



# The Story of Civilization

By Will Durant

# Book summary & main ideas

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## Summary:

The Story of Civilization by Will Durant is a comprehensive 11-volume set of books that covers the history of Western civilization from ancient times to the early 20th century. The books were written over a period of more than 30 years, from 1935 to 1975. The set is divided into three sections: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern. Each volume covers a different period of history, with the first volume focusing on the ancient world and the last volume focusing on the early 20th century. The books are written in a narrative style, with Durant providing a detailed overview of the major events, people, and ideas that shaped each period of history. He also provides an in-depth analysis of the

political, social, and cultural developments of each period. The books are heavily illustrated with photographs, maps, and drawings. The Story of Civilization is considered to be one of the most comprehensive and influential works of history ever written. It has been praised for its breadth and depth of coverage, as well as its engaging and accessible writing style. It is an essential resource for anyone interested in the history of Western civilization.

Main ideas:

***#1. The Ancient World: The Story of Civilization begins with the rise of early civilizations in the Middle East, Egypt, India, and China, and the development of writing, law, and religion.***

The Story of Civilization by Will Durant begins with the rise of early civilizations in the Middle East, Egypt, India, and China.

These civilizations were the first to develop writing, law, and religion, and their impact on the world has been immense. From the earliest days of civilization, these societies have been the source of great advances in science, technology, and culture.

The Ancient World was a time of great change and progress. In the Middle East, the Sumerians developed the first writing system, while in Egypt, the Pharaohs built the Great Pyramids. In India, the Vedic period saw the development of Hinduism and the caste system, while in China, the Zhou Dynasty saw the rise of Confucianism and the beginnings of the Great Wall.

The Ancient World was also a time of great exploration and discovery. The Phoenicians explored the Mediterranean, while the Greeks and Romans spread their influence throughout Europe and the

Middle East. The Chinese explored the Silk Road, while the Arabs explored the Indian Ocean. All of these explorations helped to spread knowledge and culture throughout the world.

The Ancient World was a time of great achievements and progress. It was a time of great empires, great thinkers, and great discoveries. It was a time of great change and progress, and it laid the foundation for the modern world. The Story of Civilization by Will Durant is an excellent resource for learning more about this fascinating period of history.

**#2. *The Greek World: The Greek world saw the development of democracy, philosophy, and science, as well as the rise of Alexander the Great and the spread of Hellenistic culture.***

The Greek world was a period of immense cultural and intellectual development. It saw the emergence of democracy, philosophy, and science, as well as the rise of Alexander the Great and the spread of Hellenistic culture. The Greeks developed a unique system of government, with citizens participating in the decision-making process. This system of government was the foundation of democracy, which has been adopted by many countries around the world. The Greeks also developed a system of philosophy, which sought to explain the world around them. This system of thought was the foundation of Western philosophy, which has been studied and debated for centuries. The Greeks also made great advances in science, mathematics, and medicine. They developed a system of mathematics that was the foundation of modern mathematics, and they made great advances in medicine, which laid the

foundation for modern medicine. The Greeks also spread their culture throughout the Mediterranean world, and their influence can still be seen in many countries today.

The most famous figure of the Greek world was Alexander the Great. He was a brilliant military leader who conquered much of the known world. He spread Greek culture throughout the lands he conquered, and his legacy is still felt today. He was also a great patron of the arts, and his patronage helped to spread Greek culture even further. The spread of Hellenistic culture was also a major part of the Greek world. This culture was a blend of Greek and other cultures, and it spread throughout the Mediterranean world. This culture was the foundation of much of the culture that we see today in the Mediterranean region.

**#3. *The Roman World: The Roman world saw the rise of the Roman Empire, the development of law and engineering, and the spread of Christianity.***

The Roman world was a period of great achievement and progress. The Roman Empire rose to become one of the most powerful and influential empires in history, stretching from Britain to the Middle East. The Romans developed a system of law and engineering that was the foundation of much of the Western world. They also spread Christianity throughout the empire, which had a lasting impact on the development of Europe and the world.

The Roman Empire was a major force in the ancient world, and its legacy can still be seen today. Its engineering feats, such as the aqueducts and roads, are still in use. Its legal system, which was based on



the Twelve Tables, was the basis for much of the law in the Western world. Its art and architecture, such as the Colosseum and the Pantheon, are still admired today. The Roman Empire also spread Christianity throughout the empire, which had a lasting impact on the development of Europe and the world.

The Roman world was a period of great achievement and progress. Its legacy can still be seen today in its engineering feats, legal system, art and architecture, and its spread of Christianity. The Roman world was a major force in the ancient world, and its influence can still be seen in the modern world.

