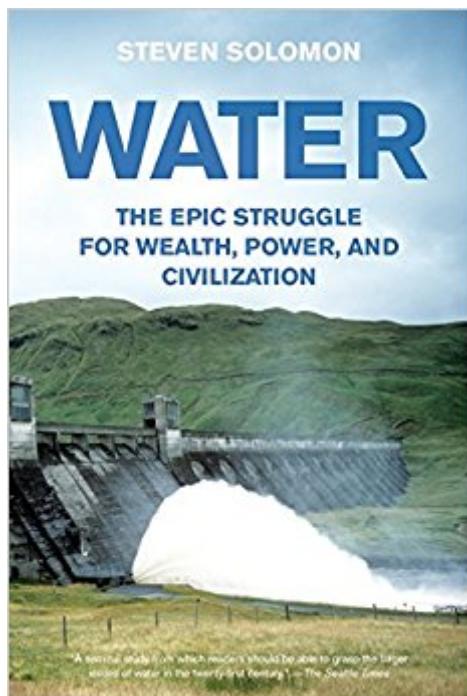


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# Water: The Epic Struggle For Wealth, Power, And Civilization



## Synopsis

“I read this wide-ranging and thoughtful book while sitting on the banks of the Ganges near Varanasi. It’s a river already badly polluted, and now threatened by the melting of the loss of the glaciers at its source to global warming. Four hundred million people depend on it, and there’s no backup plan. As Steven Solomon makes clear, the same is true the world over; this volume will give you the background to understand the forces that will drive much of 21st century history.” Bill McKibben In Water, esteemed journalist Steven Solomon describes a terrifying—and all too real—world in which access to fresh water has replaced oil as the primary cause of global conflicts that increasingly emanate from drought-ridden, overpopulated areas of the world. Meticulously researched and undeniably prescient, Water is a stunningly clear-eyed action statement on what Robert F Kennedy, Jr. calls “the biggest environmental and political challenge of our time.”

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This sprawling text reconstructs the history of civilization in order to illuminate the importance of water in human development from the first civilizations of the Fertile Crescent and the Indus River Valley to the present. Solomon (The Confidence Game) advances a persuasive argument: the prosperity of nations and empires has depended on their access to water and their ability to harness water resources. The story he tells is familiar, but his emphasis on water is unique: he shows how the Nile’s flood patterns determined political unity and dynastic collapses in Egypt. He suggests that

the construction of China's Grand Canal made possible a sixth-century reunification that eluded the Roman Empire. Finally, he attributes America's rise to superpower status to such 20th-century water innovations as the Panama Canal and Hoover Dam. Solomon surveys the current state of the world's water resources by region, making a compelling case that the U.S. and other leading democracies have untapped strategic advantages that will only become more significant as water becomes scarcer. (Feb.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

\*Starred Review\* Solomon's unprecedented, all-encompassing, and resounding inquiry into the science and politics of water is predicated on two incontrovertible yet disregarded facts: water is essential to life and civilization. After elucidating water's defining role in the planet's climate and quantifying the earth's limited supply of freshwater, Solomon describes in vivid detail the water technologies of the ancient river societies of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Assyria. On to Rome and its world-altering aqueducts and advanced sanitation, a crucial subject covered in depth when Solomon turns to nineteenth-century London, after telling the fascinating story of China's bold and transforming waterworks. By the time Solomon reaches America and its water-powered industrialization, it becomes clear that the technological marvels of one era deliver the environmental challenges of the next. The triumphs of water harnessed, therefore, give way to accounts of water polluted and squandered. Solomon shares sobering revelations about the harsh disparities between the lives of those who have water and those who don't, reports on the cruel consequences of today's water scarcities, and assesses the potential for a nightmarish impending freshwater famine. Seeking to inspire us to place a higher value on water and establish wiser approaches to its use, Solomon has created a brilliantly discursive and compelling epic of humankind and earth's most vital and precious resource. --Donna Seaman --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I bought this book to learn more on the subject of water and its impact on the world. I have the opinion that water is the next oil in the world of foreign affairs and wanted increase my understanding of it. And this book did not disappoint me in supporting this thought or in educating me in the value of water that I did not understand before. But a very interesting and important benefit, in addition to the title name sake, is the history of water expanding my general knowledge of world history. I would like to stress to all parents and teachers of eighth or ninth grade students to have the students read this book for a very clear primer about world history. If this book cannot be

part of a school class then it should be encouraged to be read during the summer break and a report made on it at the beginning of the ninth grade. Learning about the value of water is important but what this book explains in terms of historical relevance from 3,000 BCE to today will make future history and social study classes much easier to learn. The student will learn why societies built up near rivers and lakes, why ocean located cities grew and expanded over inland or land locked societies. How managing water impacted technical advances in a society over another. The holidays are near get Water as a present for that 13 or 14 year child, grandchild, or young person you want to mentor.

This is one of the most exceptional and insightful books that I have read in years. Steven ties the development of water resources to the development of civilization. Time and time again I found myself sitting back in awe at the insights that he shared with me. I don't know the author and am not his agent. But I have simple advice for you. Buy this book. Read this book. And give thanks that such a stunning book was published.

This book provides a history of human efforts to control fresh water dating back to the ancient Egyptians, Mesopotamians, Chinese, and covering most major civilizations since. Solomon gives an informative and fascinating account of efforts to divert, collect, and control water resources throughout history. We see the ways that droughts, floods, and fights over these resources have affected civilizations for the past 6000 years. The extent to which the ancients engineered water supplies and depended on these efforts was new to me, as I would expect it to be to the vast majority of readers. It is surprising to see how far back in history human manipulation of rivers and wetlands reaches, as well as the scale of some of these projects. It is also surprising to see how far back in history environmental damage, and economic repercussions, can be documented from some of these projects. The book follows history to the present day, covering modern dam-building, water for power generation, and even efforts to restore the drained wetlands of the Florida Everglades. **Negatives:** There are a few passages in Chapter 3 where the timelines confused me and I needed to resort to the Internet for clarification. There are several chapters on control of ocean shipping lanes which seem more about transportation and military history, somewhat tangential to the primary focus of the book. Overall, the book is clearly written, informative, and comprehensive. I enjoyed reading it and learned a great deal. I'd recommend the book for anyone interested in history, particularly economic or environmental history, no technical background required. The book would provide a good historical context for an introductory course on environmental policy. Another

reviewer has recommended the book for high school students, and I concur. I could see the relevant chapters from this book supporting high school or undergraduate courses on ancient history, the industrial revolution, and other periods, as well as giving some historical context to an earth science course.

I gave considerably less than the current price for this work, and will never pay more than \$9.99 for a small electronic file that incurs virtually no printing, shipping or inventory costs on its publishers. That said...This was an excellent and entertainingly-written book about an increasingly crucial subject. As the author points out, water is heavy, difficult to purify and transport, and yet amazingly crucial to the everyday activities of everyone everywhere. Therefore a society's sophistication in dealing with water is indeed a fair measure of its overall capabilities and priorities. While in my opinion the author stretches this point a little here and there, it's for the most part a valid one. In my own case, I found the sections on the politics of water most fascinating and informative of all.

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