A Brief History Of Everyone Who Ever Lived Summary

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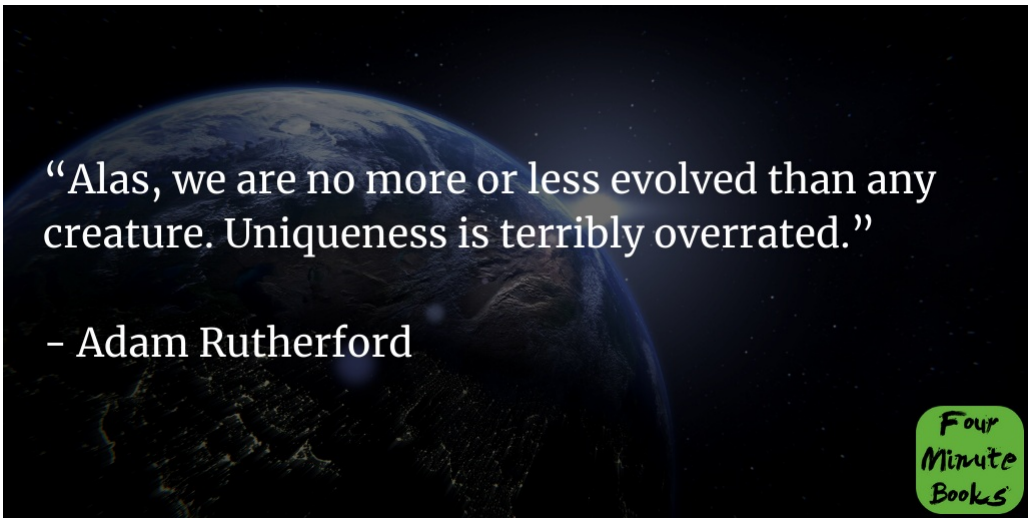
1-Sentence-Summary: *A Brief History Of Everyone Who Ever Lived gives you another important perspective on mankind's past and present through the lens of our genes.*

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Have you ever wished you could go back in time? Maybe to Ancient Rome, or to see how the Great Pyramids were built? Science may not have come far enough to grant us these wishes in the form of a time machine. But genetic science can give us an incredible picture of our past that we didn't know before.

Do you want to know how cultures were developed? Or where race began? What about where and how humans migrated across the globe? All these questions, and many more, can be unlocked with genetic advances.

In *A Brief History of Everyone Who Ever Lived: The Human Story Retold Through Our Genes*, we get the whole story of human history, as told by our genes. Adam Rutherford dives into our past and the evolution of our species. The further we go back, it's easy to see misconceptions we have about race and society, and we find that we are all much more alike than we ever thought. And using this fascinating genetic past, we can shed light on humanity's future.

Here are the 3 most interesting lessons about the human story:

1. The genes of *Homo sapiens* can change depending on the environment and culture.
2. You and I are descendants of royalty.

3. Deciphering the entire three billion letters of the human genome took eight years but taught us a lot about ourselves.

Are you ready to get a better understanding of what's in your genes? Let's go!

Lesson 1: **Human culture and the environment can affect our genes as they did so for our ancient ancestors.**

Did you know changes in human culture can be found in our genes? Take milk, for example. While some people enjoy it on a daily basis, most adults are actually lactose intolerant. Have you ever wondered why?

The enzyme responsible for breaking down lactose, *lactase,* is coded into our genes and actually disappears after we are infants. But somewhere along the line, a mutation resulted in it staying throughout adult life. This happened in Europeans, and this is why those of European ancestry were able to enjoy milk, which lead to the cultural practice of dairy farming.

Other groups in Africa and Asia also developed the ability to keep lactase. **It's likely these genes mutated because it was evolutionarily advantageous to be able to digest lactose.**

Environment can also change our genes. It's thought that all humans originated from Africa, and everyone had dark skin. The people that migrated to Europe 50,000 years ago also had dark skin. How did they end up with the lighter skin they have today?

Dark skin was an adaptation to the sunny weather. We can see that the people who migrated to Sweden had a change in their skin around 7,700 years ago. Their genes acted together to produce lighter hair, skin, and eyes as an adaptation to less light.

Lesson 2: **Royalty is in the family tree of everyone on earth.**

If you're like me, you may have seen your family tree trace back to someone royal, like Charlamagne. Pretty impressive, right? Sorry to burst your bubble, but everyone's lineage traces back to royalty. And here's why.

Joseph Chang, a statistician at Yale, looked at ancestry through numbers. He wanted to find how far back you needed to go to find a common ancestor for all Europeans. The answer? Just 600 years. Every European line crosses around the time of Richard II of England.

It seems impossible considering the amount of Europeans alive today because they must have billions and billions of ancestors, right?

Well, there weren't that many Europeans just a thousand years ago. **Every European that is alive today descended from literally every person that was alive in the ninth century.** Many of those people fill multiple spots on a family tree, and so Charlamagne, who fathered 18 children, is on every tree of Europeans alive today.

Similarly, Genghis Khan is a common ancestor on all Asian family trees, and Nefertiti is the same for Africans. All across the world, on every family tree, everyone is related to some ancient royalty.

Lesson 3: **We understand a lot more about the human genome after deciphering it in the year 2000.**

It was relatively recently, the year 2000, that we were finally able to decipher the human genome. It took eight years to read the 3 billion letters of the human genetic code, and was truly a groundbreaking feat.

We learned many exciting and fascinating things about the code that makes us who we are. Scientists guessed we had more than 100,000 genes when in reality, we have just 20,000. **But what's perhaps even crazier is that a banana has even more genes than us!**

Did you know that most of our DNA serves no purpose whatsoever? According to scientists, only two percent of our genes are actually "readable." The rest are known as "junk DNA" that is incomprehensible. But we're not totally sure yet whether or not it serves a purpose.

Another fascinating discovery was just how complex interactions between our genes are. Researchers first believed that a specific Gene was code for a specific outcome, like a disease. But now we know that this isn't the case. Our genes interact in complicated ways, and ten to hundreds of them are actually what play a role in disease.

A Brief History Of Everyone Who Ever Lived Review

I really liked *A Brief History Of Everyone Who Ever Lived*, and it reminds me a lot of *Sapiens* and *A Crack In Creation*, both of which I read recently. The principles of genetics are always fascinating to me because of how much they tell us about life. This book taught me some interesting principles we can learn from DNA, and I'm sure you will enjoy it.

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Who would I recommend the A Brief History Of Everyone Who Ever Lived summary to?

The 57-year-old with a fascination with history and biology, the 22-year-old college student who is thinking about majoring in a field related to genetics, and anyone with an interest in evolution, genes, and DNA.

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I want to form better habits. 🛌 I want to get rich. 💸 I want to live a happier life. ☺ Something else.
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