***#4. The Middle Ages: The Middle Ages saw the rise of feudalism, the development of the Catholic Church, and the spread of the Islamic faith.***

The Middle Ages were a period of great change and development in Europe. Feudalism, a system of government based on the exchange of land for military service, became the dominant form of political organization. This system was based on the idea of a lord granting land to a vassal in exchange for loyalty and military service. This system of government allowed for the rise of powerful lords and kings who held great influence over their lands.

The Catholic Church also rose to prominence during the Middle Ages. It became the dominant religious institution in Europe and was a major force in politics, culture, and education. The Church was responsible for the spread of Christianity throughout Europe and for the development of a unified system of laws and beliefs.

The Islamic faith also spread during the Middle Ages. Islamic scholars and traders brought their religion to Europe, and it became an important part of the culture in many areas. Islamic scholars also made important contributions to the fields of science, mathematics, and medicine.

***#5. The Renaissance: The Renaissance saw the revival of classical learning, the development of the printing press, and the rise of the nation-state.***

The Renaissance was a period of great cultural and intellectual revival in Europe, beginning in the 14th century and lasting until the 17th century. It was a time of exploration and discovery, of new ideas and new ways of thinking. During the Renaissance, classical learning was revived and the printing press was developed, allowing for the spread of

knowledge and ideas. The nation-state began to emerge, with the rise of powerful monarchs and the development of strong central governments. Art and literature flourished, with the works of Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and William Shakespeare becoming some of the most famous and influential works of the period. The Renaissance was a time of great progress and achievement, and its legacy can still be seen in the world today.

***#6. The Reformation: The Reformation saw the rise of Protestantism, the development of the scientific method, and the spread of the Enlightenment.***

The Reformation was a period of religious, political, and social upheaval that began in the 16th century and lasted until the early 19th century. It was a period of profound change in Europe, and it had a lasting

impact on the world. The Reformation saw the rise of Protestantism, the development of the scientific method, and the spread of the Enlightenment. It was a period of religious and political conflict, as well as a period of intellectual and cultural transformation.

The Reformation began with Martin Luthers 95 Theses, which he posted on the door of the Wittenberg Church in 1517. Luthers challenge to the Catholic Church sparked a wave of reformers who sought to reform the Church and its teachings. This led to the formation of Protestant denominations, such as Lutheranism, Calvinism, and Anglicanism. These denominations rejected the authority of the Catholic Church and sought to create their own forms of Christianity.

The Reformation also saw the development of the scientific method,

which was a major step forward in the advancement of knowledge. This method of inquiry and experimentation allowed scientists to make discoveries and develop theories that would shape the modern world. The Reformation also saw the spread of the Enlightenment, which was a period of intellectual and cultural transformation that emphasized reason, science, and individualism.

The Reformation had a lasting impact on the world. It changed the way people thought about religion, politics, and science, and it helped to shape the modern world. The Reformation was a period of profound change, and its legacy can still be seen today.

***#7. The Age of Exploration: The Age of Exploration saw the rise of European colonialism, the development of global trade, and the spread of new ideas and***

## ***technologies.***

The Age of Exploration was a period of great change and discovery. It saw the rise of European colonialism, the development of global trade, and the spread of new ideas and technologies. It was a time of great risk and adventure, as explorers set out to discover new lands and cultures. It was also a time of great wealth and power, as European nations sought to expand their empires and gain control of new resources.

The Age of Exploration was a period of intense competition between European nations. Explorers sought to find new routes to the East, to gain access to valuable resources, and to establish colonies in the New World. This competition led to the establishment of trading posts, the development of new technologies, and the spread of European

culture and religion. It also led to the displacement of native populations, the exploitation of resources, and the spread of disease.

The Age of Exploration was a period of great progress and achievement. It saw the development of new technologies, the growth of global trade, and the spread of new ideas and cultures. It was a time of great risk and adventure, as explorers set out to discover new lands and cultures. It was also a time of great wealth and power, as European nations sought to expand their empires and gain control of new resources.

***#8. The Age of Reason: The Age of Reason saw the rise of the scientific revolution, the development of the industrial revolution, and the spread of the Enlightenment ideals.***



The Age of Reason, which began in the late 17th century, was a period of great intellectual and scientific progress. It was a time when the scientific method was applied to the study of nature, and when the power of reason was used to challenge traditional beliefs and superstitions. The Age of Reason saw the rise of the scientific revolution, the development of the industrial revolution, and the spread of the Enlightenment ideals of liberty, equality, and justice. It was a period of great intellectual and scientific progress, and it was during this time that the foundations of modern science, technology, and philosophy were laid.

