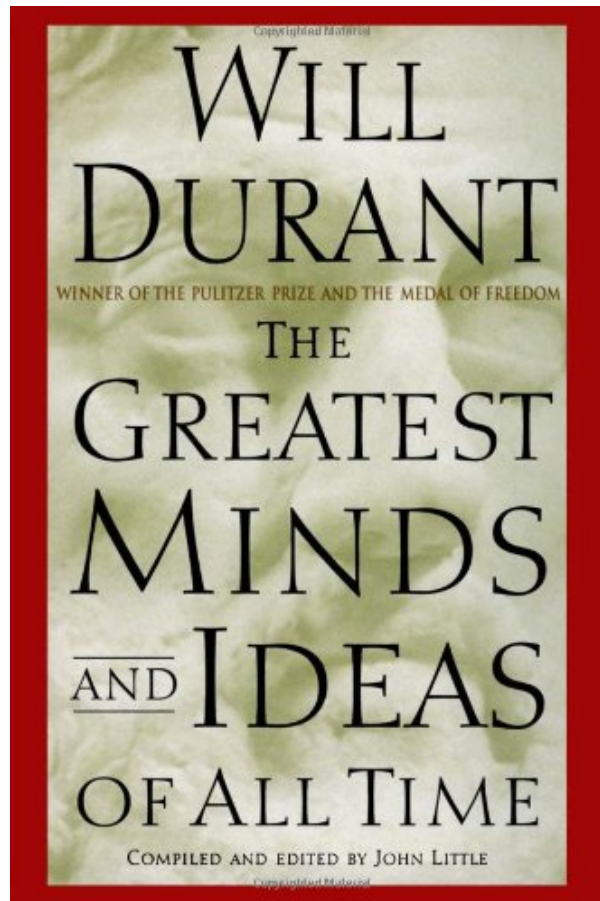
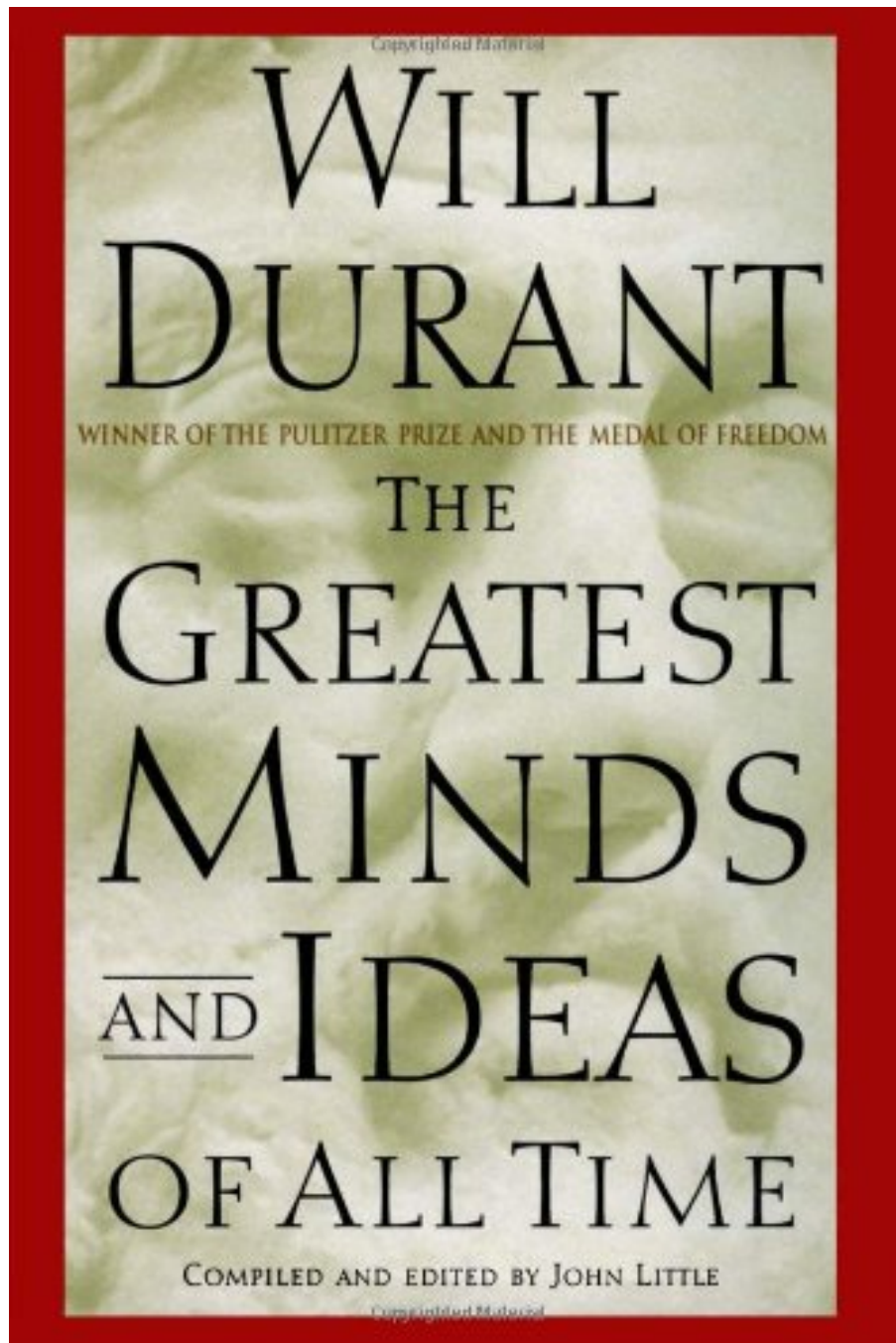


