

The 1st Runner Up of English Section

Junior Division

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**Book Title : *A History of The World in 100
Objects***

Author : Neil MacGregor

Publisher : Penguin Books

When we come across the word history, the images of dull history textbooks would usually appear in our minds. Then, when we come across the British Museum, we would think of the Neoclassical building in London, renowned for its tremendous collection of works and, most notably, mummies. These two words pose very similar characteristics, but to connect them and create an extraordinary phenomenon, is what *A History of World in*

100 Objects has accomplished.

In 2006, now-former director of the British Museum, Neil MacGregor, and his crew decided to work on a project: they had to choose 100 objects from the 8 million displays in the museum and conduct research on them. Four years later, their extensive work was featured in the book we are discussing now, receiving critical acclaim upon its arrival. As you dig deep into the book, you would realize that these 100 objects have all played a vital role in human history, regardless of the intention. They also tell varying stories of our journey on the planet. From hunting deer with axes to carving jade that the Emperor Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty called a darling, the book convinces you of the intrigue of every culture developed on this planet.

Let us take the jade ax mentioned in the book as an example. Although it may look rusty and rock-like on the outside, the jade ax is, in fact, one of the earliest records

we can find to trace the start of art appreciation. It turns out the jade ax was not for attacking animals nor killing them; it was actually jewelry. According to archaeologists, sculptors extracted jade from the North Italian Alps, took it down the mountains, and crafted it into a divine ax. It is hard to picture that all this happened merely six thousand years ago; our humanity sure has gone through a lot since then.

Another famous object mentioned in the book is the Hawaiian feather helmet. Explorer Captain James Cook collected the helmet in Hawaii as a gift from the natives during his world-renowned voyage to North America, searching for an alternate trading route, before being stabbed to death by the same people almost a year after. The tale still passes on, generations after generations, but the main concern is far beyond that. What does this particular helmet hold that might open the gateway for us foreigners to understand Hawaiian tradition?

The answer is uncertain; even a follower of Cook only "guessed" how Hawaiian culture and structures worked. It is even harder to interpret the functioning of the Hawaiian society through a helmet. Some modern scholars perceive the helmet as Oceanic art tradition, while others brood over what Hawaii would have developed into if it had never been invaded, over-exploited, or annexed. But through the helmet, Cook's journey, and the legacy it has left behind, we can be confident of one thing: Hawaii's sophisticated culture and tradition is still honored by locals over the years and has now transformed into one of the world's most appreciated cultures.

Heading back to some other information about the book, *A History of The World in 100 Objects* is, in fact, a companion book to the BBC radio series of the same name. Although the radio series features pretty much the same thing, I would say that the book gives readers more

room to imagine and to evaluate. Nonetheless, both the book and the radio series are fantastic depictions of these objects, and I think that getting a glimpse of the photos and the radio series would help with reading, too. If you ever plan to go to the British Museum or galleries that feature similar artifacts, this book will give you some deep insight into the rich, profound history behind the display windows.

On the whole, *A History of The World in 100 Objects* is a marvelous book to read. Indulging in the book is a great way to evoke your interest in world history, no matter which side of the continent you are on. As long as you can endure long nights of reading with sentences that seem very advanced and wordy but fun, this book will expand your horizons and provide you with another view of the human world. I enjoyed reading it, and I hope you will do so, too. To world history lovers, this is definitely the book for you, so hop onto this ride

now and start reading!