The Age of Reason was also a period of great social and political change. The Enlightenment ideals of liberty, equality, and justice were embraced by many, and the concept of democracy began to take shape. The American Revolution and the

French Revolution were both products of the Age of Reason, and the ideas of the Enlightenment had a profound impact on the development of modern society. The Age of Reason also saw the rise of the Industrial Revolution, which brought about great changes in the way people lived and worked.

The Age of Reason was a period of great progress and change, and it laid the foundations for the modern world. It was a time of great intellectual and scientific progress, and it was during this time that the foundations of modern science, technology, and philosophy were laid. The Age of Reason also saw the rise of the Industrial Revolution, which brought about great changes in the way people lived and worked. The Enlightenment ideals of liberty, equality, and justice were embraced by many, and the concept of democracy began to take shape. The Age

of Reason was a period of great progress and change, and it laid the foundations for the modern world.

***#9. The French Revolution: The French Revolution saw the overthrow of the monarchy, the development of the Napoleonic Code, and the spread of the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity.***

The French Revolution of 1789 was a pivotal moment in European history. It saw the overthrow of the monarchy, the development of the Napoleonic Code, and the spread of the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity. The Revolution began with the storming of the Bastille, a prison in Paris, and the subsequent Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. This document declared that all men were equal before the law and had the right to participate in the government of their

country. The Revolution also saw the establishment of a new form of government, the Republic, and the adoption of a new constitution.

The Revolution also had a profound impact on the culture of France. It saw the emergence of a new form of art, known as neoclassicism, which was inspired by the ideals of the Revolution. It also saw the emergence of a new form of literature, known as the Romantic movement, which was inspired by the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity. The Revolution also saw the emergence of a new form of philosophy, known as the Enlightenment, which was inspired by the ideals of reason and progress.

The French Revolution had a lasting impact on the world. It inspired other revolutions, such as the American Revolution and the Haitian Revolution, and

it spread the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity to other countries. It also had a lasting impact on the culture of France, with its neoclassical art, Romantic literature, and Enlightenment philosophy. The French Revolution was a pivotal moment in European history, and its legacy continues to this day.

***#10. The Industrial Revolution: The Industrial Revolution saw the rise of the factory system, the development of new technologies, and the spread of industrialization.***

The Industrial Revolution was a period of great change and progress in the history of the world. It began in the late 18th century in Britain and spread to other parts of Europe and the United States. During this period, new technologies were developed, factories were built, and industrialization spread. This period saw the rise of the

factory system, which replaced the traditional craft system of production. New machines and tools were developed to increase production and efficiency. The development of the steam engine and the use of coal and iron were key elements of the Industrial Revolution.

The Industrial Revolution had a profound effect on the way people lived and worked. It changed the way goods were produced and distributed, and it led to the growth of cities and the development of new forms of transportation. It also led to the growth of the middle class and the emergence of a new type of worker, the industrial worker. The Industrial Revolution also had a major impact on the environment, as it led to the pollution of air and water, and the destruction of forests.

The Industrial Revolution had a lasting impact on the world. It changed the way

people lived and worked, and it led to the growth of cities and the development of new technologies. It also had a major impact on the environment, as it led to the pollution of air and water, and the destruction of forests. The Industrial Revolution was a period of great change and progress in the history of the world, and it continues to shape our lives today.

***#11. The Age of Imperialism: The Age of Imperialism saw the rise of European empires, the development of new economic systems, and the spread of Western culture.***

The Age of Imperialism was a period of great change and expansion for Europe. It saw the rise of powerful empires, the development of new economic systems, and the spread of Western culture. European nations sought to expand their influence and power by colonizing other

parts of the world. This period saw the establishment of trading posts, military outposts, and colonies in Africa, Asia, and the Americas. The Europeans used their superior military and economic power to dominate and control the native populations of these regions. They also sought to spread their culture and religion, often at the expense of the native cultures.

The Age of Imperialism had a profound effect on the world. It brought about the rise of powerful empires, the development of new economic systems, and the spread of Western culture. It also had a major impact on the native populations of the colonized regions. Many of these populations were subjected to harsh treatment and exploitation. The Age of Imperialism also had a major impact on the global economy, as the Europeans used their economic power to control the resources of the colonized regions.



The Age of Imperialism was a period of great change and expansion for Europe. It had a major impact on the world, and its legacy can still be seen today. The Age of Imperialism was a period of great change and expansion for Europe, and it had a lasting impact on the world.