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From Publishers Weekly

This engaging, accessible book of essays from Pulitzer Prize-winning philosopher and historian Durant, author of the authoritative 11-volume *Story of Civilization*, should be essential reading for anyone interested in the evolution of thought. Little, the founder and director of The Will Durant Foundation, includes in his slim compendium such works as "The One Hundred 'Best' Books For an Education" and "Twelve Vital Dates in World History." Durant's "The Ten 'Greatest' Thinkers" details minds as enlightening as Confucius and as influential as Darwin, whom Durant says "reduced man to an animal fighting for his transient mastery of the globe." "The Ten 'Greatest' Poets," charts a course from Homer's brilliance to Dante's haunted heart to Whitman's "frank and lusty" originality, in prose peppered with biographical bon mots and excerpts of the world's loveliest poems. Lay folks especially will find this a delightful introduction to Durant's irrepressible style. What else would one expect from Durant, an intellect who, when asked, "Whom in all of history would you most like to have known?" drolly replied, "Madame de Pompadour."

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From Booklist

By the time of his death in 1981, it was fashionable for many scholars to deride the works of Will Durant; his faith in human progress and emphasis upon the great achievements of individuals seemed outmoded in circles that stressed pessimism about the fate of humanity and lauded the power of mass movements. So it is refreshing to again encounter historical writing that brims with optimism and pays just tribute to individual minds and ideas that have shaped history and advanced both moral and material progress. Editor Little is a lecturer on philosophy, a documentary filmmaker, and director of the Will Durant Foundation. His compilation of Durant's essays is divided into sections on the greatest thinkers, poets, books, and landmarks of human progress. Even Durant acknowledges that his efforts to rate "top tens" borders on the frivolous, but there is nothing frivolous about Durant's elegant prose and cogent insight into the lives and minds of men as diverse as Confucius, Voltaire, and Darwin. This compact work is a gem that elevates historical writing to the level of superb literature. Jay Freeman

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THE GREATEST MINDS AND IDEAS OF ALL TIME BY WILL DURANT PDF

A wise and witty compendium of the greatest thoughts, greatest minds, and greatest books of all time -- listed in accessible and succinct form -- by one of the world's greatest scholars.

From the "Hundred Best Books" to the "Ten Greatest Thinkers" to the "Ten Greatest Poets," here is a concise collection of the world's most significant knowledge. For the better part of a century, Will Durant dwelled upon -- and wrote about -- the most significant eras, individuals, and achievements of human history. His selections have finally been brought together in a single, compact volume. Durant eloquently defends his choices of the greatest minds and ideas, but he also stimulates readers into forming their own opinions, encouraging them to shed their surroundings and biases and enter "The Country of the Mind," a timeless realm where the heroes of our species dwell.

From a thinker who always chose to exalt the positive in the human species, *The Greatest Minds and Ideas of All Time* stays true to Durant's optimism. This is a book containing the absolute best of our heritage, passed on for the benefit of future generations. Filled with Durant's renowned wit, knowledge, and unique ability to explain events and ideas in simple and exciting terms, this is a pocket-size liberal arts and humanist curriculum in one volume.

