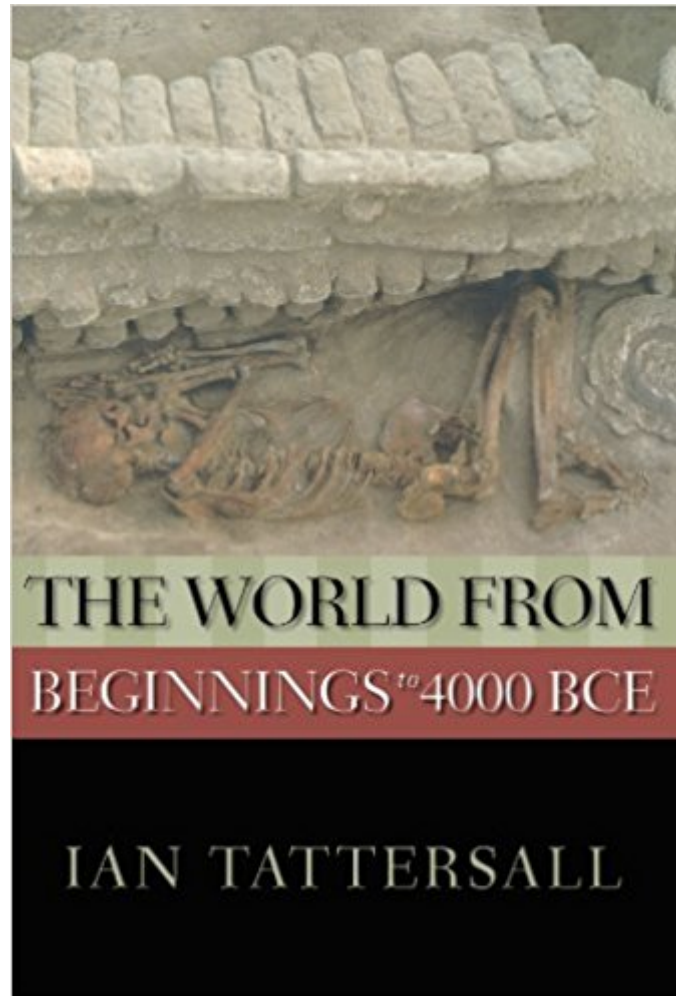


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The World From Beginnings To 4000 BCE (New Oxford World History)



Synopsis

To be human is to be curious. And one of the things we are most curious about is how we came to be who we are--how we evolved over millions of years to become creatures capable of inquiring into our own evolution. In this lively and readable introduction, renowned anthropologist Ian Tattersall thoroughly examines both fossil and archaeological records to trace human evolution from the earliest beginnings of our zoological family, Hominidae, through the appearance of *Homo sapiens* to the Agricultural Revolution. He begins with an accessible overview of evolutionary theory and then explores the major turning points in human evolution: the emergence of the genus *Homo*, the advantages of bipedalism, the birth of the big brain and symbolic thinking, Paleolithic and Neolithic tool making, and finally the enormously consequential shift from hunter-gatherer to agricultural societies 10,000 years ago. Focusing particularly on the pattern of events and innovations in human biological and cultural evolution, Tattersall offers illuminating commentary on a wide range of topics, including the earliest known artistic expressions, ancient burial rites, the beginnings of language, the likely causes of Neanderthal extinction, the relationship between agriculture and Christianity, and the still unsolved mysteries of human consciousness. Complemented by a wealth of illustrations and written with the grace and accessibility for which Tattersall is widely admired, *The World from Beginnings to 4000 BCE* invites us to take a closer look at the strange and distant beings who, over the course of millions of years, would become us.

