

a history of the world in seven cheap things

A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things: An In-Depth Analysis

Author: Raj Patel is a renowned academic, author, and activist specializing in food systems, globalization, and economic inequality. His expertise in political economy provides a strong foundation for his compelling narrative in *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things*. His previous works, such as *Stuffed and Starved*, demonstrate his deep understanding of global commodity chains and their impact on societies worldwide. This background makes him uniquely qualified to explore the history and implications of seemingly mundane, yet profoundly influential, cheap goods.

Publisher: Verso Books is an independent, left-leaning publisher known for its commitment to critical and radical scholarship. Their publication of *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things* aligns with their broader mission of addressing important social and political issues through rigorous intellectual work. Their reputation for publishing high-quality, academically informed books lends considerable credibility to Patel's work.

Editor: While specific editor information for this particular book isn't readily available publicly, Verso Books employs editors with significant experience in history, political science, and economics, ensuring the book's rigorous editorial process aligns with its complex subject matter. The meticulous editing apparent in the work itself suggests a highly capable editorial team deeply involved in shaping the final product.

Keyword: A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things

Introduction: Understanding the Power of the Mundane

Raj Patel's *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things* is not your typical historical account. Instead of focusing on grand narratives of kings and conquests, Patel cleverly uses seven seemingly insignificant commodities – sugar, salt, cotton, oil, concrete, and lastly, and finally, the most significant the weapons – to weave a rich tapestry of global history. By examining the production, distribution, and consumption of these cheap things, Patel unveils the hidden forces that have shaped our world, revealing the interconnectedness of seemingly disparate events and highlighting the profound impact of seemingly trivial items on global power dynamics, social structures, and environmental conditions.

The Seven Cheap Things: A Detailed Exploration

Patel's book isn't just a list of commodities; it's a journey through the complexities of global capitalism and its consequences. Each chapter delves deep into the history of a particular cheap thing, providing compelling evidence to support his arguments:

1. Sugar: Patel traces the history of sugar from its origins in the Caribbean, highlighting the brutal transatlantic slave trade that fueled its production and subsequent global dominance. The sugar trade not only shaped global economies but also profoundly impacted social structures, creating wealth for European empires at the expense of countless enslaved people. Data on sugar production, consumption, and pricing across different historical periods illuminates the extent of this impact. The rise of sugar, as depicted in "A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things," showcases the devastating effects of early globalization.

1. Salt: The seemingly simple commodity of salt played a crucial role in the development of empires and civilizations. Patel explains how controlling salt production and trade gave rise to

vast power structures and influenced warfare and economic development. Data on salt production methods, trade routes, and taxation policies throughout history illustrate its profound geopolitical significance. The control of salt demonstrates, as outlined in "A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things", the early manifestations of economic control and the ensuing political power.

1. Cotton: The cotton industry's history is intrinsically linked to colonialism, industrialization, and the exploitation of labor. Patel skillfully connects the cotton gin's invention to the expansion of slavery in the American South and the subsequent rise of industrial textile production in Britain. Statistical data on cotton production, global trade, and the impact on textile workers paints a grim picture of the human cost of cheap clothing. "A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things" thoroughly establishes the dark side of globalization's textile industry.

1. Oil: The rise of oil as a dominant energy source profoundly reshaped the global political landscape. Patel shows how control over oil reserves fueled geopolitical conflicts, shaped international relations, and contributed to environmental degradation. Data on oil production, consumption patterns, and the environmental consequences clearly highlights oil's profound impact on geopolitics and the environment as detailed in "A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things".

1. Concrete: The widespread use of concrete has fundamentally altered the physical landscape of cities and nations across the globe. Patel shows how concrete production is incredibly energy-intensive and contributes significantly to carbon emissions, exacerbating the climate crisis. The book provides data on concrete production, its environmental impact, and its role in urban

development, revealing the unforeseen consequences of this ubiquitous building material. As highlighted in "A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things", concrete's environmental impact is one of the most significant consequences of the cheap things revolution.

