

ARCH 0440 Archaeologies of the Ancient Middle East

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Book/Film Review Essay

****DUE - MON. APRIL 19****

Your review essay should be a summary of a fictional account book/film of prehistory or prehistoric man. You may choose any book/film, but please run your selection by me before you proceed (pick something by **April 1**). I will try to read/see the account you choose before you submit the review.

What is a book review?

A book review is a description, critical analysis, and an evaluation on the quality, meaning, and significance of a book, **not a retelling**. It should focus on the book's purpose, content, and authority. A critical book review is not a book report or a summary. It is a **reaction paper** in which strengths and weaknesses of the material are analyzed. It should include a statement of what the author has tried to do, evaluates how well (in the opinion of the reviewer) the author has succeeded, and presents evidence to support this evaluation.

Your review

Your review should analyze the book/film's presentation of a prehistoric period, pertinence (i.e., how (or if) does this book/film contribute to prehistoric research), conclusions (i.e., both what they determine and possible directions for future research), and persuasiveness (i.e., do you find their conclusions cogent, are particular facets of the study more convincing than others, did you perceive contradictions in their conclusion, was it better than sliced bread [and if so why], and so on).

You have likely read many reviews in some form, and regardless of academic or popular format these reviews generally provide some summary and critical appraisal of a text, movie, or other presentation. This review should not be modeled in expository style or intellectual tone on something like a book review in the Washington Post, where what passes for reviews typically are forced efforts at originality, cynical humor, or obstinate predispositions toward particular ways of writing or personalities.

Instead, approach this as a written statement you would provide an academic colleague, so that they might evaluate what the book/film is about and how presents prehistory (accurately or inaccurately) to the public. This sounds a bit dry, but the review should demonstrate your comprehension of the book/film in relation to the readings and class work on prehistory. Your review should:

- Clearly outline what the book/film is about,
- Provide some sense of how you personally viewed the account in relation to prehistory,

- Provide a critical assessment of the presentation of prehistory – its key concepts and theories – in a fictional account,
- Of course you can and should be critical of a poorly written book or a very bad movie, which you do not like, but be specific about the sources of your discontent; i.e., "this movie is awful" is not sufficient, but a review which more or less says the book/film stinks because of specific elements of the method, presentation, or conclusions is reasonable.

There are some basic issues to consider as you prepare your review.

1. Did you basically like the book/film? Was the subject of interest to you? Why or why not? Was the book/film clear to you? How and why was it clear, and if it was not clear, in what specific ways was it confused?
2. Who do you suppose is the intended audience for the book/film? What suggests this to you? Does the format and style of the book/film work for a wide audience, or does it have presentation details, which make it seem particularly specialized?
3. How is prehistory portrayed in the book/film? Is it accurate, inaccurate, parts accurate? I do not want a laundry list of inaccuracies but rather an analysis of prehistoric man/life portrayed in the book/film drawing on the larger themes discussed in class (i.e. human evolution, origins of agriculture, secondary products revolution, evidence for organized religion, early writing). What are the writer's research objectives in using prehistory as a setting? Do you find the book/film's portrayal of prehistory persuasive?
4. How well is the book/film written? For example, how does the book/film flow from one idea to the other, or from data to interpretation? Does the book/film have clear introductions and transitions, incorporation of quotes and technical details, etc? Is the evidence clearly analyzed in the book/film?

In all cases, strive to be as specific as possible in your summary, referring to specific passages or elements of the book/film to illustrate your analysis and as well as drawing from assigned readings and class discussion. Do not be vague or dismissive; if the book/film is ambiguous, be clear about what you find difficult, illogical or inane, or simply try another book/film for the exercise. I am happy to review drafts or discuss particular reviews if you have any questions.

The Basics

Please submit an email of the review to me at Morag_Kersel@brown.edu. The review must be a minimum of three double-spaced pages in length, with 1" margins on all sides, and font size no larger than 12 point. The reviews should cite material covered in class and extra readings you find while researching the period/region of prehistory. Everything must be properly cited – pick a style (MLA, Chicago Manual of Style, AAA) and use it consistently. I will penalize reviews that do not follow these guidelines. Unclear grammar, spelling errors, or other stylistic preparation problems will be

considered as part of the review's grade. Please remember to put your name on the first page.

