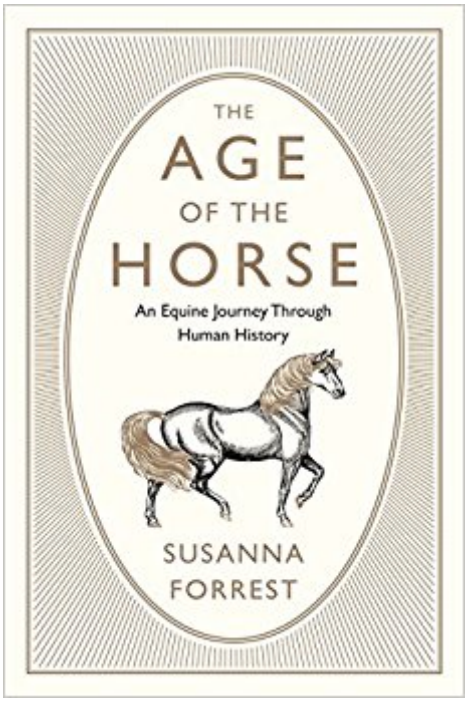
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The Age Of The Horse: An Equine Journey Through Human History



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Synopsis

An essential book for anyone whoÃ¢â ¬â„¢s ever been captivated by horses, The Age of the Horse is a breathtaking exploration of the enduring connection between humans and Equus caballus. Equestrian expert Susanna Forrest presents a unique, sweeping panorama of the animalÃ¢â ¬â„¢s prominent role in societies around the world and across time. Fifty-six million years ago, the earliest equid walked the earthÃ¢â ¬â ¢and beginning with the first-known horse-keepers of the Copper Age, the horse has played an integral part in human history. Combining fascinating anthropological detail and incisive personal anecdotes, Forrest draws from an immense range of archival documents as well as literature and art to illustrate how our evolution has coincided with that of horses. In paintings and poems (such as ByronÃ¢â ¬â„¢s famous Ã¢â ¬Å“MazeppaÃ¢â ¬Â•), in theater and classical music (including works by Liszt and Tchaikovsky), representations of the horse have changed over centuries, portraying the crucial impact that weÃ¢â ¬â„¢ve had on each other. Forrest deftly synthesizes this material with her own experience in the field, traveling the globe to give us a diverse, comprehensive look at the horse in our lives today: from Mongolia where she observes the endangered takhi, to a show-horse performance at the Palace of Versailles; from a polo club in Beijing to Arlington, Virginia, where veterans with PTSD are rehabilitated through interaction with horses. With passion and singular insight, Forrest investigates the complexities of human and horse coexistence, illuminating the multifaceted ways our cultures were shaped by this powerful creature.

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Customer Reviews

Praise for THE AGE OF THE HORSE Ã¢â ¬Å“In clear, introspective prose that underscores the astonishing depth of her research, Forrest tracks human history through the eyes of our equine companions . . . it is indeed that personal touch, that devotion, that elevates this volume from fascinating history to work of art.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â ¢Booklist (starred review) Ã¢â ¬Å“Many a horse lover would prefer to spend their entire day on the trail or at the race track, with no other human to taint the majesty of the experience. Susanna Forrest goes even further, delivering all of history with a sharp equine focus. Through her fascinating delving she creates a magical world where these exquisite creatures reign supreme.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â ¢Elizabeth Mitchell, author of Three Strides Before the Wire: The Dark and Beautiful World of Horse Racing and Libertys Torch: The Great Adventure to Build the Statue of Liberty Ã¢â ¬Å“Horses are woven into human history. In some ways horses have made humanity what it is. Here, Susanna Forrest does a wonderful big-picture job of conveying what we have made the horse, what the horse has made us, and how diminished humankind would be without the presence of horses.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â ¢Carl Safina, author of Beyond Words: What Animals Think and Feel Ã¢â ¬Å“Susanna Forrest is the outstanding writer at the erudite end of horse madness . . . To well-rehearsed facts, she brings new detail . . . for the horse-addicted, a book can get no better than this . . . original, cerebral and from the heart.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â ¢Times (UK) Ã¢â ¬Å“The history of horse-human relations is, and continues to be, a rich and deeply troubling epic. Susanna Forrest has done it admirable justice.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â ¢Jonathan Balcombe, author of What A Fish Knows: The Inner Lives of Our Underwater Cousins Ã¢â ¬Å“Susanna Forrest tells the complete story of the horse, from the Mongolian steppes to Victorian coaches and Amish farms, in a book filled with vivid anecdotes and big ideas.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â ¢Boria Sax, author of The Mythical Zoo: Animals in Myth, Legend, and Literature Ã¢â ¬Å“Forrest covers wide sweeps of history with dexterity and panache.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â ¢Literary Review

Susanna Forrest lives in Berlin where she works as a writer and editor. She studied social anthropology at the University of Cambridge.

