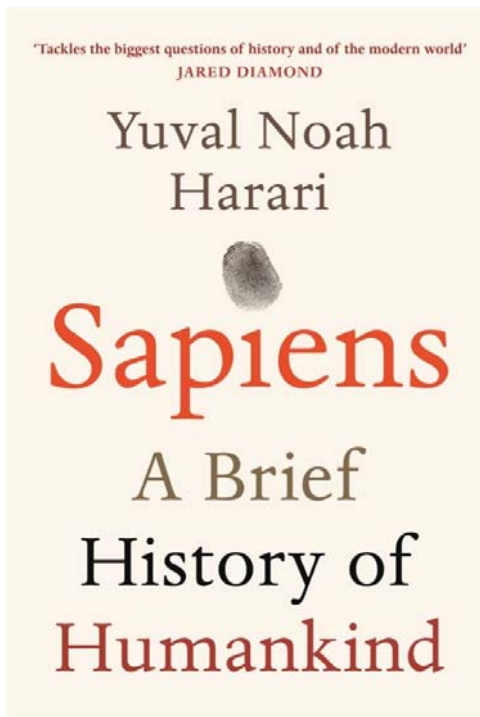


The Literacy Lowdown: Sapiens, chapter 1



A level geography students, remember, you should:

- undertake wider reading
- use factual texts, discursive / creative material

Summary

Did you ever hurl the insult you're a Neanderthal! at someone? Well, in Part 1 The Cognitive Revolution, you will be enlightened to learn it's a common fallacy to envision different species as arranged in a straight line of descent.

Homo rudolfensis, "Man from Lake Rudolf" (northern Kenya), Homo neanderthalensis, "Man from Neander Valley" (Mettmann in West Germany) and Homo sapiens, "Wise Man" – to name but a few – are all from a large and particularly noisy family called the great apes. But what sets us apart?

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Specification links

AQA GCSE 3.1.2.2 The value of Tropical Rainforests to people and the environment.

Edexcel A Level 6.3 A balanced carbon cycle is important in sustaining other earth systems.

OCR A Level (the prehistoric background) 3.b case study of one indigenous farming technique.

WJEC Ecosystems 4.2.3 Biodiversity under threat.

Key quotes

"Having so recently been one of the underdogs of the savannah, we are full of fears and anxieties over our position, which makes us doubly cruel and dangerous. Many historical calamities, from deadly wars to ecological catastrophes, have resulted from this." (p13)

"The appearance of new ways of thinking and communicating, between 70,000 and 30,000 years ago, constitutes the Cognitive Revolution. What caused it? We're not sure. The most commonly believed theory argues that accidental genetic mutations changed the inner wiring of the brains of Sapiens, enabling them to think in unprecedented ways." (p23)

"The gossip theory might sound like a joke [to explain what was 'so special about the new Sapien language', remember every animal knows how to communicate] but numerous studies support it." (p26)

"The First Wave Extinction, which accompanied the spread of the foragers, was followed by the Second Wave Extinction, which accompanied the spread of the farmers, and gives us an important perspective on the Third Wave Extinction, which industrial activity is causing today." (p82)