The review is due on or before **April 19, 2010**. Reviews will be accepted until the end of the day in my email in box. Reviews turned in late will be penalized a letter grade for each day they are late, but you will receive credit, so do not bag the assignment even if you are late--partial credit is better than no credit.

Suggestions

Books

Anet, Claude (pseud. Jean Schopfer). *Fin d'Un Monde* [The End of the World]. Paris: B. Grasset, 1925. [A group of reindeer men (Cro-Magnon). Has an interesting epilogue.]

Anthony, Piers. *Tatham Mound*. New York: Morrow, 1991. [Prehistoric Indians in Florida.]

----- . *Isle of Woman*. New York: TOR, 1993. [A fantasy about prehistoric man.]

Auel, Jean M. *The Clan of the Cave Bear; A Novel*. New York: Crown, 1980. Volume 1 of *Earth's Children*. [Cro-Magnons and Neanderthals.]

----- . *The Valley of the Horses*. New York: Crown, 1982. Volume 2 of *Earth's Children*.

----- . *The Mammoth Hunters*. New York: Crown, 1985. [Earth's Children, sequel to the Valley of the Horses]

----- . *The Plains of Passage*. New York: Crown, 1990. [Earth's Children, sequel to The Mammoth Hunters]

Bandelier, Adolf Francis Alphonse [1840-1914]. *The Delight Makers*. Introduction by Charles F. Lummis. 2nd edition. New York: Dodd, Mead, c.1918. [Pueblo Indians.]

Barnett, Franklin. *Crooked Arrow: A Novel of Southwestern Prehistoric Indians of the 13th Century*. Tempe, AZ: Beaumaris, 1977.

Bishop, Michael. *No Enemy But Time: A Novel*. New York: Timescape, 1982. [Time travel to prehistoric Africa.]

Bruchac, Joseph. *Dawn Land: A Novel*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Pub., c.1993. [Prehistoric Abnaki Indians.]

Doyle, Arthur Conan. *The Lost World*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1912. [The classic tale of a prehistoric area on a plateau in Venezuela.]

Gear, W. Michael, and Kathleen O'Neal Gear. *People of the River*. New York: TOR, 1992. [Warring clans around present-day Cahokia, IL, in A.D. 1300.]

----- . People of the Wolf. New York: TOR, 1992.
----- . People of the Sea. New York: Forge, 1993. [Prehistoric man in western U.S.]
----- . People of the Lakes. New York: Forge, 1994. [Mound builders.]

Harrison, Harry and Leon Stover. Stonehenge. New York: Scribner, 1972. [Fictional interpretation, not for the fainthearted.]

Holland, Cecelia. Pillar of the Sky; A Novel. New York: Knopf, 1985 [Prehistoric England.]

Kertegen, Eileen. Journey to Apriloth. New York: Ace, 1980. [Journey of a young man from Britain to the mouth of the Euphrates at the time of the building of Stonehenge.]

Kurten, Bjorn. Dance of the Tiger; A Novel of the Ice Age. New York: Pantheon, 1980 (Swedish edition c.1978). [Story set in Scandinavia 35,000 BP.]
----- . Singletusk. New York: Pantheon, 1986.

London, Jack. Before Adam. Macmillan, 1906. [Life as a caveman. See also Waterloo, Stanley.]

Rutherford, Edward. Sarum; the Novel of England. New York: Crown, 1987. [Traces the history of England from the Ice Age to the present through five fictional families. First part is recommended.]

Waterloo, Stanley. The Story of Ab: A Tale of the Time of the Caveman_. Way & Williams, 1897. [A pseudo-historical novel of prehistory. Waterloo accused Jack London of plagiarism in _Before Adam_. See London, Jack.]

Williams, Raymond. People of the Black Mountains. 2 volumes. London: Chatto & Windus, 1989. [Fictional account of South Wales from the Paleolithic to the present. Current archaeological work done in the area shows that the author's (who was not an archaeologist at all) chapter on Vikings had a lot of true elements to it.]

Wilson, Colin. The Philosopher's Stone. New York: Crown, 1971. [The secret of human prehistory is revealed with the help of a few archaeologists and a scientist who can reconstruct the past accurately.]

Wolf, Joan. The Horsemasters. New York: Dutton, 1993. [Prehistoric man.]

Films

10,000BC, One Million BC, Caveman etc....