

## A Children's History of the World

By Erna Osland & Victoria Sandøy (ill.)

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### EVERYONE HAS RESPONSIBILITIES [page 12–13]

Were people from the Stone Age like us?

Did they like to feel safe and enjoy good food?

Yes, say the researchers, which explains why Stone Age people lived in groups.

When there were more of them, they could help each other find food, repair homes, and chase away enemies. That's how they had time to rest and get together with friends. Cooperation made life safer.

Stone Age people took responsibility for one another. If only one person was able to hunt, fish or make a fire, it would be dangerous if they died. As a result, everyone knew a little bit about everything. And they learned from early on. Children were out hunting and fishing. Imagine how exciting and fun that must have been! Perhaps more tedious was making tools. They had to practice for a long time to make good axes or sharpen knives and make arrows to kill larger animals.

By learning, children learned about responsibility.

They helped make life good for everyone.

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Sample translation by James Konrad Puchowski

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Making tools out of stone is an art. The technique is called knapping. The stone had to be struck in a certain way. And it took a lot of practice. We have found traces of knapping.

Skilled knappers made knives just as sharp as the steel knives we use today.

Archaeologists have found axes, knives, bows and spears up in the north of Europe that resemble the ones in the south. It tells us that people from the Stone Age worked together and learned from one another. Knowledge was precious. A good axe was like treasure, a fine gift for a friend.

DANGEROUS AND GOOD [page 18–19]

Life in the Stone Age was dangerous. Not least for children. Being born – being pushed out of a mother – is one of the most dangerous things that there is. For children there were dangers everywhere: They had to watch out for wild animals, cliffs and sharp knives and axes. The skeletons of Stone Age people often bear traces of wounds and cuts.

In the earliest days, it was easy to hunt, as the animals were not scared of people. But later, when hunting or fishing went wrong, there could be very little food, and this affected children the most. The men who were good at hunting and women who could have new children got food first; the others had to go hungry.

Not all Stone Age families had a good time. And not every day was easy. But the Stone Age lasted for thousands of years, and quite a lot of people had good lives.

There is quite a lot of rubbish left over from the Stone Age, and it tells us that people had a lot of food. Not to mention, they had plenty of time to be together. Children could be with their mother and father the entire day. During the mornings and afternoons, they were together, foraging for food or making tools. At night they slept close together to keep warm.

The Stone Age was the longest period in history.

Was it because people had it so good?

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WITH MOTHER AND FATHER IN FIELDS AND TOWNS [page 21–23]

“Hurry, boy! The sheep are out in the field!” If your mother asks you to watch the field, you’re no longer a child of the Stone Age. You and your parents have become farmers.

The first farmers lived in the Middle East. Here they learned to tame animals and grow vegetables, fruit and corn 12,000 years ago.

Cultivating the same piece of land day in and day out is different than roaming free in nature. Foraging in the forest is different than pulling out weeds in a field. And hunting is different than herding sheep. So why would free hunting people turn their lives completely upside down?

Herodotus, a historian who lived 2,500 years ago, thought that farming life began at the River Nile in Egypt.

The large, calm river helped farmers to both water and fertilise the ground, which the sun was good at warming up.

Not everyone had it as easy as the people by the Nile. Nevertheless, they became farmers, as even small crops made it safer to become a farmer than a hunter. The animals they hunted could disappear, and berries could be taken by other people. So, despite the hard and long work in the fields, hunters and foragers became farmers.

Children did the same tasks as their parents.

They learned how to grow corn, cabbage and herbs.

They learned how to shear sheep, butcher pigs and milk cows. They preserved and developed the art of being a farmer. Together with their parents, they tended fields and animals, and new towns and villages grew.

THE SMALLEST IN THE GREAT ROMAN EMPIRE [page 34–35]

The war god Mars had two sons, Romulus and Remus. When they were toddlers, an enemy left them in the forest. A she-wolf found them and saved them. They grew up, became warriors and made the Roman Empire great and wealthy.

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But not everyone had it just as good.

There was an enormous difference between the rich and poor in Rome. The rich lived in unimaginable luxury, the poor in bottomless poverty. The slaves and their children had it worst. And there were a lot of them, because the Romans fought hard and took prisoners as slaves.