**#12. *The World Wars: The World Wars saw the rise of totalitarianism, the development of new weapons, and the spread of global conflict.***

The World Wars were a period of immense global conflict and upheaval. During this time, the world saw the rise of totalitarian regimes, the development of new and devastating weapons, and the spread of conflict to all corners of the globe. The World Wars were a time of great suffering, with millions of lives lost and entire nations changed forever.

The World Wars also saw the emergence of new technologies, such as the airplane, the tank, and the machine gun. These weapons changed the way wars were fought, and allowed for unprecedented levels of destruction. The World Wars also saw the development of new strategies, such as the use of propaganda and psychological warfare, as well as the use of chemical and biological weapons.

The World Wars also had a profound effect on the international political landscape. The rise of totalitarian regimes, such as Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, had a lasting impact on the world. The World Wars also saw the emergence of the United Nations, which was created to promote international peace and security.

The World Wars were a period of immense

suffering and destruction, but they also had a lasting impact on the world. The development of new technologies, strategies, and political systems changed the way wars were fought and the way the world was governed. The World Wars were a defining moment in human history, and their legacy continues to shape the world today.

***#13. The Cold War: The Cold War saw the rise of the nuclear arms race, the development of the space race, and the spread of the Cold War ideology.***

The Cold War was a period of intense geopolitical tension between the United States and the Soviet Union that lasted from the end of World War II until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. During this time, the two superpowers competed for global influence and power, leading to a number of proxy wars, the

development of nuclear weapons, and the spread of Cold War ideology. The Cold War saw the rise of the nuclear arms race, as both sides sought to gain a strategic advantage over the other. The United States and the Soviet Union developed increasingly sophisticated nuclear weapons, leading to a period of intense competition and the threat of nuclear war. The Cold War also saw the development of the space race, as both sides sought to gain a technological advantage in space exploration. The Cold War also saw the spread of Cold War ideology, as both sides sought to spread their own political and economic systems to other countries. The Cold War ultimately ended with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, but its legacy still remains today.

***#14. The Post-War World: The Post-War World saw the rise of the United Nations, the development of the***

## ***Marshall Plan, and the spread of the Cold War ideology.***

The Post-War World saw the rise of the United Nations, a global organization dedicated to maintaining international peace and security. The United Nations was established in 1945, shortly after the end of World War II, and has since become the primary international forum for resolving disputes between nations. The United Nations also provides humanitarian aid and development assistance to countries in need.

The Post-War World also saw the development of the Marshall Plan, a U.S.-led initiative to rebuild Europe after the devastation of World War II. The Marshall Plan provided billions of dollars in economic aid to European countries, helping them to rebuild their economies and infrastructure. This aid was

instrumental in helping Europe to recover from the war and to become a prosperous region.

Finally, the Post-War World saw the spread of the Cold War ideology. This ideology was based on the idea of a bipolar world, with the United States and the Soviet Union as the two superpowers. This ideology led to a period of intense competition between the two countries, as they sought to gain influence and control over the world. This competition eventually led to the development of nuclear weapons, and the Cold War ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

***#15. The Civil Rights Movement: The Civil Rights Movement saw the rise of the civil rights movement, the development of new laws, and the spread of the ideals of equality and justice.***

The Civil Rights Movement was a period of time in the United States when African Americans and other minority groups fought for their rights and for equality. It began in the 1950s and continued into the 1970s, and it was a major part of the struggle for civil rights in the United States. The movement was led by activists such as Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, and Malcolm X, and it was supported by organizations such as the NAACP and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. The movement sought to end segregation and discrimination, and to secure the right to vote for African Americans. It also sought to end racial violence and to ensure that African Americans had access to the same opportunities as white Americans. The movement was successful in achieving many of its goals, and it helped to create a more just and equal society in the United States.

The Civil Rights Movement was a major turning point in American history. It helped to bring about the end of segregation and discrimination, and it helped to create a more equal society. The movement also helped to create a new sense of pride and identity among African Americans, and it helped to create a new sense of unity among all Americans. The movement also helped to create a new sense of hope and optimism among African Americans, and it helped to create a new sense of possibility for the future. The Civil Rights Movement was a major part of the struggle for civil rights in the United States, and it helped to create a more just and equal society.

***#16. The Feminist Movement: The Feminist Movement saw the rise of the women's movement, the development of new theories, and the spread of the ideals of gender equality.***



The Feminist Movement was a powerful force in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It sought to challenge the traditional roles of women in society and to promote gender equality. The movement was led by a diverse group of women, including suffragists, labor activists, and intellectuals. It was a multifaceted movement that sought to address a wide range of issues, from voting rights to economic and educational opportunities.

