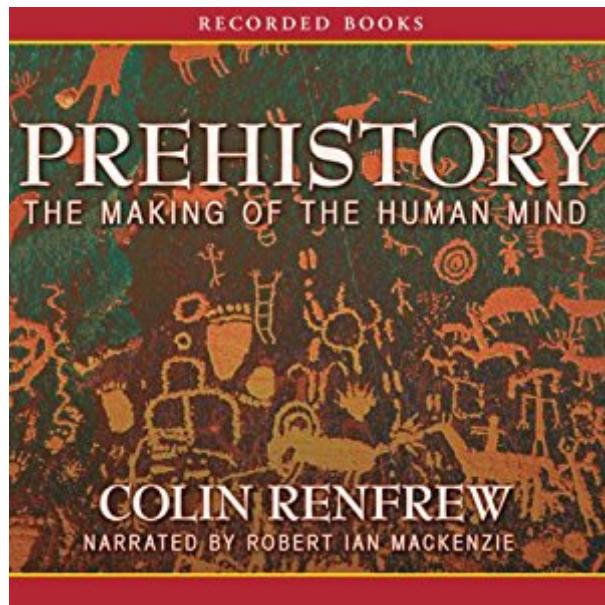


The book was found

Prehistory: Making Of The Human Mind



Synopsis

In Prehistory, the award-winning archaeologist and renowned scholar Colin Renfrew covers human existence before the advent of written records—“which is to say, the overwhelming majority of our time here on earth. But Renfrew also opens up to discussion, and even debate, the term “prehistory” itself, giving an incisive, concise, and lively survey of the past, and how scholars and scientists labor to bring it to light. Renfrew begins by looking at prehistory as a discipline, particularly how developments of the past century and a half—“advances in archaeology and geology; Darwin’s ideas of evolution; discoveries of artifacts and fossil evidence of our human ancestors; and even more enlightened museum and collection curatorship”—have fueled continuous growth in our knowledge of prehistory. He details how breakthroughs such as radiocarbon dating and DNA analysis have helped us to define humankind’s past—“how things have changed—“much more clearly than was possible just a half century ago. Answers for why things have changed, however, continue to elude us, so Renfrew discusses some of the issues and challenges past and present that confront the study of prehistory and its investigators. In the book’s second part, Renfrew shifts the narrative focus, offering a summary of human prehistory from early hominids to the rise of literate civilization that is refreshingly free from conventional wisdom and grand unified theories. The author’s own case studies encompass a vast geographical and chronological range—the Orkney Islands, the Balkans, the Indus Valley, Peru, Ireland, and China—and help to explain the formation and development of agriculture and centralized societies. He concludes with a fascinating chapter on early writing systems, “From Prehistory to History.” In this invaluable, brief account of human development prior to the last four millennia, Colin Renfrew delivers a meticulously researched and passionately argued chronicle about our life on earth, and our ongoing quest to understand it. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 9 hours and 1 minute

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Recorded Books

Audible.com Release Date: February 27, 2009

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B001UFGDGY

Best Sellers Rank: #227 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > History > Ancient #1804 in Books > History > World > Civilization & Culture #2138 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Science

Customer Reviews

Combining a long career in the field with a fine narrative style, Renfrew provides a succinct summary of human origins. In a brief overview, the author manages to trace the beginnings of humanity in Africa and how we learned to follow its track across the planet. Well formulated for the reader new to the various research tools that have helped this process, it's also an excellent reference for those conversant with the basics to enlarge their view. Relying on a global perspective, his account stretches from African beginnings through Asia and Europe and to Mesoamerica. His expansive view allows him to address the question of "how we came to be" with deep insight. "Prehistory", he reminds us, is a term difficult to define. We're accustomed, he says, to view anything prior to written records - even clay ones - as prehistory. That leads to an over-focussed view of areas like Mesopotamia and Egypt. Renfrew opens the book by demonstrating how that approach should be modified. There are other forms of records and other conclusions to be drawn by understanding them. Renfrew stresses that there are few global patterns to rely on and each region must be considered through the available evidence. Among the many ways of doing this, he pays special attention to radiometric dating, a technique he helped foster in the UK. Another significant method, following shortly after the introduction to isotopic analysis is that of reading DNA. Together, these two analytical techniques overturned many previously held misconceptions. The explanation on what constitutes prehistory and the rise of analytical technology requires less than a third of the book. The remainder is dedicated to a discussion of what makes humanity special in the animal kingdom.

I do recommend this book, but certainly not as highly as I had hoped to. This is partly because it did not meet certain expectations. I had very high hopes indeed of uploading a lifetime's worth of synthetic insight into human prehistory from a famous name in the field. That hope was largely disappointed by this book. Perhaps I should have seen it coming, the book is only 240 pages long, certainly not space enough for a detailed treatise on prehistory (for that I have turned to Steven Mithen's 600 page "After the Ice: A global human history 20,000-5,000 B.C."). Instead, I should have paid more attention to Renfrew's glinting subtitle "The making of the human mind." In fact I did see

this, and was intrigued, but unfortunately, in the end found Renfrew's thesis on that subject to be based on a dichotomy that I don't believe exists. This book is composed of two parts. The first part is Renfrew's history of Prehistory, as a field of academic endeavor. This is in itself interesting tale. From a history of science perspective, there is always much to be learned from examination of successive emancipations from past biases and technological boundaries, and how those two factors feedback on each other. However, there follows an odd disconnect from that story, it seemed to me, with the second part of the book. Renfrew periodically hypes up the worth of paradigmatic technologies of radioisotopes, and, most recently DNA methods. The big anticlimax for me was that in the second half of the book, the curtain was finally drawn, and the DNA evidence was brought out to bear in overwhelmingly in support of the "out-of-Africa" scenario and soundly damning the longstanding alternative, the "multi-regional hypothesis."

[Download to continue reading...](#)

Prehistory: Making of the Human Mind Nursing: Human Science And Human Care (Watson, Nursing: Human Science and Human Care) The Past in Perspective: An Introduction to Human Prehistory Bone Rooms: From Scientific Racism to Human Prehistory in Museums Human Caring Science: A Theory of Nursing (Watson, Nursing: Human Science and Human Care) Architecture: From Prehistory to Postmodernity (Second Edition) Architecture: From Prehistory to Postmodernity, Reprint (2nd Edition) A History of US: The First Americans: Prehistory-1600 A History of US Book One When Fish Got Feet, Sharks Got Teeth, and Bugs Began to Swarm: A Cartoon Prehistory of Life Long Before Dinosaurs The First Americans, Third Edition: Prehistory-1600 (A History of US, Book 1) Ancient Earth Journal: The Late Jurassic: Notes, drawings, and observations from prehistory When Bugs Were Big, Plants Were Strange, and Tetrapods Stalked the Earth: A Cartoon Prehistory of Life before Dinosaurs Ancient Mediterranean Civilizations: From Prehistory to 640 CE World Prehistory: A Brief Introduction (7th Edition) A Critical History of Early Rome: From Prehistory to the First Punic War World Prehistory and Archaeology Ancient Lives: An Introduction to Archaeology and Prehistory Archaeology and Humanity's Story: A Brief Introduction to World Prehistory The Humanistic Tradition Volume I: Prehistory to the Early Modern World Dress, Fashion and Technology: From Prehistory to the Present (Dress, Body, Culture)

[Dmca](#)