

## Book Review of Disease Selection: The Way Disease Changed the World

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Title: Disease Selection: The Way Disease Changed the World

Author: Roger Webber

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### Review

From an individual stand point, infection with a communicable disease is more or less a chance happening. If considered at a population level, however, patterns of emergence and transmission of disease become apparent, the effect of which on development of societies may be appreciated. This enjoyable book provides an insightful primer to which diseases have made the most impact on human history, how this happened and what were the consequences. Twenty chapters cover infectious diseases of viral, bacterial, protozoal and helminth origin as well as a few non-communicable conditions including cancer. It starts by speculating on prehistoric life-forms and their diseases and ends by considering what the future holds for the interplay between humans and microorganisms. In between, an informal, informative narrative explores the host-pathogen relationship, transmission routes, evolution and epidemiology of infectious diseases throughout the ages think bubonic plague, smallpox, cholera, malaria, hookworm, tuberculosis, influenza and HIV/AIDS and you get the picture. Even diseases carried by, and potentially transferred from, our pets merit a mention. I read this book during the course of a long haul flight when it engaged me easily enough to forego the usual in-flight entertainment. As an infectious disease immunologist with a professional working knowledge of the subject area this proved something of a busman's holiday. However, I learnt plenty from the author, a retired public health physician with extensive experience of developing countries, and from whose career he occasionally embellishes the tale with anecdotal stories. Medical microbiologists from all backgrounds would find this a worthwhile read.

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