Book Information

Series: New Oxford World History

Paperback: 160 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; 1 edition (February 1, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0195333152

ISBN-13: 978-0195333152

Product Dimensions: 9.2 x 0.5 x 6.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 8.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars 18 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #83,139 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #24 in Books > History > Ancient Civilizations > Prehistory #151 in Books > Textbooks > Humanities > History > Ancient #312 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Anthropology > General

Customer Reviews

Tattersall (*Becoming Human*), a curator in the anthropology division of the American Museum of Natural History, uses fossil and archeological records to examine the seven (or so) million years from the dawn of the Hominidae, the family that includes humans, to the gradual development of agriculture and permanent settlements. His topic is huge and his pages are few, but this overview will give readers a sense of the current thinking in the field. Tattersall discusses the characteristics that separate *Homo sapiens* from extinct hominids, concluding that the gulf between us and our closest relative opened up when our enlarged brains gave rise to symbolic reasoning. Asserting that hominid evolution is more complex than previously thought and that the idea of a linear progression of species is far too simplistic, Tattersall presents mitochondrial DNA evidence that we are not directly related to Neanderthals and declares, We are not the result of constant fine-tuning over the eons, any more than we are the summit of creation. Finally, he explains the techniques used to interpret the physical evidence of evolutionary processes. This is an elegant, if brief, introduction to a complex field. 20 b&w illus. (Feb.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"[L]ucid and insightful prose...[A]n excellent introduction to a part of history that most historians skip over due to its remoteness in time, the complexity and the changing nature of the evidence, and the difficulty of the science it takes to understand it...[A]n extremely well presented and at time engaging history of the exploration of our evolutionary origins."--*World History Connected*"A lucid and at times elegant introduction to the complex field of evolutionary theory...Tattersall takes the reader on a lively and readable romp through the eons of hominid history...Ian Tattersall's masterful treatment of early human evolution represents an auspicious point of departure for Oxford's new series on world history."--*The Journal of World History*"Contributes without doubt to provide a better understanding of academic research in this field."--Elizabeth Do Lam, *Teaching History*

An enjoyable (but short) read - covers "the World" (from a hominid/human perspective) through to the development of civilisation/cities around 4000 BCE. Starts with a synopsis of the history of theories on evolution - and provides a big breakthrough in understanding for the layman in presenting the non-linear approach to evolution. Makes sense, moving through the emergence and co-existence of various hominids. Also explains in clear terms how *homo sapiens* came to populate the earth and how so-called racial variations came to emerge. Well illustrated with photos, maps and drawings. The only disappointment is that the book is quite short - the text in the Kindle version is complete at around 70% through, with the remaining 30% comprising sources, references to

websites and an index. That quibble aside, this book has brought great clarity to a subject that was previously buried in mystery.

Ordered this for research in my PaleoAnthropology course. Ian Tattersall writes with a flair for explaining reasoning and giving one a vivid glimpse of our planet's epoch's and how WE came to be who we are now. The process of it all is fascinating. Awesome book!

I knew very little about anthropology prior to this book and I found it to be a great introduction. This book is very short, I read it over three days which means most people could read it in 3 hours. It is packed with info, I could probably read it again and learn a few more things. The book discusses the different hominid life forms that have been discovered leading up to homo sapiens. It's a very honest book, describing things we know and things we just don't know yet. This reads like a textbook, so it can be a bit dry at times, but overall I was very happy with it.

It's a well-written brief review of our evolution, but the title is misleading. It doesn't start with the beginning of the world, but from the appearance of hominids some 7 million years ago.

Good introduction, but there may be books that are more recent.

Generally the monographs in this series are well rounded books on topic. With this one, I thought there may have been more details on the developing Neolithic societies around the world. There was, however, good coverage of the 'out of Africa' development of early man.

Ian Tattersall continues his exploration of human origins and the emergence of homo sapiens in this introductory history series by the Oxford University Press. I have read many of Dr. Tattersall's books and this small volume ranks right there up with his best. An excellent overview of prehistory by an expert in the field who also happens to write very, very well.

An interesting and informative treatment of the evolution of modern humans, there are still many missing pieces and it's possible that they will never be found but I enjoyed the journey.

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