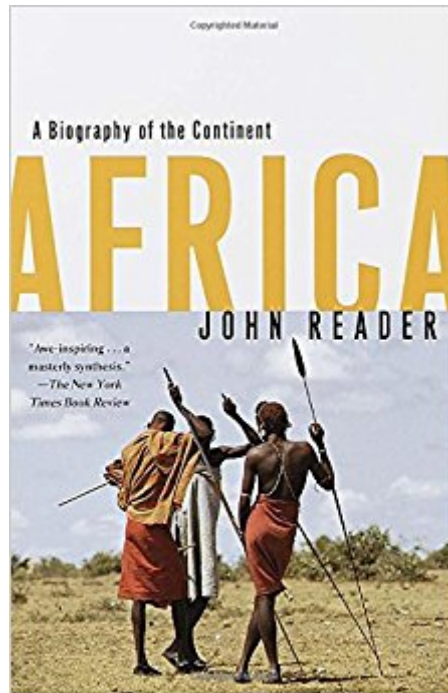


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# Africa: A Biography Of The Continent



## Synopsis

In 1978, paleontologists in East Africa discovered the earliest evidence of our divergence from the apes: three pre-human footprints, striding away from a volcano, were preserved in the petrified surface of a mudpan over three million years ago. Out of Africa, the world's most ancient and stable landmass, Homo sapiens dispersed across the globe. And yet the continent that gave birth to human history has long been woefully misunderstood and mistreated by the rest of the world. In a book as splendid in its wealth of information as it is breathtaking in scope, British writer and photojournalist John Reader brings to light Africa's geology and evolution, the majestic array of its landforms and environments, the rich diversity of its peoples and their ways of life, the devastating legacies of slavery and colonialism as well as recent political troubles and triumphs. Written in simple, elegant prose and illustrated with Reader's own photographs, *Africa: A Biography of the Continent* is an unforgettable book that will delight the general reader and expert alike.

## Book Information

Paperback: 816 pages

Publisher: Vintage (September 7, 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 067973869X

ISBN-13: 978-0679738695

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 1.6 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 92 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #97,442 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #49 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Specific Topics > Colonialism & Post-Colonialism #52 in Books > Textbooks > Humanities > History > Africa #60 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > International & World Politics > African

## Customer Reviews

"The ancestors of all humanity evolved in Africa," notes photojournalist John Reader at the beginning of this epic, panoramic overview of African history. From the formation of the continent to the present, Reader's informative narrative tells the story of the earliest dwellers and the natural obstacles of desert, jungle, and animals they faced, expertly entwining the development of humanity with the ecological and geographical evolution of the continent. He demonstrates how the physical makeup of Africa is like nowhere else on earth, both supporting and crippling human progress over

time. Reader, who has lived and traveled in Africa for many years, explores the migration of humanity as early as 100,000 years ago out of Africa into Europe and South America, forming the earliest indigenous populations in these areas. At the same time he traces the effects of European settlers, slavery, and tribal warfare to the present day's independent states that have suffered through chronic disease, famine, and brutal conflict. Reader's passion for this continent is evident throughout the text, bringing to life his scrupulous research which explores in fascinating detail, the intricate and complex history of Africa. --Jeremy Storey --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Africa's collision with the Eurasian landmass 30 million years ago; the emergence of upright, bipedal human ancestors four million years ago; the migration of anatomically modern nomads out of Africa a mere 100,000 years ago; the rise of Africa's first literate indigenous civilization, Aksum (ancient Ethiopia) in the first century A.D. these are signposts in a continent's evolution in Reader's unusual, enthralling survey. A British photojournalist who has spent most of his adult life in Africa, he writes with sweeping historical perspective and an engaging familiarity with the continent and its people. Ranging from the earliest known evidence of life on earth 3.6-billion-year-old fossilized bacteria to recent upheavals in Rwanda and South Africa, this immensely rewarding synthesis is amplified by the author's deeply lyrical, quietly stunning photographs that evoke Africa's beauty and ancient roots. Reader refutes the notion of the Egyptian Nile region as a fulcrum that conveyed civilization to sub-Saharan Africa; instead, he argues, the relationship was one of pillager and pillaged. Blaming European colonizers' near-genocidal slaughter, exploitation and imposition of artificial nation-states for much of contemporary Africa's malaise, he maintains that the "dark continent" has been woefully misunderstood and misused throughout history. His eye-opening chronicle will change the way many think about Africa. Photos. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

One of more amazing books I have read. It addresses: Geology, Paleontology, Anthropology, Sociology, Political Science, Economics, War, Agriculture, and many other fields. All with some emphasis on Africa, but all with a relationship to humanity and the World at large. It is now more than 20 years old in volatile continent, but still fascinating. It shows a significant amount of research and understanding of many areas. One of the themes is that Africa should be of interest to all of mankind. It is where man evolved and human characteristics were first developed. It has had significant interaction with most of Earth's other Continents. It can provide lessons on many aspects

of the World and mankind. My only complaints are mostly functional. It is long (700 pages), small print, and entirely inadequate visual elements (maps, pictures, etc.). I would love to have a kindle version.

This is a great book. It's exactly what it says it is: a biography of the African continent. Reader does an excellent job writing about a subject that could easily be very dry. He keeps the pages alive and easy to read. The book progresses in a sensible fashion that keeps you going. I laughed when I read the review calling this book "awe-inspiring" HA! How could a history book this broad possibly be inspiring!?! I was wrong: This book really is awe-inspiring.

Great book. I previously knew very little about the continent, but purchased this book for a class I was taking. Unlike most textbooks, I enjoyed reading this and am keeping it. Reader has an expansive knowledge of Africa and narrates the history in a winsome way, with plenty of diversions into interesting side topics.

This book is a great summary of the history of Africa beginning with formation of the continent. Well-written, well-researched, and well-cited.

This book deals with the people, cultures, geography, geology, commerce, and climate of Africa. It is a large and ambitious book. It contains a lot of content that I had not learned before. The author's style is dry and factual. It has a textbook-like quality to it. I found it easiest to read one chapter at a time and then go on to reading something else. It isn't something I could curl up with for the evening. But the content is excellent.

This is a fascinating, detailed and perceptive history of Africa, a massive topic covered in such a way as the reader is not only informed, but also made to feel part of the whole process of evolution and development. The themes are personal, national, political and social, and, considering the violent and unhappy aspects of much of the past two centuries, extremely even handed. There is so much to criticise today about Africa, cruelty, corruption, exploitation, that it is important to understand how today's Africa reached the state it is now in. Equally, while being critical of the West's part in causing many of today's problems, it is also critical to examine this in the context in which the events and actions of the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries occurred. This is an excellent history book, textbook and general reader, and never either boring or over contentious without good reason.

Great, but long read.

I have bought this book 7 times. Each time, I lend or give it to colleagues ranging from diplomats to missionaries, and then have to buy a new copy for my own reference! The maps in the back alone are worth the price of the book. I've worked in US embassies in 13 African countries over the last 20 years, and this book is still my favorite. Reader combines his geographic perspective ("How does humankind live on the land? why are human communities located where they are?" and the ever-popular "Why did humanity evolve in Africa?") with some enlightening side trips e.g. geology: ("Why do diamonds and gold occur where they are? How have such resources affected the continent's history?"). He isn't afraid to tackle the realities of the colonial legacy, but he is balanced in also describing the role of home-grown obstacles on the road Africans are traveling to improve their lives. If you are only going to get through one book about Africa, this is it.

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