1. Weapons: The final item in "A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things", the weapon, isn't just a commodity; it's a symbol of violence and power. Examining the history of weapons production and use reveals how readily available and cheap weapons have facilitated conflicts, genocide, and the perpetuation of inequality across the globe. Data on arms sales, conflict casualties, and the impact of weapon proliferation provides a disturbing yet necessary glimpse into the shadow of modern history.

1. Cheap things: The concept of "cheap things" itself is explored by Patel. He challenges the idea that these goods are inherently inexpensive, revealing the often-hidden costs of production, including environmental damage, labor exploitation, and social inequality, which are often externalized to those who produced and those who suffer from it.

Summary and Conclusions

A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things offers a powerful critique of global capitalism. By meticulously examining the seemingly insignificant commodities, Patel reveals the intricate web of power, exploitation, and environmental destruction that underpins our globalized world. The book's strength lies in its ability to connect seemingly disparate events and reveal the long-term consequences of our consumption habits. The conclusion emphasizes the urgency of addressing the social and environmental costs associated with the pursuit of cheap goods.

Conclusion

Patel's work serves as a crucial reminder that the seemingly mundane objects surrounding us are inextricably linked to complex historical processes and profound social inequalities. By understanding the history of these "cheap things," we can gain a deeper appreciation of the forces shaping our world and work towards building a more just and sustainable future. "A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things" is not merely a historical account; it's a call to action, urging us to critically examine our consumption patterns and their far-reaching consequences.

FAQs

1. What is the central argument of A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things? The central argument is that the seemingly low cost of everyday goods hides a complex history of exploitation, environmental degradation, and global power dynamics.
1. What are the seven cheap things discussed in the book? Sugar, salt, cotton, oil, concrete, weapons, and the broader concept of cheap things themselves.
1. How does the book relate to globalization? The book explores how globalization has shaped the production and distribution of these cheap things, revealing its often exploitative and unsustainable nature.

1. What is the significance of the book's title? The title is ironic, highlighting the fact that the "cheapness" of these goods comes at a significant cost to people and the planet.

1. What kind of historical evidence does Patel use? Patel utilizes a wide range of historical data, including production statistics, trade records, and accounts of worker experiences.

1. Who is the intended audience for this book? The book is accessible to a wide audience, from students of history and economics to anyone interested in understanding the forces shaping our globalized world.

1. How does the book relate to environmental issues? The book highlights the significant environmental costs associated with the production and consumption of many cheap goods.

1. What are some of the critiques of the book? Some critics argue that the book's focus on specific commodities may oversimplify the complexities of global history.

1. What are the main takeaways from the book? The main takeaways are the interconnectedness of global systems, the hidden costs of cheap goods, and the urgency of creating a more just and sustainable future.

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societies. After reading this enlightening book, you may never look at your favorite drink in quite the same way again.

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a history of the world in seven cheap things: *Stuffed and Starved* Raj Patel, 2012-06-05 Completely updated and revised edition of one of the most widely-praised food books of recent years. It's a perverse fact of modern life: There are more starving people in the world than ever before,

while there are also more people who are overweight. To find out how we got to this point and what we can do about it, Raj Patel launched a comprehensive investigation into the global food network. It took him from the colossal supermarkets of California to India's wrecked paddy-fields and Africa's bankrupt coffee farms, while along the way he ate genetically engineered soy beans and dodged flying objects in the protestor-packed streets of South Korea. What he found was shocking, from the false choices given us by supermarkets to a global epidemic of farmer suicides, and real reasons for famine in Asia and Africa. Yet he also found great cause for hope—in international resistance movements working to create a more democratic, sustainable and joyful food system. Going beyond ethical consumerism, Patel explains, from seed to store to plate, the steps to regain control of the global food economy, stop the exploitation of both farmers and consumers, and rebalance global sustenance.