Awesome history of he world and especially of mankind. Mongolian presentation is incredible with insight to the people through the horses. Can get confusing with jumps through history but it does come together quite well.

Very dense reading. If reading it as a reference book, I was hoping for more on

history/archaeology/paleontology of the horse and its near cousins. Failing that, I would have wanted a livelier narrative voice.

The author writes very well. She traces various uses of the horse, from prehistoric times to contemporary times such as the use of refined European horses in competitive events in today's China and the mounted horsemen in modern Portuguese bullfighting.

I love horses, and grew up riding them. But I couldn't read this book. I found it as wanting to be some sort of impressionistic diorama, if that's not a contradiction in terms. Lots of emoting, lots of self-indulgent prose which seems to be constantly looking at itself, lots of skipping around among focuses, historical eras (including the present) and geographical locations, for my money too much of the author interpolating herself between the horse(s) and the reader. There are obviously folks who respond well to this kind of approach, and they may well find the book fascinating and even moving. (I know that sounds snarky, but don't mean it that way.) But I like horses as they are, not romantic stories woven around them.

Wasn't sure whether four or five stars was appropriate here; I decided on five because the writing is generally good and there is a large amount of information. The title is somewhat misleading, because it is not a history of the age of the horse, but rather a personal exploration of a number of topics related to horses, and people. The sections are a bit uneven, a couple are exceptional and one that seems just added on at the end.It starts out with the tarpan and takhi, famed wild equines, including Nazi German interest in breeding back to the extinct tarpan (it fits in a way, with eugenics). Part of this section, and the best is her visit to Mongolia. The next section looks at culture and horses, including Xenophon's comments on horses, Louis XV's stables at Versailles, and performing horses. It includes a fairly extensive section on performing horses in works created by the French performance artist Bartabas (it's not exactly performance art but that's the closest term I can think of).Chapter 3 is I think the best in the book, on horses used as power, including coach horses, dray -,horses, horses powering machinery and more. By 1871 in the UK there were as many city horses as there were in the country, and by 1901, city horses outnumbered farm horses two to one--so the focus on "power" is partly in the industrializing city in the later 1800s. The section also looks at horse people such as grooms, drivers, dealers and others. Forrest also visits an Amish area to see how they still use horses, and a farm in new England which is bringing back horses as actually more efficient than machinery and far more ecologically sound.Section 4 looks at horses as

food. The question of why some nations don’t eat horse and others do is intriguing. Much of the chapter though describes the market for broken down and unwanted horses in the US, sold and then transported to slaughterhouses in Canada and Mexico (it’s currently not really legal to slaughter horses for food in the US). This is overall a sad and depressing section. The 5th section looks at horses as symbols of wealth, in particular in China.The 6th section asks "Are Horses Warriors" and examines the question in a roundabout way. This discusses aspects of training. It also includes a lot of the use of horses in treating American vets who have PTSD. It’s an interesting section, but a bit more on the vets than on the therapy horses. This could have been edited a bit better, I think.There’s a section of illustrations that are quite good and help the book make its points. The overall style is less history than literary journalism, reminding me a little of John McPhee’s books. There’s lots of information embedded in a personal exploration that features interviews, participation and observation.

Thanks to Netgalley for ARCIt is difficult to review this book. It would be easier if it were a rant or a rave. Instead it’s just ’meh.’ The author looks at six uses of the horse from the dancing horses of the haute ecole to the draft horses that are making a comeback in agriculture. There is no unifying thesis to bind these disparete articles into a whole. Instead they read like magazine articles published at various times.If you know a young person who is horse mad and not very critical, this book might make a nice gift.

First, I knew Ms. Forrest when I lived in Berlin, so I’m quite aware of her obsession with horses, as memorably explored in her previous book, If Wishes Were Horses. On her part, she’s aware that my interest in horses extends to the racetrack, and very little further. But that makes for a perfect author/reader relationship here: I’m not all that fascinated with horses, but I devoured this book nonetheless: it’s that good. Part travelogue (she goes to Mongolia to see ancient breed of horses and explore a horse-centric people), part history (how *did* we domesticate these huge beasts?) and part journalism (she observes an equestrian ballet master, a farm that uses horses as agricultural machines), it is driven throughout by a clear and vivid prose style. Her little vignette of an imaginary 19th century London gentleman’s day in the Power chapter shows how his life is affected directly and indirectly by the services of horses is nothing short of brilliant. When I put the book down, I tried to figure out whose writing it reminded me of, and finally the answer came: a young John McPhee, a writer I know we both admire greatly. This being the case, I would love to see her write about something other than horses eventually, because writing this good is a skill few

practice these days. So why the missing star? Well, I'm *still* not all that fascinated with horses. But I know who I'll turn to should that change.

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