

# NATURAL FACTS

UNDERSTANDING HOW THE WORLD WORKS

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## Notes:

- (Text in parenthesis) before paragraph, indicates a note-to-self
- Inline text in bold indicates a note-to-self
- [//] indicates a sentence or paragraph under construction
- [~] tilde indicates word choice to be determined
- Hyphen with spaces, between two words [eg, nature - environment] indicates choice of words is to be determined

# N A T U R A L F A C T S

## INTRODUCTION

This online book is an effort to explore humanity's relationship with the natural world throughout ancient and modern history, and to reflect on how the forces of nature have shaped our progress. It looks at how people lived in ancient times, and how the modern way of life came to be.

The book is partly about history and partly about education. The idea is to lay out clear, concise historical, scientific and environmental information, for a broad audience

Our fundamental and complex relationship with the world is mutual—the earth's dynamic climates, physical forces and material resources have always had a major **effect** on humanity's advancement. And human striving has, in turn, had a dramatic **impact** on the earth. The forces of nature have shaped us, and we've shaped the environment.

**Humankind has struggled with the natural environment throughout the course of history.** The specific geographies and climates that people faced played a major role in whether they endured, or perished. *Natural Facts* studies nature's effect on humanity and humanity's effect on nature, and it also looks at how the **relationship** has changed.

Our ancestors lived closely tied to, and dependent on, the land's essential resources, learning many **hard lessons** from the dangers of the areas they inhabited. Through painful losses from storms, diseases and starvation, and with occasional triumphs, they survived—and eventually overcame the obstacles and dominated the environment to an ever-greater extent.

Everyone living today is - are the inheritors of a vast accumulation of experience and hard-earned knowledge of how the natural world works. But people today often have an unclear picture of how things work. And it remains unknown whether we'll be able to meet the challenge of using our understanding ~wisely for the sake of our descendants (and our collective future).

This book is a blend of several themes, which hopefully work gracefully together in the narrative. The book's main themes are — historical perspective / environmental understanding / scientific awareness.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK is to, hopefully, expand our view of the world. The book looks at several key periods and compares some of the main differences between pre- and post-industrial societies. We have much in common with those who came before us, although the ways we live and regard the world are profoundly different. We now have a degree of perspective about the world that our predecessors never imagined, but at the same time we've also lost much of the intimate **connection** they had with the world. Until recently, we've always existed on the Earth's **terms**, but now our **relationship** with the environment has changed in fundamental ways which never could have been foreseen.

This book's purpose is to help people make **connections** between human events, to describe a better **perspective** of history, and to understand our place in the natural world.

*Natural Facts* is about the long, eventful course of human **progress**. It tries to observe where our path has gone, how our growth has evolved, for better and worse. It's about what we've learned about the world, what we've forgotten, and what we have yet to understand—and what that teaches us about ourselves. **This book is an effort to explore our relationship with the world and examine what progress means.**

This is a book about the importance of the natural world — but it isn't about ecology per se, or about gaia, or about New Age, Green product branding.

The record of our history is warped by time, distilled by memory and twisted by bias. Our understanding of history is flawed by the tendency to tell our story...more as we'd like to see it rather than as it really was. We tend to get an idealized story rather than an objective accounting.

Our history is told in various ways and from specific points of view. Sometimes the stories are of a long line of kings and kingdoms, or they are framed in terms of religious traditions, or with the emphasis on material growth. The victors of war tend to be the writers of history, and they tend to cast themselves in the best possible light, presenting their motives as pure and those of the vanquished people as illegitimate.

This book is about looking at human history in a different way—as a long chain of connections to the world.

# N A T U R A L F A C T S

## DISCLAIMER

The intent of this book is to use historical narrative as a framework to highlight and connect several scientific and environmental subjects. The book isn't meant to be a detailed or comprehensive account of **historical** events, and it tries to avoid promoting an oversimplified **grand unified** theory of **history**.

This project is a work in progress. The book's foundation is in place, and I will continue to refine the narrative, which will take time to complete. Any interested person is invited to comment or contribute.

## THANKS

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