume edition supposedly fixes this, but it's quite expensive. Roberts' stated overall theme is the shaping of the modern world through history, and the book is paced accordingly. About half of it is dedicated to the years 1700 onward, which may or may not suit your interests. If you're inclined towards classical and medieval history as I am, you'll probably want to find good surveys of those periods. The modern section is detailed enough as to make one redundant. I especially would have liked more descriptions of social and cultural life; those included are relatively minimal.

J.M. Roberts is a good popular historian. Of the several works of his for the popular audience that I have read, all have come across as interesting and well organised, accessible and fairly objective. Roberts also writes for scholarly audiences; while his popular works are not rigorous, his other works prove that there is serious scholarship underpinning these works. Roberts' large, one-volume 'History of the World' joins many such volumes in having strengths and weaknesses, the primary weakness affecting them all being the inherent problem of selectivity. The history of the world, even if one simply means by this the history of human civilisation, has so much data in so many directions that ultimately no single volume (or, indeed, whole series of volumes) will satisfy all on every count. Roberts begins with the pre-historical beginnings of human beings in various parts of the world, based on archaeological evidence. He then explores of civilisation in various parts of the world (Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, India - all the places civilisation arose largely independently of each other). From there, Roberts traces the advances of civilisation through the Classical Mediterranean period, the post-Roman imperial time, the period of European expansion around the world, the period of world wars, and the modern post-war period. Within these broad divisions, Roberts introduces the history of other parts of the world -- the Islamic civilisation, more advanced than the post-Roman lands, is not seen as a mere afterthought or addendum to the 'real' action in Europe; Roberts also traces historical development in China, India, and Japan as major centres of civilisation.

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