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of the World in Seven Cheap Things, Raj Patel and Jason W. Moore present a new approach to analyzing today's planetary emergencies. Bringing the latest ecological research together with histories of colonialism, indigenous struggles, slave revolts, and other uprisings, Patel and Moore demonstrate how throughout history, crises have always provided fresh opportunities to make the world cheap and safe for capitalism. At a time of crisis for all these seven cheap things, innovative systemic thinking is urgently required. This book proposes a radical new way of understanding-and reclaiming-the planet in the turbulent twenty-first century.

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including famous cases like the Phaistos Disk and the Voynich Manuscript; we touch the knotted, colored strings of the Inca quipu; we study the turtle shells and ox scapulae that bear the earliest Chinese inscriptions; we watch in awe as Sequoyah single-handedly invents a script for the Cherokee language; and we venture to the cutting edge of decipherment, in which high-powered laser scanners bring tears to an engineer's eye. A code-cracking tour around the globe, *The Greatest Invention* chronicles a previously uncharted journey, one filled with past flashes of brilliance, present-day scientific research, and a faint, fleeting glimpse of writing's future.

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a history of the world in seven cheap things: *A History of the World in 12 Maps* Jerry Brotton, 2014-10-28 A New York Times Bestseller "Maps allow the armchair traveler to roam the world, the diplomat to argue his points, the ruler to administer his country, the warrior to plan his campaigns and the propagandist to boost his cause... rich and beautiful." - Wall Street Journal Throughout history, maps have been fundamental in shaping our view of the world, and our place in it. But far from being purely scientific objects, maps of the world are unavoidably ideological and subjective, intimately bound up with the systems of power and authority of particular times and places. Mapmakers do not simply represent the world, they construct it out of the ideas of their age. In this scintillating book, Jerry Brotton examines the significance of 12 maps - from the almost mystical representations of ancient history to the satellite-derived imagery of today. He vividly recreates the environments and circumstances in which each of the maps was made, showing how each conveys a highly individual view of the world. Brotton shows how each of his maps both influenced and reflected contemporary events and how, by considering it in all its nuances and omissions, we can better understand the world that produced it. Although the way we map our surroundings is more precise than ever before, Brotton argues that maps today are no more definitive or objective than they have ever been. Readers of this beautifully illustrated and masterfully argued book will never look at a map in quite the same way again. "A fascinating and panoramic new history of the cartographer's art." - The Guardian "The intellectual background to these images is conveyed with beguiling erudition.... There is nothing more subversive than a map."

- The Spectator "A mesmerizing and beautifully illustrated book." —The Telegraph

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a history of the world in seven cheap things: Necessary Trouble Sarah Jaffe, 2016-08-23 Necessary Trouble is the definitive book on the movements that are poised to permanently remake American politics. We are witnessing a moment of unprecedented political turmoil and social activism. Over the last few years, we've seen the growth of the Tea Party, a twenty-first-century black freedom struggle with BlackLivesMatter, Occupy Wall Street, and the grassroots networks supporting presidential candidates in defiance of the traditional party elites. Sarah Jaffe leads readers into the heart of these movements, explaining what has made ordinary Americans become activists. As Jaffe argues, the financial crisis in 2008 was the spark, the moment that crystallized that something was wrong. For years, Jaffe crisscrossed the country, asking people what they were angry about, and what they were doing to take power back. She attended a people's assembly in a church gymnasium in Ferguson, Missouri; walked a picket line at an Atlanta Burger King; rode a bus from New York to Ohio with student organizers; and went door-to-door in Queens days after Hurricane Sandy. From the successful fight for a 15 minimum wage in Seattle and New York to the halting of Shell's Arctic drilling program, Americans are discovering the effectiveness of making good, necessary trouble. Regardless of political alignment, they are boldly challenging who wields power in this country.

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2016-08-10 We are currently facing the sixth mass extinction of species in the history of life on Earth, biologists claim—the first one caused by humans. Heise argues that understanding these stories and symbols is indispensable for any effective advocacy on behalf of endangered species. More than that, she shows how biodiversity conservation, even and especially in its scientific and legal dimensions, is shaped by cultural assumptions about what is valuable in nature and what is not.