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faith in human progress and emphasis upon the great achievements of individuals seemed outmoded in circles that stressed pessimism about the fate of humanity and lauded the power of mass movements. So it is refreshing to again encounter historical writing that brims with optimism and pays just tribute to individual minds and ideas that have shaped history and advanced both moral and material progress. Editor Little is a lecturer on philosophy, a documentary filmmaker, and director of the Will Durant Foundation. His compilation of Durant's essays is divided into sections on the greatest thinkers, poets, books, and landmarks of human progress. Even Durant acknowledges that his efforts to rate "top tens" borders on the frivolous, but there is nothing frivolous about Durant's elegant prose and cogent insight into the lives and minds of men as diverse as Confucius, Voltaire, and Darwin. This compact work is a gem that elevates historical writing to the level of superb literature. Jay Freeman

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Review

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Most helpful customer reviews

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

All the People You Will Ever Need to Know in History

By N.J. Terry

We all took Social Science in school, where we learn history; Mesopotamia, the Byzantine Empire, the Ottoman Empire, Greeks, Romans... we all learn that. What we don't learn is how each of those dynasties could have been predicted due to the cyclical nature of the world.

Will Durant sums up all the people and dates that you need to know to understand why the world was the way it was and how it is the way it is. He describes how history and economic growth are interrelated, history and government, history and a slew of other things.

It's amazing how much information he was able to find into such a short book (127 pages).

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

Accurate Title, Wonderful Book

By Robert David STEELE Vivas

Some will obviously quibble over Will Durant's selections, but I will not. I got hooked on Durant after reading his 1916 doctoral dissertation (a full thirty years after I acquired the multi-volume History of Civilization), and have been working my way through various "short books" in the past six months.

Here are my fly-leaf notes.

Slams H. G. Wells early on. Durant seems to be the anti-thesis to Marx.

He opens by pointing out that the greatest minds of history were those of philosophy and science, not captains of war, priests, or artists.

As is my tendency, I praise the book by summarizing it. Below are his lists.

Ten greatest thinkers:

01 Confucius as a moral philosopher

02 Plato for first university, philosophy as means of remolding world

03 Aristotle as philosopher and scientists, creating new science

- 04 St. Thomas Aquinas for bridging between knowledge and belief
- 05 Copernicus (Poland) for astronomy and mathematics, shifting attention from man to the cosmos
- 06 Sir Francis Bacon, for knowledge as remodeling power, opened eyes to nature (see my review of Intelligence in Nature, forthcoming).
- 07 Sir Isaac Newton, for scientific mastery of modern thought
- 08 Voltaire for ending despotism and starting the enlightenment, but see my review of Voltaire's Bastards: The Dictatorship of Reason in the West
- 09 Immanuel Kant for mind over materialism, restored faith to co-equal status with science
- 10 Charles Darwin for state of nature, life as conflict, natural selection

Ten greatest poets:

- 01 Homer
- 02 "David"
- 03 Garupedes
- 04 Lucretius
- 05 Li Po
- 06 Dante
- 07 Shakespeare
- 08 Keats
- 09 Shelly
- 10 Whitman

Ten "Peaks" for Humanity

- 01 Speech
- 02 Fire
- 03 Conquest of Animals
- 04 Agriculture
- 05 Social Organization
- 06 Morality [see my review of The Lessons of History)
- 07 Tools
- 08 Science
- 09 Education
- 10 Writing & Print

I have a note to myself in which I include the Internet in #10, and see #11 as being "True Cost" accounting, see my reviews of, among others:

Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Movement in the World Came into Being and Why No One Saw It Coming
Ecological Economics: Principles And Applications
The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism

Twelve Major Dates in Human History

- 01 4241 BC Egyptian Calendar
- 02 543 BC Death of Buddha
- 03 478 BC Death of Confucius
- 04 199 BC Death of Socrates
- 05 44 BC Death of Caesar
- 06 BC-AD Birth of Christ
- 07 AD 632 Death of Mohammed
- 08 AD 1294 Death of Roger Bacon, birth of gunpowder

09 AD 1455 Gutenberg Press

10 AD 1492 Columbus discovers America (see 1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus)

11 AD 1769 James Watt and the Steam Engine

12 AD 1789 French Revolution

One can only speculate at what he might have picked in the past century or two, that alone would make a marvelous semester-long course.

The book has a lovely index of all names, both those considered and those considered but not selected.

I consider this a classic gift item, along with Ralph Nader's *The Seventeen Traditions* and Durant's *Lessons of History* linked above as well as his edited work drawing out others *On the Meaning of Life*

For my own contribution, a work marvelously edited by Canadian PhD candidate Mark Tovey, see *Collective Intelligence: Creating a Prosperous World at Peace*. All of the work I have sponsored or produced can be found for free at OSS.Net.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

The greatest minds of all times

By eileen moreno

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