

Sapiens Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *Sapiens* is your guide to becoming an expert on the entire history of the human race as it reviews everything our species has been through from ancient ancestors to our dominating place in the world today.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Try this fun little experiment right now. Extend both arms out from your body so they make a horizontal line. Stretch them as far as you can. Let this span represent the history of our Earth. What length between your arms would represent human history?

If you think it's as big as an arm, elbow, or hand, you'd be pretty far off. Amazingly, our time here would only represent a tiny amount so small you'd need a microscope to see it!

Even though our existence on Earth is relatively short, we've come far. What steps led us to dominate the planet like we do? In Yuval Noah Harari's *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, he reviews each step that got us here. You'll learn each of the elements in our history, from language and money to science, that made us who we are.

Here are the 3 most interesting lessons this book teaches about our species:

1. The ability to think gave early humans language, which eventually led to agricultural advances allowing them to grow exponentially.
2. Improvements in trade were only possible with the invention of money and writing.
3. With better economic and communication means, scientific progress gave our race the abilities necessary to get to where we are today.

Are you ready for an exciting crash course on the entire history of mankind? Here we go!

Lesson 1: Exponential population growth began with agricultural advances after early humans had the ability to think and speak.

Homo sapiens had some distinct advantages that let them get ahead of other human species on earth. Most importantly are the differences in humans brains. These began with the *Cognitive Revolution* around 70,000 years ago. This was a time when mental development rose relatively suddenly, setting our ancient ancestors apart.

With their newfound better brains, Homo sapiens could outperform other species of humans. Forming communities, developing better hunting tools, and building simple trade networks made everything about life and survival easier.

As the ability to communicate grew, so did the population. Language set our species apart from others because it made us able to distribute information more freely. This helped early people share lessons about predators and food with each other. **Because humans could cooperate as a society and flexibly, ideas spread which made even more progress possible.**

Not long later, the *Agricultural Revolution* gave humans another great advantage. By deserting old hunting and gathering methods for farming, mankind further improved their situation. This new method, although slow to begin, was far more efficient than the old ways, and let population growth explode.

Things were looking up but there was a problem. Coping with this larger community would require mankind to make even more advances to get to where we are today.

Lesson 2: The inventions of money and writing let mankind trade more efficiently, paving the way for further expansion.

With agriculture, humans became more efficient with their time and energy. This let some people begin doing other work like weaving or blacksmithing. These individuals would then trade or barter with farmers, exchanging their goods for food. While this new system was better, it quickly became inefficient.

Let's imagine that you're living at the time and you've chosen blacksmithing as your profession. Your assortment of knives and swords provide good means to trade for food, like pork. Seems easy enough to just make the trade. But what if the farmer in your town already has a knife? Or maybe he's not got a pig to kill for you yet. He can promise you one, but how do you know he'll be honest about it?

It's easy to see how having writing and money would make your situation a lot better. With the ability to record your transaction with the farmer, you can make sure he keeps his word if he needs to promise you a pig. **And if you don't have anything he needs, you can just sell your knife for currency, like barley, to make the transaction.**

From here, advancements for Homo sapiens began happening rapidly. Pretty soon laws helped regulate everything to be safer. With the ability to write, economies and governments could grow. Society began to flourish, and the next step was science.

Lesson 3: Our society today is a result of explosive technological and scientific growth that came after our ancestors could trade and communicate better.

Now that they had efficient food, trading, and writing methods, our ancestors could begin thinking more. This led to a *scientific revolution* with many people considering ways to improve their way of life. Experimentation and exploration became common, and massive leaps in astronomy, physics, and medicine made life significantly better.

Take the child mortality rate, for example. We may take for granted the ability to have children that don't die young, but this wasn't always the case. Before medical advancements, it was common for two or three children to die prematurely in even the richest families. Today, things are even better and only one out of every 1,000 kids dies in childhood.

Humans also saw opportunities to expand globally. **Governments helping fund explorers and scientists saw great expansions in their empires.** Christopher Columbus's journey to America as well as that of James Cook to the South Pacific are just a couple of examples. Rapid growth into these areas followed these explorations, paving the way for the globalization we have today.

Although we've had our times of war, the history of mankind has now come to a place of great peace and prosperity. Some may see our unification as homogeneous and boring, but the lack of war in recent years is unprecedented. And while we may deal with other modern problems, but we can thank the advancements of each of our ancestors for the pleasant place we find ourselves in now.

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Sapiens Review

Well that was an interesting read for sure! *Sapiens* is jam-packed with everything you need to know about the history of our species. It was fascinating to learn about the steps in our progression from early man to our technologically advanced society today.

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Who would I recommend the Sapiens summary to?

The 27-year-old who doesn't know much about history but would like a crash course in it, the 54-year-old that's religious but wants to gain a more balanced view of mankind's history, and anyone who's curious about how our species got to where it is now.