

## HISTORY BOOK GROUP BOOK REVIEW

### A HISTORY OF THE WORLD IN 100 OBJECTS

This book is the record of a series of programmes on BBC Radio 4, broadcast in 2010. Neil McGregor's fascinating book takes the reader back in time and across the world to examine how humans have shaped and been shaped by, the world, over the past 2 million years.

By selecting and examining 100 objects from the British Museum, McGregor and the team from the British Museum bring us a history of the world we might never otherwise know. Each object tells of its own world, giving messages about people, places and environments, as opposed to individual events. The book includes all sorts of objects, some carefully designed and then admired and preserved, and some used, broken and discarded. The objects range in date from the beginning of human history, around 2 million years ago, to the present day. Items come from every area of the world and include everyday items as well as great works of art.

The 100 objects range from an African chopping stone from 2 million years ago, to the world's first credit card from 2009. Some items are well known, like the statue of Ramses II and the Sutton Hoo helmet, while beautiful and fascinating items like the Mexican ceremonial ballgame belt (AD100-500) and the Hoxne pepper pot (AD300-400) are less celebrated, but equally enlightening.

We find that mankind has always expressed itself artistically and that the powerful have long misappropriated art for political propaganda purposes. Each item comes with additional comment or enquiry from a current academic or enthusiast, helping the reader to further explore the possible meaning of each.

Ceramic fragments found on a beach at Kilwa Kisiwani, Tanzania provide evidence of the great trade routes from Tanzania, through Mombasa, in modern Kenya, to Mogadishu in Somalia. These communities also constantly mixed with other traders coming across the Indian Ocean, via the Middle East, India and China. The fragments found include shards from China, Iraq, Syria and Oman, which have all ended up together in the same place.

The book takes us from Africa 2 million years ago, to the beginning of the 21st century on a tour of human history. The continuing story of mankind's story of migration, world travel, exploration, climate change, trade, economics, the rise of world faiths and dynastic power struggles, is told through examination of these 100 objects. Time and time again, we see evidence that people, goods and ideas have moved across continents since the beginning of time, creating a huge interconnected world where local history is always likely to be linked in some way to other parts of the world.

This great book transports the reader to every corner of the globe, telling the history of the world and our place in it in a completely absorbing way.

Helen Glassford