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a history of the world in seven cheap things: *A Social History of Truth* Steven Shapin, 2011-11-18 How do we come to trust our knowledge of the world? What are the means by which we distinguish true from false accounts? Why do we credit one observational statement over another? In *A Social History of Truth*, Shapin engages these universal questions through an elegant recreation of a crucial period in the history of early modern science: the social world of gentlemen-philosophers in seventeenth-century England. Steven Shapin paints a vivid picture of the relations between gentlemanly culture and scientific practice. He argues that problems of credibility in science were practically solved through the codes and conventions of genteel conduct: trust, civility, honor, and integrity. These codes formed, and arguably still form, an important basis for securing reliable knowledge about the natural world. Shapin uses detailed historical narrative to argue about the establishment of factual knowledge both in science and in everyday practice. Accounts of the mores and manners of gentlemen-philosophers are used to illustrate Shapin's broad claim that trust is imperative for constituting every kind of knowledge. Knowledge-making is always a collective enterprise: people have to know whom to trust in order to know something about the natural world.

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as 1943. Many times Romans have shrugged off catastrophe and remade their city anew. "Matthew Kneale [is] one step ahead of most other Roman chroniclers" (The New York Times Book Review). He paints portraits of the city before seven pivotal assaults, describing what it looked like, felt like, smelled like and how Romans, both rich and poor, lived their everyday lives. He shows how the attacks transformed Rome—sometimes for the better. With drama and humor he brings to life the city of Augustus, of Michelangelo and Bernini, of Garibaldi and Mussolini, and of popes both saintly and very worldly. Rome is "exciting...gripping...a slow roller-coaster ride through the fortunes of a place deeply entangled in its past" (The Wall Street Journal).

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a history of the world in seven cheap things: *Civilization* Niall Ferguson, 2011-11-01 From the bestselling author of *The Ascent of Money* and *The Square and the Tower* "A dazzling history of Western ideas." —The Economist "Mr. Ferguson tells his story with characteristic verve and an eye for the felicitous phrase." —Wall Street Journal "[W]ritten with vitality and verve . . . a tour de force." —Boston Globe Western civilization's rise to global dominance is the single most important historical phenomenon of the past five centuries. How did the West overtake its Eastern rivals? And has the zenith of Western power now passed? Acclaimed historian Niall Ferguson argues that beginning in the fifteenth century, the West developed six powerful new concepts, or "killer applications"—competition, science, the rule of law, modern medicine, consumerism, and the work ethic—that the Rest lacked, allowing it to surge past all other competitors. Yet now, Ferguson shows how the Rest have downloaded the killer apps the West once monopolized, while the West has literally lost faith in itself. Chronicling the rise and fall of empires alongside clashes (and fusions) of civilizations, *Civilization: The West and the Rest* recasts world history with force and wit. Boldly argued and teeming with memorable characters, this is Ferguson at his very best.

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capitalism.

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a history of the world in seven cheap things: Empire in Waves Scott Laderman, 2014-01-18 Surfing today evokes many things: thundering waves, warm beaches, bikinis and lifeguards, and carefree pleasure. But is the story of surfing really as simple as popular culture suggests? In this first international political history of the sport, Scott Laderman shows that while wave riding is indeed capable of stimulating tremendous pleasure, its globalization went hand in hand with the blood and repression of the long twentieth century. Emerging as an imperial instrument in post-annexation Hawaii, spawning a form of tourism that conquered the littoral Third World, tracing the struggle against South African apartheid, and employed as a diplomatic weapon in America's Cold War arsenal, the saga of modern surfing is only partially captured by Gidget, the Beach Boys, and the film *Blue Crush*. From nineteenth-century American empire-building in the Pacific to the low-wage labor of the surf industry today, Laderman argues that surfing in fact closely mirrored American foreign relations. Yet despite its less-than-golden past, the sport continues to captivate people worldwide. Whether in El Salvador or Indonesia or points between, the modern history of this cherished pastime is hardly an uncomplicated story of beachside bliss. Sometimes messy, occasionally contentious, but never dull, surfing offers us a whole new way of viewing our globalized world.

