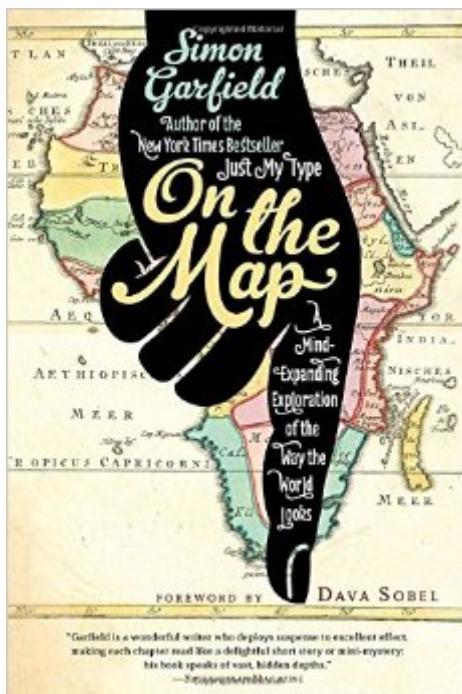


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On The Map: A Mind-Expanding Exploration Of The Way The World Looks (Ala Notable Books For Adults)



Synopsis

Cartography enthusiasts rejoice: the bestselling author of the Just My Type reveals the fascinating relationship between man and map. Simon Garfield's Just My Type illuminated the world of fonts and made everyone take a stand on Comic Sans and care about kerning. Now Garfield takes on a subject even dearer to our fanatical human hearts: maps. Imagine a world without maps. How would we travel? Could we own land? What would men and women argue about in cars? Scientists have even suggested that mapping "not language" is what elevated our prehistoric ancestors from ape-dom. Follow the history of maps from the early explorers' maps and the awe-inspiring medieval Mappa Mundi to Google Maps and the satellite renderings on our smartphones, Garfield explores the unique way that maps relate and realign our history and reflect the best and worst of what makes us human. Featuring a foreword by Dava Sobel and packed with fascinating tales of cartographic intrigue, outsize personalities, and amusing "pocket maps" on an array of subjects from how to fold a map to the strangest maps on the Internet, On the Map is a rich historical tapestry infused with Garfield's signature narrative flair. Map-obsessives and everyone who loved Just My Type will be lining up to join Garfield on his audacious journey through time and around the globe.

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Customer Reviews

On the Map is a very readable, entertaining look at the history of cartography and the use of maps with today's technological advancements. The book's target audience is very wide which means the

writing style is casual and a vast array of subjects are discussed, including the maps of Ptolemy and Grand Theft Auto. Garfield almost always reproduces the particular map he is discussing, but these images are grayscale and often cropped, so you will probably want to view the maps online instead. I read the first eight chapters straight through and the historical development of mapmaking was well covered. After that though, the book became a series of largely unrelated chapters that profiled individual mapmakers, traders, explorers, thieves, etc. The short "Pocket Map" sections emphasize the lack of cohesion in the last 3/4 of the book. The good news is that because the later chapters are standalone stories, a reader can easily skip past any uninteresting chapters without losing any broader understanding of the book or missing important information. This makes a long book much shorter and more enjoyable for most readers.

I'm a map addict, history and geography jock, and a fan of Simon Garfield's writing. Put those all together and you've got a five star review of Garfield's latest book, "On the Map". British author Garfield has a wide-ranging oeuvre of titles. He's written about everything from WW2 wartime Britain to the music industry to the joys of stamp collecting (while also discussing personal matters) to a book on fonts, and, finally, to this book on maps. The verb "to map" can be used in many different ways. Of course, the most popular way is "to map" geographical places, but you can also "map" diseases, family histories, economic development, and much, much more. Garfield writes about all these in his new book, but primarily focuses on mapping geographical places. He traces the development of maps from prehistoric ages, paying close attention to the various expeditions devoted to mapping what was then thought to be unknown. Expeditions like Lewis and Clark in the US northwest, the various expeditions to the polar regions, and the expeditions to find the China from Europe by going west. Garfield points out that by 1492, most geographers knew the world was round; the exact size and what lay where was still the missing component. Simon Garfield is a lively writer, and he addresses both history and geography in his book. He writes about all the places that appeared on early, post-Columbus maps that simply didn't exist. A range of mountains in west Africa and several non-existent islands in the Pacific were the result of mangled streams of information. And the state of California was shown as an island in many early maps of the area. One of the most interesting things is to take a look at early maps of any area and see how detailed the shorelines were but how blank or underdeveloped the internal areas of countries and continents were. The book also has a really cool front and back piece; a map of the world with a super-imposed map of the type of the London tube system. Garfield's book is full of little-known facts and explanations of well-known facts that would be of interest to most any map-addicts. It's a super

read.

Don't judge this book by its cover. Highly illustrated - but with small, black and white maps! The reading is a bit dry, too. I'll finish it, but the rave reviews that Smithsonian Magazine gave this are overrated. If I'd seen this in a book store (and not on-line) I would not have bought it.

A book about maps with graphics so small that you cannot see any detail at all. What's the point? The maps were sized down to fit the page and were literally so small that you could not view names or details even with a magnifying glass and 2.75 reading glasses. What was the book designer thinking? Better question: was there a designer at all?

The endpapers of this book have a map of the world in subway-system format. Subway maps are so familiar to urban dwellers from London to Philadelphia to Buenos Aires and Santiago de Chile that one might be surprised to learn they were actually invented by a known person on a known date. That's the kind of tidbit one gets from this entertaining if superficial history of maps and mapmaking, with excursions into map collecting, map selling, and map stealing. The publisher, however, erred badly in opting for small, often unreadable and poorly-reproduced black-and-white illustrations. Color-plate inserts add appreciably to the cost of a book and are often unnecessary anyway, but cartography is a subject that virtually demands at least a few decent-quality illustrations. They would have improved this book substantially. The other major shortcoming of this book is its seemingly inexplicable failure to mention weather maps (but see below). They are among the most familiar and ubiquitous maps for most people and they have a fascinating history--it is claimed that the concept originated with Benjamin Franklin, e.g. Fortunately there is a superb book devoted entirely to the subject, albeit at a much higher intellectual level: "Air Apparent" by Mark Monmonier (University of Chicago Press, 1999). Its author anticipates the absence of weather maps from "On The Map" by observing--in his explanation of why he undertook the project-- that for some reason mainstream cartographers seem systematically to ignore the subject. Certainly Simon Garfield did.

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