John Reader, Africa: A Biography of the Continent

Choose a topic from John Reader, Africa: A Biography of the Continent, to pursue further research. (For example C3 vs. C4 photosynthesis and carbon fixation, the expensive tissue hypothesis, the social brain theory, Man the Hunter theory, etc.)- Approximately 1,800 - 2,000 words, 11 pt, Times New Roman, 1.5 spacing- Endnote citations using Chicago ManualOther Notes:- There is a lot of technical information presented IN ADDITION to a great deal of embedded reasoning regarding principles of contemporary evolutionary thought. (HINT: 'evolution’ and ‘ecology’ are inseparable systems of thought). You have a lot of work to do just to assimilate all the material here in addition to remaining attentive to the movements and pattern of thinking and reasoning. Try to stay at least somewhat attentive to both. It is the habits of the mind performed and demonstrated here that are the principal asset of this work and the intended one in this course. - These 150 pages represent a compression of tens of thousands of pages of the most advanced work on material and living evolutionary processes and "ecological thinking” arguably ever achieved in such short a space. For this reason, you are being given a lot of time to read it slowly and to try to absorb its logic and movements as much as possible and not only the facts. You are also being provided with the notes and the vast (and brilliantly curated) bibliography at the back. USE THESE as you read. Although there have been updates since the book was written (20 years ago), some interesting discoveries, a few revisions, and so forth, this remains a reliable source of the latest thinking on the subject. (And many of you — especially those of you from Anglosaxon cultures — or documentary watchers — will know just how rich but short a tradition this is (everyone from the Leakeys, to Goodall, to Attenborough and so forth). While on this latter topic, allow me to invoke the recent work of Yuval Hariri, particularly the huge bestseller “Sapiens” that I suspect many of you at least know about and which probably some of you have read. The Hariri work is fun and interesting to be sure but is not in the same league by a long shot as the work you now have in your hands. (We can discuss this too if you are interested.)- The ‘story’ being told is in fact that — a story. It happens to be also the story of ‘the stories that have been told, not only of “where we and ‘this’ comes from” (this is interesting but also familiar and for that reason almost trivial) but also for the following two things: 1. It sets the bar for what the structure of such a story must include today and 2. It demonstrates that the story of the world and the story of the massively encephalized creature capable of shaping it and receiving signals from that world and hence being shaped by it are necessarily the same. (Hint: the last statement is the largest intellectual task that this course will demand from you.)