

CULTURAL, SOCIAL & MEDICAL HISTORY



What do **ADIRONDACK CHAIRS AND ICE CREAM CONES** have in common?

Both objects were invented as a result of tuberculosis. In the early part of the 20th century, more men in the US began shaving and women's hemlines shortened. Why? Because these were seen as means to slow the spread of tuberculosis germs.

Tuberculosis has infected people for thousands of years. In 1883, Robert Koch discovered that tuberculosis was caused by a bacterium, finally ending the debates about cause and transmission.

"History is often imagined as a series of events, unfolding one after the other like a sequence of falling dominoes. But most human experiences are processes, not events."

How can we as a society prevent diseases from spreading?

"Did TB cause World War I? Not really, but I would argue that it should be listed as a minor cause alongside the major ones."

The disease remained incurable until the 1940s, when an antibiotic was discovered. Treatments can last for many months, and many current strains of tuberculosis have grown resistant to antibiotics, so the disease continues to impact many lives, as well as our cultures and societies.

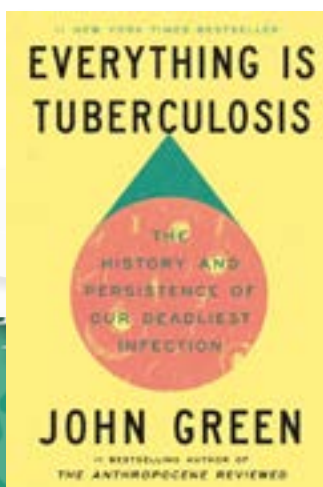
How do health concerns impact our actions today?

How have medical treatments evolved over time as our understandings have changed?

What kind of lasting impact will the Covid-19 pandemic have?



Tuberculosis Don't kiss me! By JD, 1936–1941, WPA Federal Art Project. Public domain.



**USA COMMON READ/COMMON WORLD
2026/2027 BOOK SELECTION:**

EVERYTHING IS TUBERCULOSIS