



The Little Ice Age: How Climate Made History 1300-1850

By Brian Fagan

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The Little Ice Age tells the story of the turbulent, unpredictable, and often very cold years of modern European history, how this altered climate affected historical events, and what it means for today's global warming. Building on research that has only recently confirmed that the world endured a 500-year cold snap, renowned archaeologist Brian Fagan shows how the increasing cold influenced familiar events from Norse exploration to the settlement of North America to the Industrial Revolution. This is a fascinating book for anyone interested in history, climate, and how they interact.

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The Little Ice Age: How Climate Made History 1300-1850 By Brian Fagan Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

"Climate change is the ignored player on the historical stage," writes archeologist Brian Fagan. But it shouldn't be, not if we know what's good for us. We can't judge what future climate change will mean unless we know something about its effects in the past: "those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it." And Fagan's story of the last thousand years, centered on the "Little Ice Age," reminds us of what we could end up repeating: flood, fire, and famine--acts of God exacerbated by acts of man.

For all that he takes a broad--a *very* broad--view of European history, Fagan's writing is laced with human faces, fascinating anecdotes, and a gift for the telling detail that makes history live, very much in the style of Barbara Tuchman's *A Distant Mirror*. When Fagan talks about the voyages of Basque fishermen to American shores (probably landing before Columbus sailed), he puts in the taste of dried cod and the terrifying suddenness of fogs on the Grand Banks. The Great Fire of London, what it was like when the Dutch dikes broke, the Irish Potato Famine, the year without a summer, ice fairs on the Thames, and volcanoes in the South Pacific--Fagan makes history a ripping yarn in which we are all actors, on a stage that has always been changing. --*Mary Ellen Curtin*

From Publishers Weekly

The role of climatic change in human history remains open to question, due in large part to scant data. Fagan, professor of archeology at UC Santa Barbara, contributes substantively to the increasingly urgent debate. Contending with the dearth of accurate weather records from a few parts of the world, for little over a century Fagan (*Floods, Famines, and Emperors: El Niño and the Fate of Civilizations*) draws discerning connections between an amazing array of disparate sources: ice cores, tree rings, archeological digs, tithing records that show dates of wine harvests, cloud types depicted in portraits and landscapes over time. He details human adaptation to meteorologic events for example, the way the Dutch, in the face of rising sea levels, engineered sea walls and thus increased their farmland by a third between the late 16th and early 19th centuries. Explanations of phenomena like the North Atlantic Oscillation (which "governs... the rain that falls on Europe") lucidly advance Fagan's conviction that, though science cannot decide if the current 150-year warming trend (with one slight interruption) is part of a normal cycle, we should err on the side of caution. His study of the potential for widespread famine further bolsters his nonpartisan argument for a serious consideration of rapid climatic shifts. But Fagan doesn't proffer a sociopolitical polemic. He notes that we lack the political will to effect change, but refrains from speculating on future environmental policy. *Illus.* not seen by PW. (Mar. 1) Forecast: This topical book will appeal to fans of John McPhee, as well as to science and history scholars. With publicity targeted at the coasts (author tour in L.A., San Francisco and N.Y.; a talk at N.Y.'s Museum of Natural History), a forthcoming review in *Discovery* magazine and Fagan's enthusiastic readership, it should sell well.

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From Library Journal

During the Little Ice Age approximately the 14th to the mid-19th centuries the climate of northern Europe turned volatile and markedly cooler. As Fagan (archaeology, Univ. of California, Santa Barbara) explains, while this did not directly cause major historical events, it catalyzed significant social, political, and economic changes throughout the region. Widespread reliance on subsistence farming meant that bad weather and shortened growing seasons led to food shortages, even famines. Hunger, in turn, along with disease, war, crime, and economic forces, provoked widespread sociopolitical upheaval, including the

collapse of Norse settlements in Greenland, the French Revolution, and the Irish Famine. While not unique in examining the influence of weather on the history of civilization (see John D. Post's *The Last Great Subsistence Crisis in the Western World*, 1977. o.p., and Fagan's own *Floods, Famines, and Emperors: El Niño and the Fate of Civilizations*, Basic, 2000), this book is noteworthy for its chronological and geographical scope. Recommended for public and academic libraries. Nancy R. Curtis, Univ. of Maine Lib., Orono
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Users Review

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Brett Baker:

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