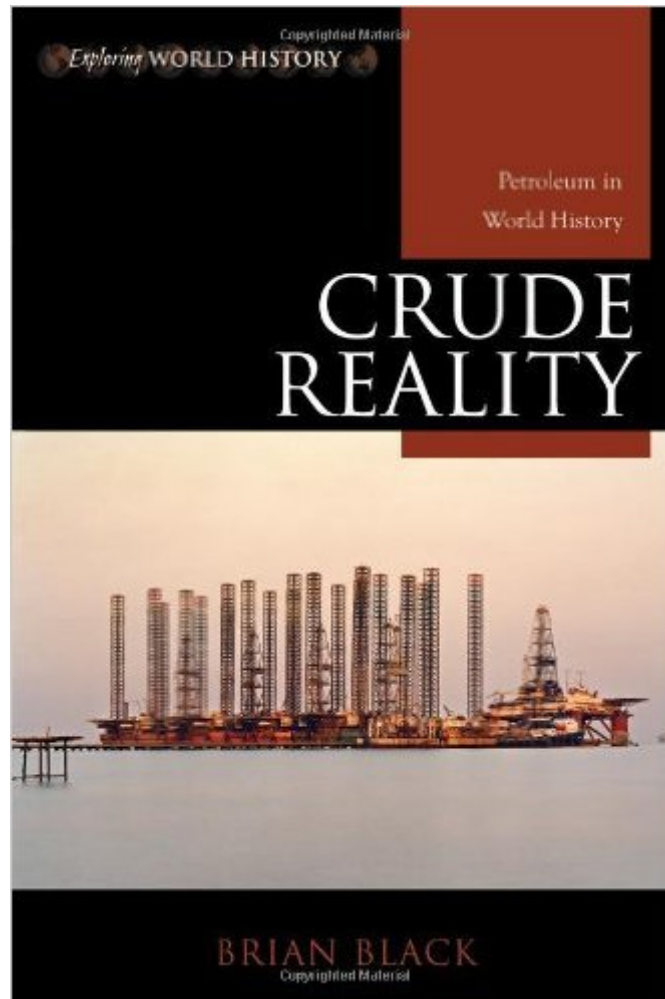


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Crude Reality: Petroleum In World History (Exploring World History)



Synopsis

This concise, accessible introduction to the history of oil tells the story of how petroleum shaped human life since it was first discovered leaking inconspicuously from the soil. Leading environmental history specialist Brian C. Black connects the subsequent exploitation of petroleum to patterns in world history while tracing the intricate links between energy and people after 1850. For a century, human dependence on petroleum caused little discomfort as we enjoyed the heyday of cheap crude—a glorious episode of energy gluttony that was destined to end. Today, we see the disastrous results of environmental degradation, political instability, and world economic disparity in the waning years of a petroleum-powered civilization—lessons rooted in the finite nature of oil. This crude reality becomes tragic when we measure our overwhelming reliance on this geological ooze. Considering the nature of oil itself as well as the specifics of humans' remarkable relationship with it, *Crude Reality* reveals our modern conundrum and then suggests the challenges of our future without oil. It is this essential context, the author argues, that will prepare us for our energy transition. Black brings to this book a global perspective and a wide-ranging technical knowledge presented specifically for general readers, making its scope much broader than any other survey. Written by a major scholar on the history of petroleum, it is an essential contribution to environmental history and the rapidly emerging field of energy history. The paperback edition features an updated epilogue and a bibliography.

Book Information

Series: Exploring World History

Paperback: 298 pages

Publisher: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers; Updated ed. edition (April 10, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0742556557

ISBN-13: 978-0742556553

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 0.9 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars— See all reviews— (1 customer review)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,012,662 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #130 in Books > Business & Money > Industries > Energy & Mining > Natural Resource Extraction #457 in Books > Business & Money > Industries > Energy & Mining > Oil & Energy #938 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Public Affairs & Policy > Environmental Policy

Customer Reviews

This book is brief about a vast subject, but it does have its moments. The photos are useful. Some chapters are better written than others, as if the author has real interest in some of the context but was given a book contract and had to write about some duller stuff. I found the best part of the book to be how technologies combined, influenced and were influenced by fossil fuels, leading to the internal combustion engine, and the resulting technologies such as batteries, filling stations, road systems and all the vast apparatus. That's hardly all of how petroleum has affected world history, but it is an important part. You may have read some of it before: the oil development in Pennsylvania, gushers in Texas, the Nobel brothers in the Caspian, supertankers, production manipulation to punish political opponents, and so on. That's a lot of material and this book does a good job of covering it in a readable, fairly short book. The book could use a few good maps. It has some not very useful graphs.

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