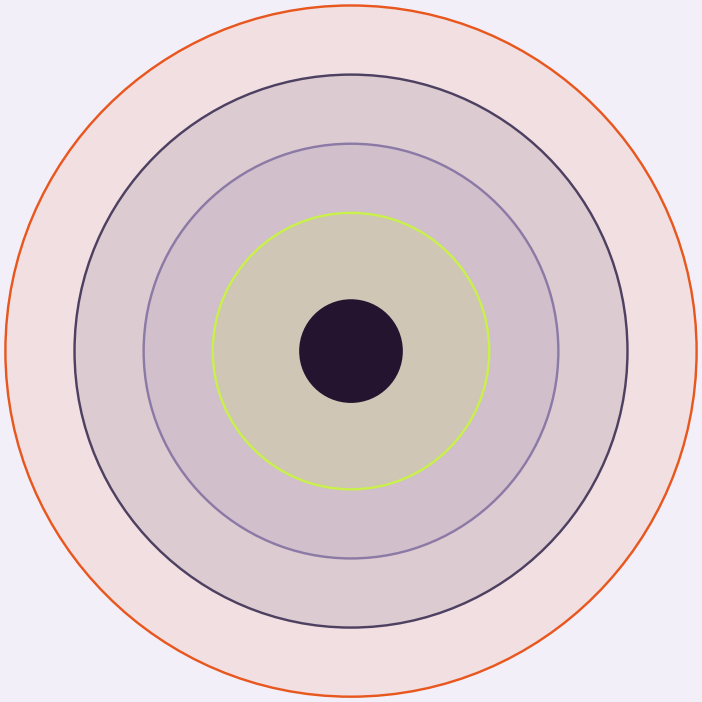


Empire of Guns: The Violent Making of the Industrial Revolution

A reading of the book by Priya Satia (2018)

1. ACTION BOOK

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of Empire of Guns: The Violent Making of the Industrial Revolution, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

The book in a minute

Priya Satia is a historian of Britain and its empire who teaches at Stanford University. In Empire of Guns she argues that war, and the British state's demand for guns in wartime, did much to drive the Industrial Revolution. She traces how Birmingham's gun trade grew with government orders, and how guns also worked as a currency in the slave trade and as tools of colonial expansion. The book centres on Samuel Galton Jr., a Quaker gunmaker and member of the Lunar Society whom the Birmingham Quaker meeting disowned in the 1790s for making guns. His defence, that everyone in an economy at war shared in it, becomes her way into questions of complicity and conscience in economic life. Her thesis is debated among economic historians.

Below are the 9 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

The takeaways

1

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

The Industrial Revolution was built on war as much as on invention.

Satia argues that Britain's near-constant wars in the eighteenth century made the state the biggest customer for metal goods. Its orders for guns kept Birmingham's workshops busy and pushed them to grow. In her account, war is not a backdrop to industry but one of its engines.

2

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

In the eighteenth century a gun was often money before it was a weapon.

Guns were traded in West Africa in exchange for enslaved people, and they changed hands as gifts and goods across the colonial world. Satia uses this to show that demand for guns did not come only from battle. They moved through the economy the way other trade goods did.

3

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

If everyone profits from war, the gunmaker is not the only one implicated.

When the Birmingham Quaker meeting moved against Samuel Galton Jr. in the 1790s, he argued that anyone who paid taxes or traded in an economy at war shared in it. The meeting disowned him anyway. Satia takes his argument seriously, because it was hard to answer.

4

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Complicity spread thin is still complicity, and it is far easier to ignore.

Galton's case shows how a modern economy splits responsibility into small pieces. The supplier, the lender, the shipper and the taxpayer each touch a small part. No single person feels like the author of the harm.

5

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

The usual story of cotton mills and steam engines leaves war out of the picture.

Satia argues that the later telling of the Industrial Revolution, centred on clever inventors and peaceful factories, made industry look separate from violence. Putting the state and its wars back in changes who the story is about.

6 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A good person can sit at the centre of a harmful trade.

Galton was a man of science and a member of the Lunar Society, the Birmingham circle that met to discuss experiments and ideas. He was also a gunmaker. Satia does not cast him as a villain, which makes his case more useful to think with.

7 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A conscience needs a line, and a modern economy keeps moving it.

The Quakers' peace testimony drew a line at making weapons. Galton's defence asked why the line fell there and not at the banker, the ironmonger or the taxpayer. The book leaves the reader holding that question.

8 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

When the state is the biggest buyer, its wars shape the whole economy.

Government demand in wartime reached far beyond soldiers. Satia shows it running through metalworking, credit and trade, so that ordinary businesses were tied to the war effort whether they chose it or not.

9 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Ask what your work and money ultimately support, not only what they make.

Galton made guns, but he argued the real question was where everyone's money went. That question still applies to a salary, a pension or a weekly shop. You cannot opt out of the economy, but you can look at your part in it.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Draw your own ledger
- [ ] Look up what your pension holds
- [ ] Find out who your employer serves
- [ ] Write your line in one sentence
- [ ] Choose one change and one acceptance

KEEP UP DAILY

- ◯ Ask the question before big decisions
- ◯ Review the ledger once a year
- ◯ Read history that counts the cost

30 days · Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

- [ ] SETUP 1

Draw your own ledger

On one page, list where your work and money flow: your job, your savings or pension, and your three biggest regular purchases.

Beside each, write what it ultimately supports.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 2

Look up what your pension holds

Most pension and index funds publish a list of their holdings.

Find yours and read the top ten names. Note one you did not expect.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 3

Find out who your employer serves

Read your employer's annual report or website, or ask a manager, to learn who its biggest customers are.

Write down what those customers do with the work.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 4

Write your line in one sentence

Write one sentence about what you will not do for money, and one about what you accept as part of living in an economy.

Keep it somewhere you will see it again.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 5

Choose one change and one acceptance

From your ledger, pick one thing you will change this month and one thing you knowingly accept.

Write a reason for each.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

Ask the question before big decisions

Before a large purchase, a new job or a new contract, ask what it ultimately supports.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

Review the ledger once a year

When your pension statement or tax form arrives, reread your ledger.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

Read history that counts the cost

Each season, read one history that includes the people who paid for an economy's growth, not only the people who built it.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
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2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
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December 2026

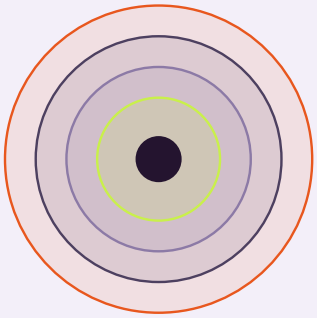
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28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



Nobody's money is clean. The honest move is to read your own ledger, then decide what you will change.

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER PRIYA SATIA