
YUVAL NOAH HARARI

and *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*

WHO IS YUVAL NOAH HARARI?

Yuval Noah Harari was born in Haifa, Israel in 1976. He completed his undergraduate degree at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and his doctorate at Oxford University, where he studied medieval military history. He returned to the Hebrew University, where he is today a professor in the Department of History. His early academic work focused on medieval warfare and war memoirs — a long way from the grand sweep of human prehistory.

That background matters. Harari is not a paleoanthropologist, evolutionary biologist, or geneticist. He is a historian with an exceptionally wide intellectual range and a gift for synthesis. *Sapiens* draws on fields far outside his formal training — which is both its greatest strength and the source of its most contested claims.

THE BOOK

Sapiens began as undergraduate history lectures at the Hebrew University. The Hebrew edition appeared in 2011; the English translation in 2014. It became one of the best-selling works of popular non-fiction of the past decade.

Copies sold	Over 25 million worldwide
Languages	Translated into more than 65 languages
Notable admirers	Barack Obama, Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg
Critical reception	Enthusiastic popular press; substantial academic pushback

"About 13.5 billion years ago, matter, energy, time and space came into being in what is known as the Big Bang. The story of these fundamental features of our universe is called physics."

— Yuval Noah Harari, *Sapiens*, opening sentence

HOW TO READ HARARI

Harari writes with unusual confidence. He moves seamlessly between established science, reasonable inference, and bold speculation — often in the same paragraph, sometimes in the same sentence — without flagging the shift. This is what makes *Sapiens* compulsively readable. It is also what makes it intellectually dangerous if taken uncritically. This course applies the **E/I/S framework** to evaluate his claims:

E ESTABLISHED	Strong scientific consensus — directly supported by physical evidence
I INFERRED	Logically derived from evidence — reasonable conclusion, not directly observed
S SPECULATIVE	Plausible hypothesis — evidence thin, indirect, or genuinely contested