The movement was fueled by the writings of early feminists such as Mary Wollstonecraft, who argued for the rights of women to be equal to those of men. This was followed by the work of other feminists such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who fought for the right of women to vote. The movement also saw the development of new theories, such as Simone de Beauvoir's concept of gender as a social construct.

The Feminist Movement spread its ideals of gender equality around the world, inspiring women in other countries to fight for their rights. It also had a profound impact on the way women were viewed in society, leading to greater acceptance of women in the workplace and in politics. The movement continues to be an important force in the fight for gender equality today.

***#17. The Environmental Movement: The Environmental Movement saw the rise of the environmental movement, the development of new technologies, and the spread of the ideals of sustainability.***

The Environmental Movement saw the rise of a new awareness of the importance of protecting the environment. This movement was driven by a growing

concern for the health of the planet and its inhabitants, and the need to develop sustainable practices. It was also driven by the development of new technologies, such as renewable energy sources, that could help reduce the impact of human activities on the environment. The movement also spread the ideals of sustainability, which emphasize the need to use resources responsibly and to protect the environment for future generations.

The Environmental Movement was a major force in the development of environmental laws and regulations, as well as the creation of environmental organizations and initiatives. It also helped to raise public awareness of environmental issues, and to encourage individuals and businesses to adopt more sustainable practices. The movement has had a lasting impact on the way we think about and interact with the

environment, and it continues to be an important force in the fight for a healthier planet.

***#18. The Information Age: The Information Age saw the rise of the internet, the development of new technologies, and the spread of the digital revolution.***

The Information Age was a period of unprecedented technological advancement and digital revolution. It saw the rise of the internet, the development of new technologies, and the spread of digital media. The internet allowed for the rapid exchange of information, making it easier for people to access and share information from around the world. New technologies such as smartphones, tablets, and laptops made it easier for people to access the internet and digital media. The digital revolution also saw the emergence of new

forms of communication, such as social media, which allowed people to connect with each other in ways that were previously impossible. The Information Age has had a profound impact on the way we live, work, and communicate, and it has changed the way we interact with the world around us.

The Information Age has also had a major impact on the economy. The internet has allowed businesses to reach new markets and customers, and it has enabled the growth of the digital economy. The development of new technologies has also allowed businesses to become more efficient and productive, and it has enabled them to create new products and services. The Information Age has also had a major impact on education, as it has made it easier for people to access educational resources and to learn new skills. Finally, the Information Age has had a major

impact on politics, as it has allowed for the spread of information and ideas, and it has enabled people to engage in political discourse in ways that were previously impossible.

***#19. The Globalization Era: The Globalization Era saw the rise of global markets, the development of new economic systems, and the spread of the ideals of free trade.***

The Globalization Era saw the rise of global markets, the development of new economic systems, and the spread of the ideals of free trade. This period of globalization was marked by increased international trade, the emergence of multinational corporations, and the growth of global financial markets. It also saw the emergence of new technologies, such as the internet, which allowed for the rapid exchange of information and goods across

the world. This period of globalization also saw the rise of global governance, with international organizations such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organization playing an increasingly important role in regulating international trade and economic activity.

The Globalization Era also saw the emergence of new forms of communication, such as the internet, which allowed for the rapid exchange of information and goods across the world. This period of globalization also saw the rise of global culture, with the spread of popular culture, such as music, movies, and television, across the world. This period of globalization also saw the emergence of new forms of social and political organization, such as the rise of international organizations, such as the United Nations, and the growth of global civil society.

The Globalization Era also saw the emergence of new forms of economic activity, such as the growth of global financial markets and the development of new economic systems, such as the global economy. This period of globalization also saw the emergence of new forms of social and political organization, such as the rise of international organizations, such as the United Nations, and the growth of global civil society. This period of globalization also saw the emergence of new forms of communication, such as the internet, which allowed for the rapid exchange of information and goods across the world.

***#20. The 21st Century: The 21st Century saw the rise of new technologies, the development of new forms of communication, and the spread of the ideals of global cooperation.***



The 21st Century has been a time of unprecedented change and progress. Advances in technology have revolutionized the way we communicate, work, and live. The internet has connected people from all over the world, allowing for the sharing of ideas and resources. Globalization has opened up new markets and opportunities for businesses, while also creating a more interconnected world. The ideals of cooperation and collaboration have become more prominent, as nations and individuals work together to tackle global issues such as climate change and poverty.

The 21st Century has also seen the emergence of new forms of entertainment, such as streaming services and virtual reality. Social media has allowed people to connect with each other in ways never before possible. The world is becoming increasingly interconnected, and the

possibilities for the future are endless. As we move forward into the 21st Century, we can look forward to a future of continued progress and innovation.

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