



# This Fleeting World: A Short History of Humanity (This World of Ours)

By David Christian

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A great historian can make clear the connections between the first *Homo sapiens* and today's version of the species, and a great storyteller can make those connections come alive. David Christian is both. *This Fleeting World: A Short History of Humanity* makes the journey a fascinating one. Christian takes us from the Big Bang to the earliest foraging era to the present Anthropocene epoch. This popular work, now in its fifth printing, has been reorganized to help the student and expanded to include material on "big history." Enter *This Fleeting World* - and give up the preconception that anything old is boring. A compact, easy-to-read overview of world history, ideal for curriculum development, classroom preparation, and student review.

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## **This Fleeting World: A Short History of Humanity (This World of Ours) By David Christian Bibliography**

- Sales Rank: #80762 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Berkshire Publishing Group
- Published on: 2007-06-21
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.02" h x .33" w x 5.98" l, .60 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 120 pages

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"I first became an avid student of David Christian by watching his course, Big History, on DVD, so I am very happy to see his enlightening presentation of the world's history captured in these essays. I hope it will introduce a wider audience to this gifted scientist and teacher." -- **Bill Gates**

"Julius Caesar famously summed up the surprises and confusion of ten years of war in Gaul with three Latin words: *veni, vidi, vici*: 'I came, I saw, I conquered.' Here, David Christian performs a similar feat by summing up the surprises and confusion of 250,000 years of human history in just 92 pages; and improves on Caesar's boast by showing how persistent collective learning expanded human skills, and enlarged our numbers, wealth, and power across the ages. What a quick, convenient, and persuasive way to begin to understand the confusing world in which we find ourselves!" -- **William H. McNeill**, Professor Emeritus of History, University of Chicago; author of *The Rise of the West* (National Book Award) and *The Human Web*

"No one except David Christian could do it. He has a unique talent for mastering data, processing it efficiently, and writing it up lucidly. He can simplify without dumbing down and can be provocative without sliding into outrage. Readers can rely on him for a sensitive, well-informed, well-judged, reflective, and miraculously concise overview." -- **Felipe Fernández-Armesto**, professor of modern history, University of Notre Dame --Bill Gates, William H. McNeill, Felipe Fernández-Armesto

"History teachers wrestling with the question, 'How do I teach all the stuff that makes up world history?' might find some answers here. Rather than focus on the minutiae of details, Christian suggests teaching from the big picture. He pares all of history down to three periods: the Era of Foragers, the Agrarian Era, and the Modern Era. Critics say he excludes key historical figures, but that seems to be his point. When flying above familiar terrain, he writes, 'From the plane you will not see many details, but you will get a clearer sense of the landscape. Individual objects may be blurred, but you will see the relationship between them more easily.' Indeed, although teachers face the problem of choosing what to cover, they must also help students understand the relationship between critical turning points in world history, something more easily achieved when studying national history. The book is specifically designed to aid teachers in lesson design with these two difficulties in mind. Each of the three chapters includes a time line, topics for further study, and sidebars called 'thought experiments.' Teachers will appreciate this feature, as it takes students past memorizing names and dates and into the realm of making connections. Equally interesting and informative is the preface, written by two professors who teach prospective history teachers, and an introduction by the author. The book can easily be read in one sitting and should prove to be a valuable classroom resource." -- Kim Zach --Voya

"... a good read from beginning to end." --Midwest Book Review: March 2009

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#### About the Author

David Christian is a professor of world history at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia, and co-founder, with Bill Gates, of the Big History Project. In 1989, Christian began teaching the first course on big history, an interdisciplinary field that examines history starting with the Big Bang, and his work came to the attention of Bill Gates through a video course produced by The Teaching Company. In 2014, Gates and Christian were the subjects of the cover story of the *New York Times Magazine*. He is the author of *Maps of Time: An Introduction to Big History*, which won the World History Association book prize (2004), and is writing a history of Central Asia. He is also the author of *Living Water: Vodka and Russian Society on the Eve of Emancipation* and (with R. E. F. Smith) *Bread and Salt: A Social and Economic History of Food and Drink in Russia*. He has spoken about big history at the TED Conference, the World Economic Forum, and on the Comedy Central program *The Colbert Report*.

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