

## **Sapiens**

### **(Questions)**

Of all the human developments described in Sapiens, which one do you think was the most significant in the course of our history?

By what measures is homo sapiens the dominant species on planet earth?

Which was the most surprising fact or assertion that you came across while reading the book? Did you disagree with any of Harari's arguments or interpretations?

Do you think that the major world religions are comparable to 'shared mythologies' such as nations, corporations and currency? When does a mythology become a reality?

Humankind has only been present for a minute fraction of planet earth's existence – do you think that our civilization will retain its current position in centuries to come?

How can reading about history help us in the present day and the future?

## Sapiens

### (About the Author)

Yuval Noah Harari is a historian, philosopher, and the bestselling author of *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*, and *21 Lessons for the 21st Century*.

Born in Haifa, Israel, in 1976, Harari received his PhD from the University of Oxford in 2002, and is currently a lecturer at the Department of History, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His books have sold 27 Million copies worldwide.

Prof. Harari originally specialized in world history, medieval history and military history. His current research focuses on macro-historical questions such as: What is the relationship between history and biology? What is the essential difference between *Homo sapiens* and other animals? Is there justice in history? Does history have a direction? Did people become happier as history unfolded? What ethical questions do science and technology raise in the 21st century?

In 2018 and in 2020, Yuval Noah Harari gave keynote speeches on the future of humanity on the Congress Hall stage of the World Economic Forum annual meeting in Davos. Harari regularly discusses global issues with heads of state, and has had public conversations with Netherlands Prime Minister Mark Rutte and with Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz. He also met with President Emmanuel Macron of France, Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany, President Mauricio Macri of Argentina, President Frank-Walter Steinmeier of Germany, and Mayor Ying Yong of Shanghai. In 2018, Yuval presented the first ever TED talk delivered as a digital avatar, and in 2019, he sat down for a filmed discussion on technology and the future of society with Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg.

Published in 2014, Harari's *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* has become an international hit. Over 15.5 Million copies had been sold and the book was translated into over 50 languages. It was a *New York Times* top 10 bestseller, and held positions #1-#3 on the *Sunday Times*' bestseller list for 96 consecutive weeks, with over 150 weeks in the top ten. *Sapiens* was recommended by Mark Zuckerberg, Barack Obama, Bill Gates, and many others.

In 2016 Prof. Harari returned with *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*, a critically acclaimed book that examines the big future projects facing humanity in the 21st century. Since its publication, 7.5 Million copies of the book had been sold worldwide, and it was translated into over 50 languages.

After exploring deep into the past and then the future, Yuval Noah Harari published *21 Lessons for the 21st Century* in 2018. Here he stopped to take the pulse of our current global climate, focusing on the biggest questions of the present moment: What is really happening right now? What are today's greatest challenges and choices? What should we pay attention to? Within its first year of publication, 4 Million copies of *21 Lessons* had been sold worldwide and it was translated into over 40 languages.

In 2019, *21 Lessons* was honoured as 'Knowledge Book of the Year' by the German magazine *Bild der Wissenschaft*, and *Sapiens* won the 'Academic Book of the Year' prize as part of the UK's Academic Book Trade Awards. In 2017 *Homo Deus* won *Handelsblatt's* German Economic Book Award for 'the most thoughtful and influential economic book of the year', and in 2019 it was recognized as the 'Wise Book of the Year' by Krakow's Jagiellonian University. Yuval Noah Harari is a two-time winner of the Polonsky Prize for Creativity and Originality, which he was awarded in 2009 and 2012. In 2011 he won the Society for Military History's Moncado Award for outstanding articles on military history.

Prof. Harari lectures around the world on the topics explored in his books and articles, and has written for publications such as *The Guardian*, *Financial Times*, *The New York Times*, *The Times*, *The Economist* and *Nature* magazine. He also offers his knowledge and time to various organizations and audiences on a voluntary basis.

In 2019, Yuval Noah Harari and Itzik Yahav co-founded Sapienship: an organization whose mission is to clarify the global conversation, focus attention on the most important challenges and support the quest for solutions.

<https://www.ynharari.com/about/>

## Sapiens

### (Reviews)

Harari (History/Hebrew Univ. of Jerusalem) provides an immersion into the important revolutions that shaped world history: cognitive, agricultural and scientific. The book was originally published in Israel in 2011 and became a best-seller.

There is enormous gratification in reading books of this nature, an encyclopedic approach from a well-versed scholar who is concise but eloquent, both skeptical and opinionated, and open enough to entertain competing points of view. As Harari firmly believes, history hinges on stories: some stories for understanding, others prompting people to act cooperatively toward common goals. Of course, these stories—“ ‘fictions,’ ‘social constructs’ or ‘imagined realities’ ”—can be humble or evil, inclusive or self-serving, but they hold the power of belief. Harari doesn't avoid the distant past, when humans “were insignificant animals with no more impact on their environment than gorillas, fireflies or jellyfish,” but he is a skeptic and rightfully relies on specific source material to support his arguments—though he is happy to offer conjectures. Harari launches fully into his story with the cognitive revolution, when our brains were rewired, now more intelligent and creative, with language, gossip and myths to fashion the stories that, from politicians to priests to sorcerers, serve to convince people of certain ideas and beliefs. The agricultural revolution (“lives generally more difficult and less satisfying than those of foragers”) comes next and firmly establishes the intersubjectivity of imagined orders: hierarchies, money, religion, gender issues, “communication network[s] linking the subjective consciousness of many individuals.” Throughout, the author revels in the chaos of history. He discusses the good and bad of empires and science, suggests that modern economic history comes down to a single word (“growth”), rues the loss of familial and societal safety nets, and continues to find wonder in the concept that “the keys to happiness are in the hands of our biochemical system.”

The great debates of history aired out with satisfying vigor.

<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/yuval-noah-harari/sapiens/>

## Sapiens

### (Enhancement)

Seventy thousand years ago, there were at least six different human species on earth. They were insignificant animals, whose ecological impact was less than that of fireflies or jellyfish. Today, there is only one human species left: Us. Homo sapiens. But we rule this planet.

Sapiens, the book, takes us on a breath-taking ride through our entire human history, from its evolutionary roots to the age of capitalism and genetic engineering, to uncover why we are the way we are.

Sapiens focuses on key processes that shaped humankind and the world around it, such as the advent of agriculture, the creation of money, the spread of religion and the rise of the nation state. Unlike other books of its kind, Sapiens takes a multi-disciplinary approach that bridges the gaps between history, biology, philosophy and economics in a way never done before. Furthermore, taking both the macro and the micro view, Sapiens conveys not only what happened and why, but also how it felt for individuals.