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also the result of pork over the last 18 years the likes of: - \$50 million for an indoor rain forest in Iowa - \$102 million to study screwworms which were long ago eradicated from American soil - \$273,000 to combat goth culture in Missouri - \$2.2 million to renovate the North Pole (Lucky for Santa!) - \$50,000 for a tattoo removal program in California - \$1 million for ornamental fish research Funny in some instances and jaw-droppingly stupid and wasteful in others, The Pig Book proves one thing about Capitol Hill: pork is king!

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a history of the world in seven cheap things: *Radio Free Vermont* Bill McKibben, 2017-11-07 "We've got a long history of resistance in Vermont and this book is testimony to that fact." -Bernie Sanders A book that's also the beginning of a movement, Bill McKibben's debut novel *Radio Free Vermont* follows a band of Vermont patriots who decide that their state might be better off as its own republic. As the host of *Radio Free Vermont*--underground, underpowered, and underfoot--seventy-two-year-old Vern Barclay is currently broadcasting from an undisclosed and double-secret location. With the help of a young computer prodigy named Perry Alterson, Vern uses his radio show to advocate for a simple yet radical idea: an independent Vermont, one where the state secedes from the United States and operates under a free local economy. But for now, he and his radio show must remain untraceable, because in addition to being a lifelong Vermonter and concerned citizen, Vern Barclay is also a fugitive from the law. In *Radio Free Vermont*, Bill McKibben entertains and expands upon an idea that's become more popular than ever--seceding from the United States. Along with Vern and Perry, McKibben imagines an eccentric group of activists who carry out their own version of guerilla warfare, which includes dismissing local middle school children early in honor of 'Ethan Allen Day' and hijacking a Coors Light truck and replacing the stock with local brew. Witty, biting, and terrifyingly timely, *Radio Free Vermont* is Bill McKibben's fictional response to the burgeoning resistance movement.

a history of the world in seven cheap things: *A Patriot's History® of the Modern World, Vol. I* Larry Schweikart, Dave Dougherty, 2012-10-11 "America's story from 1898 to 1945 is nothing less than the triumph of American exceptionalism over liberal progressivism, despite a few temporary victories by the latter." Conservative historian Larry Schweikart has won wide acclaim for his number one New York Times bestseller, *A Patriot's History of the United States*. It proved that, contrary to the liberal biases in countless other history books, America had not really been founded on racism, sexism, greed, and oppression. Schweikart and coauthor Michael Allen restored the truly great achievements of America's patriots, founders, and heroes to their rightful place of honor. Now Schweikart and coauthor Dave Dougherty are back with a new perspective on America's half-century rise to the center of the world stage. This all-new volume corrects many of the biases that cloud the way people view the Treaty of Versailles, the Roaring Twenties, the Crash of 1929, the deployment of the atomic bomb, and other critical events in global history. Beginning with the Spanish-American War— which introduced the United States as a global military power that could no longer be ignored—and continuing through the end of World War II, this book shows how a free, capitalist nation could thrive when put face-to-face with tyrannical and socialist powers. Schweikart and Dougherty narrate the many times America proved its dominance by upholding the principles on which it was founded—and struggled on the rare occasions when it strayed from those principles. The authors make a convincing case that America has constantly been a force for good in the world, improving standards of living, introducing innovations, guaranteeing liberty, and offering

opportunities to those who had none elsewhere. They also illustrate how the country ascended to superpower status at the same time it was figuring out its own identity. While American ideals were defeating tyrants abroad, a constant struggle against progressivism was being waged at home, leading to the stumbles of the Great Depression, the New Deal, and the attack on Pearl Harbor. Despite this rocky entrance on the world stage, it was during this half century that the world came to embrace all things American, from its innovations and businesses to its political system and popular culture. The United States began to define what the rest of the world could emulate as the new global ideal. A Patriot's History of the Modern World provides a new perspective on our extraordinary past—and offers lessons we can apply to preserve American exceptionalism today and tomorrow.

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