



The Human Journey: A Concise Introduction to World History

By Kevin Reilly

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The Human Journey offers a truly concise yet satisfyingly full history of the world from ancient times to the present. The book's scope, as the title implies, is the whole story of humanity, in planetary context. Its themes include not only the great questions of the humanities—nature versus nurture, the history and meaning of human variation, the sources of wealth and causes of revolution—but also the major transformations in human history: agriculture, cities, iron, writing, universal religions, global trade, industrialization, popular government, justice, and equality.

In each conceptually rich chapter, leading historian Kevin Reilly concentrates on a single important period and theme, sustaining a focused narrative and analytical perspective. Chapter 2, for example, discusses the significance of bronze-age urbanization and the advent of the Iron Age. Chapter 3 examines the meaning and significance of the age of “classical” civilizations. Chapter 4 explains the spread of universal religions and new technologies in the postclassical age of Eurasian integration. But these examples also reveal a range of approaches to world history. The first chapter is an example of current “Big History,” the second of history as technological transformations, the third of comparative history, the fourth the history of connections that dominates, and thus narrows, so many texts. Free of either a confined, limiting focus or a mandatory laundry list of topics, this book begins with our most important questions and searches all of our past for answers. Well-grounded in the latest scholarship, this is not a fill-in-the-blanks text, but world history in a grand humanistic tradition.

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Editorial Review

Review

I look forward to using this new world history textbook, which greatly advances our struggle to think world historically and to get this field 'right.' This book is among the first to incorporate what Kevin Reilly calls 'little big history' and put human history in its place, while never losing sight of the significance of the human presence. It is a wonderfully scholarly book that directly engages the latest debates in the field (with footnotes even!) yet wears its erudition lightly. Reilly expertly weaves together political, economic, social, and LOTS of cultural threads, selecting good—and sometimes surprising—case studies for illustration. The text never loses sight of his view of the grand arc of it all, arguing for a series of successive globalizations over at least the last millennium. This text will make a wonderful companion to Reilly's two-volume document series, which remains a classic in the field. (Sue Gronewold, Kean University)

The Human Journey speaks directly to students, offering a very readable and well-developed narrative about the interactions and connections that have shaped human society—from the first hominids to the contemporary implications of globalization. Kevin Reilly presents stories of humanity's past that are concise while also providing depth and ease of understanding. This is an engaging text where readers travel back in time and are amply rewarded for their journey. (David M. Kalivas, Middlesex Community College; editor of H-World at H-Net)

Kevin Reilly has been a pioneer in the field of world history for nearly three decades. His textbooks and source collections have brought order and clarity to this vast subject for a generation of college students. In *The Human Journey*, Reilly presents the latest scholarship for general readers and students with his customary blend of intellectual curiosity, wonder, and lively expression. I can think of no better place to start out on the path of world history. (George D. Sussman, LaGuardia Community College, CUNY)

Up-to-date information and conceptualization take this book to a new level of excellence. As always, Kevin Reilly offers rich social history and narrative. (Marilynn Hitchens, University of Colorado Denver)

In this thorough text, Reilly (Raritan Valley CC) provides an accessible survey of human history. Books of this type often tend either toward macro-level narratives of global processes or "cafeteria-style" approaches, surveying one geographic region after another. Reilly attempts to strike a balance, treating regional histories while also providing a global narrative. The result is generally successful, and will provide a useful introductory text for readers with little background and teachers seeking a refresher informed by recent scholarship. The author uses comparison to good effect, introduces readers to key historiographical controversies, and contextualizes debates about the "rise of the West" and its consequences. "For much of our human journey," Reilly concludes, "we could go somewhere else.... Our journey has now taken us everywhere we can go. If we are to continue, we must do it together." Summing Up: Recommended. (CHOICE)

About the Author

Kevin Reilly is professor of history at Raritan Valley Community College.

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