The slaves were sold to rich people who put them to work in the home, in workshops or on the farm. Well educated slaves were teachers for their owner's children.

Children could be slaves even if they were not prisoners of war. Poor parents could sell them. Roman law did however have rules for selling children. If a child was sold more than three times, they were finally set free.

Abandoned infants! But hadn't many Romans become Christians by now?

The story of Romulus and Remus is a sort of fairy tale, and fairy tales aren't real stories. Regardless, they tell us about history. They tell us that Romans would abandon their children. They didn't see infants as human beings. We also see this in their ancient laws.

The Romans wanted children who would become strong warriors, so the law said that sick infants should be carried out into the forest. But if a father felt that his family didn't have enough food, he could also abandon a healthy child. Those who didn't have children could go into the forest and "pick" themselves a child.

There was a big difference between the children who were free, especially between boys and girls. Girls were educated at home. They learned how to run a household and raise children. They were already married by their teenage years. Boys, even as young as 12, became apprentices or were sent to vocational schools, and as soon as they were finished, they were then seen as adults. Wealthy parents sent their sons to private schools; they learned to read, write and calculate, as it was of course these children who would go on to run the country, just like their fathers.

Several religions considered children and adults to be equally valuable. But it took time for people to understand that.

## THE AGE OF EXPLORATION [page 47–49]

Christopher Columbus sailed into a new era. This period is often called the Age of Exploration.

During the Age of Exploration, seafarers set out on dangerous adventures. They reached lands that were far from Europe, they encountered new peoples, plundered silver and gold, and brought new goods with them home.

At home, adults developed a taste for tobacco and coffee, and children tasted sugar for the first time. In the towns, merchants offered new wares. Meanwhile, farmers found new ways to cultivate the land.

What the seafarers discovered inspired people. People back home rediscovered nature. Some began to research the stars, plants and animals. Others invented new tools or created wonderful works of art.

New knowledge brought about new ideas about humanity. “Look at everything humans can do, they don’t need to be afraid”, said those who philosophised about life. But people were afraid, especially of God, who they believed was a very strict father.

Philosophers encouraged grown-ups to be less afraid. They needed to take after their children—be curious and use their imagination. “Children are the best we have”, said a philosopher who understood that children were not small adults. Children were better at learning and coming up with new ideas. They explored the world whilst they played.

Did all children get to play? No! Most people had so little money and food that children had to go to work so they could eat.

Those new goods and ideas did not reach everyone. But everything that happened during the Age of Exploration was the beginning of an age that looks a lot more like the one we’re living in now.

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The Age of Exploration? But America had already been discovered by the people already living there!

History can be told in different ways, depending on who's telling it.

## THE NEW MASTERS OF LEARNING [page 50–51]

A lot of thinkers in the early modern age had difficult childhoods. Did that make them particularly clever?

JOHANNES KEPLER (1571-1630) was a poor, sickly child. But his desire to learn earned him a free place at school. He was so good at mathematics that he was able to calculate the orbits of planets travelling around the sun.

LEONARDO DA VINCI (1452-1519), the world's most famous painter, grew up with a strict grandfather in a poor village. Not until he was 15 did he get proper training from a painter.

ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM (1466-1536) was fatherless and attended a monastery school where children were beaten. But after Erasmus had become a famous author, he asked the king to stop the beatings.

NICOLAUS COPERNICUS (1473-1543) lost his father early, but an uncle sent him to school. Copernicus discovered that the Earth and planets orbited around the sun. This was a sensation and gave people a new perspective on the world.

ISAAC NEWTON (1643-1727) was fatherless, born prematurely, small and weak. He grew up with his grandmother and had to go to a school for poor and orphaned children who couldn't read. But he later became the world's greatest scientist of all time.

GALILEO GALILEI (1564-1642) knew that the Earth went around the Sun and argued that Earth wasn't the centre point of the universe. This was something the authorities didn't want to hear about, and he was arrested. For life.

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The masters of learning were courageous. They replaced superstition with knowledge. Printed books came into use. Even though they were expensive, and mostly for people with money, they became more and more common.

