

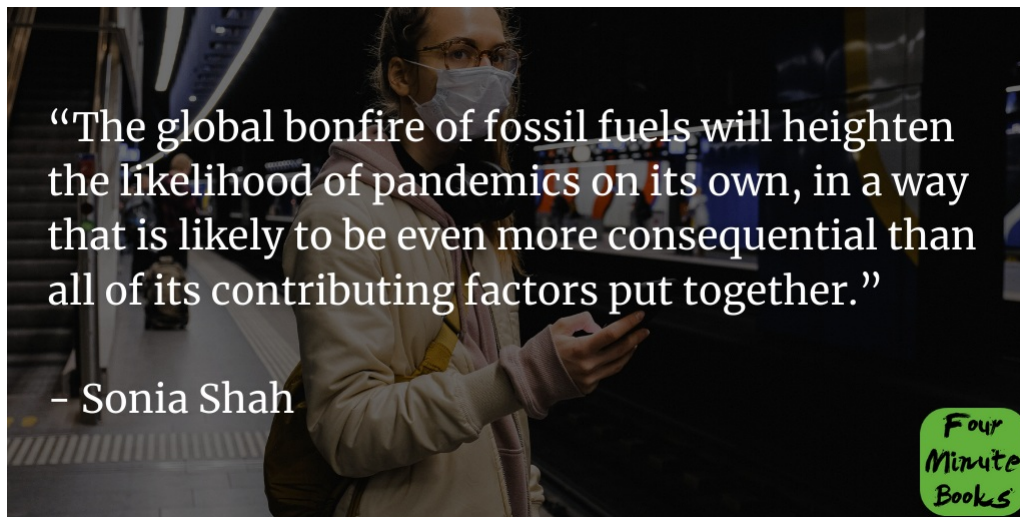
Pandemic Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *Pandemic* gives you an understanding of what pathogens and diseases are, how they evolve, what our lifestyle does to make them worse on us, how they can spread like wildfire, and most importantly, what we can do to stop them.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



For years epidemiologists have been predicting a new pandemic would sweep the world soon. They've been warning us that we should be ready. Currently, humanity is in the midst of just that. COVID-19 originated in Wuhan and spread around the world in just months, overwhelming healthcare systems and shutting down entire countries.

Sonia Shah's *Pandemic: Tracking Contagions, from Cholera to Ebola and Beyond* is incredibly relevant to what we are experiencing at this moment. It's fascinating to see the very things she described that have happened before our eyes. Some governments have inadequately handled the situation and germs are quickly spreading through modern travel, just to name a couple.

This book will teach you everything you ever wanted to know about pandemics.

Here are the 3 most relevant lessons I took away from this book:

1. As humans have settled all across the world, pathogens have adapted to infect us.
2. Modern things like our global transportation systems and increased waste have made it easier for pathogens to spread.

3. We are often held back from addressing outbreaks because of politics and false beliefs.

Get your face masks and gloves ready and let's get smarter about pandemics!

Lesson 1: Germs have adapted to humans as we have spread around the globe.

In the last tens of thousands of years, humans have spread all around the globe. People are found on every continent and in all different types of environments. But there have been some serious consequences to this spreading out.

An example of this is a Mangrove forest in Bangladesh that was left uninhabited by native people because it was considered a cursed land. When settlers from the East India Company came to cultivate the land for rice, they unknowingly exposed themselves to the abundant cholera bacteria that thrived in the land.

As they consistently bathed in and drank the contaminated water, the bacteria were able to adapt to human bodies. They did this by forming tails to bond together and colonize in a film in the gut.

Another example is the SARS epidemic that came out of a Chinese "wet market." These markets sell many live animals for consumption, such as bats, turtles, and snakes. The SARS virus originally only infected horseshoe bats.

However, because they had so many animals caged close together, it adapted little by little. This continuous exposure gave it the opportunity to make the jump to other animals and then humans.

Lesson 2: Pathogens thrive in our modern transportation systems and inadequate waste disposal.

As our lives have been improved with transportation advances like airplanes and trains, this has also been beneficial for germs as well. In fact, without the help of our transportation systems, they wouldn't be able to spread across the globe as they do now.

Nowadays, planes are a huge way pathogens get around the world. We saw this with SARS. When the first patient came to the hospital with a mystery illness, he spread it to an unknowing physician.

The doctor then traveled to Hong Kong, and there he infected 12 more people, one of whom was a flight attendant. The flight attendant spread it to Singapore, giving it to someone who flew to Frankfurt, and so on. **Within one day, because of our modern**

transportation, the new SARS had been introduced to five continents!

Another way germs take advantage of our way of life is through our waste management. Since the '60s, US farms like those for hogs and chickens have grown staggering amounts. Because of the vastness of these farms, the waste produced has also increased tremendously. Manure pools left behind are breeding grounds for pathogens, which then evolve to contaminate air, soil, and water around the farm.

Even if you're not nearby you can experience the effects of this. How often do we hear about a recall of a certain item of produce because dangerous germs like E. Coli have been found on it? We may have gotten cleaner in a lot of ways, but society still has a dangerous waste issue.

Lesson 3: Politics and false beliefs can be detrimental in our handling of outbreaks before they get too bad.

When it comes to pandemics, sometimes the people put in charge to protect the people are the ones who do the most harm. This was the case of the cholera outbreaks in 1832 and 1849 that were helped by a crooked politician.

New York's water supply was severely lacking in the 1800s and as a doctor and city engineer proposed a waterworks plan of \$200,000, state senator Aaron Burr threw out their plans and said he'd take care of it himself.

Burr didn't care about the water, he just wanted money for a new bank. **He raised the money, but used most for a bank and put an insufficient amount he had left into the waterworks.** This resulted in a terrible system that gave contaminated drinking water to the citizens for 50 years, contributing to the 1800's cholera outbreaks.

In the SARS outbreak, the Chinese government attempted to keep the problem a secret, threatening anyone who wanted to release details. Eventually, it got out but even when it did, they wouldn't let the World Health Organization get involved. Because of this, the virus was able to spread uninterruptedly.

Even if the government isn't involved, medical progress can be held back by personal beliefs. When an effective treatment for cholera was introduced by a few doctors in the nineteenth century, it was dismissed because it "only" involved replenishing patients' fluids and minerals via IV.

To the other doctors, replacing fluids couldn't be the answer. They thought diseases came from gases called "miasmas." Therefore, they ignored the treatment, though it could've saved many lives easily at the time.

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Pandemic Review

This book is incredibly on point with where we are at right now. As of this writing, it's 2020, and *Pandemic* was written in 2016. Right now we are experiencing every single one of these predicted dangers of pandemics with the COVID-19 outbreak worldwide. Let's hope that this book and others like it makes us smarter so we don't repeat these same mistakes!

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Who would I recommend the Pandemic summary to?

The 57-year-old politician who has the ability to save millions of lives by calling for social distancing measures, the 21-year-old who is studying public health in college, and anyone affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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