## SHIPS FULL OF SLAVES [page 58–59]

Over the course of 300 years, 12 million Africans were transported to the Americas. 3 million of them were children, often without their mother and father. From now on there wouldn't be any playing or learning about new things. Day after day, they were sent out to pick fruit or cotton for their slave owners.

Both Europeans and Africans sold people. The slave traders turned up wherever there was war. The side that lost became slaves.

But children also became slaves during peacetime. They were kidnapped whilst they were playing alone, were walking alone, or were out working or herding animals. Some of the children were sold by their poor, desperate parents. They would say that their children were possessed by evil spirits.

The children who were sold to the slave ships were put in cells. It was here they would be stripped naked and branded. The slaves neither got to wash themselves nor go to the toilet. Only the biggest children got to be on deck. The skinniest and smallest had to remain in the dark. Many were so scared that they refused to eat, and then they were punished.

Children easily became sick, and they would be thrown into the sea so they wouldn't infect others. Because of this the slave traders didn't think children were particularly profitable.

The journey to South and North America took three months. They were going to stay there for the rest of their lives.

But at home in Europe, people began to protest. They wanted selling humans to be banned. Then the plantation owners became worried. What if they couldn't buy new slaves? Suddenly child slaves were the most valuable. They had their whole lives ahead of them and could work for longer.

Big cheers for those who protested!

FROM FACTORY TO CLASSROOM [page 63]

FAR FROM MOTHER AND FATHER [page 70–71]

Steam engines produce steam that can power other machines: machines that can make clothes or power boats and trains.

Steam engines made machine owners happy. But for many children, this was a disaster.

To produce steam, you have to boil water, and for that the steam engines needed coal. The coal had to be dug out of soil and rock. And the more that the machines were being used, the more coal had to be dug up. Eventually only coal that was deep inside the mountains remained, and the tunnels became longer and narrower. Some mine shafts were so narrow that only children could get in. They dragged carts, filled them up with coal, and hauled the coal out to the steam engines.

All across Europe, children worked in cramped, dangerous mines. Their lungs became clogged with dust. Many drowned in underground rivers or got squashed to death when the rickety mine tunnels collapsed. Never before had children been so far away from their mothers and fathers!

WHAT SHOULD WE DO WITH THE CHILDREN? [page 78–79]

The laws that improved life for children also improved life for adults. Children got shorter working hours, and grown-ups got higher wages.

But some children were left without work, and they grew bored. They caused trouble, stole and robbed people, and the authorities didn't know what to do. What were children meant to do whilst adults were at work? The answer was school. Children who went to school didn't cause as many problems.

There were not many of them!

No, the rule was that children learned by working, not from books.

School for everyone!

“What a good idea!” a lot of people thought, because if children could read, they would become better workers when they were older. Others thought about how the country should be governed. If people were going to vote, they also needed to know how to read.

But some adults thought carefully about the children: it was better for children to be at school than in factories. France – the land of Rousseau and the French Revolution – became the first country to introduce free schooling for all.

In England, even the poor could now attend school. Children who had to work could get time off to attend school for at least two hours a day. Pupils of different ages were brought together in large rooms.

Children who had learned to read before:

In the Roman Empire: boys from wealthy families.

In China: the emperor's chosen.

In the Caliphate: princes.

In Europe: the children of knights.

They wrote on slates, but also received books written on machine-made paper. Not everyone learned to read, because the most important lesson was to be obedient. Children were to learn to obey factory owners and the authorities.

Nevertheless, school wasn't the same for everyone. The wealthiest got better education than the poorest. Boys got more education than girls. And there was a difference between the towns and countryside, as it was difficult to find teachers to teach in the country. But little by little, free schooling for all European and North American children became a reality.

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## BACK COVER TEXT

Imagine living in a completely different time! You went hunting with a knife and an axe. You travelled on big voyages of discovery with your family. Or you were hoisted up into a narrow chimney to do life-threatening sweeping work?

Read about children and how they lived, played, and learned across thousands of years. And why they traded hunting for going to school.

This book is about you – and about all the children who have helped shape the history of the world!