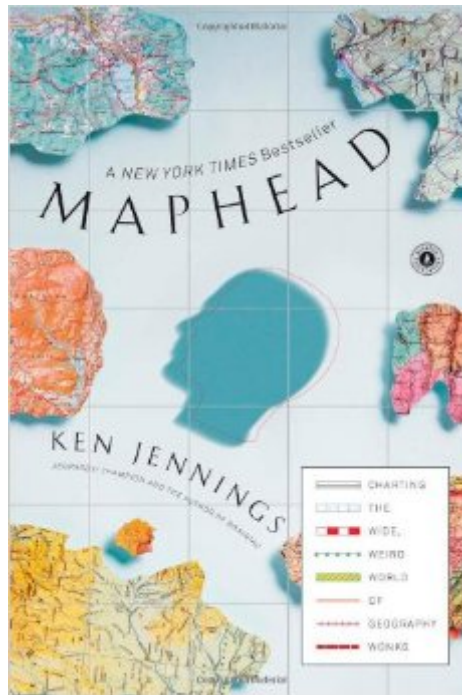


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Maphead: Charting The Wide, Weird World Of Geography Wonks



Synopsis

Record-setting Jeopardy! champion and New York Times bestselling author Ken Jennings explores the world of maps and map obsessives, a literary gem (The Atlantic) now available in paperback. Ken Jennings takes readers on a world tour of geogeeks from the London Map Fair to the bowels of the Library of Congress, from the prepubescent geniuses at the National Geographic Bee to the computer programmers at Google Earth. Each chapter delves into a different aspect of map culture: highpointing, geocaching, road atlas rallying, even the "unreal estate" charted on the maps of fiction and fantasy. Jennings also considers the ways in which cartography has shaped our history, suggesting that the impulse to make and read maps is as relevant today as it has ever been. From the "Here be dragons" parchment maps of the Age of Discovery to the spinning globes of grade school to the postmodern revolution of digital maps and GPS, Maphead is filled with intriguing details, engaging anecdotes, and enlightening analysis. If you're an inveterate map lover yourself or even if you're among the cartographically clueless who can get lost in a supermarket let Ken Jennings be your guide to the strange world of mapheads.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I cannot believe that I have found Ken Jennings making a factual error. And he did so immediately on page 3 of this wonderful read. "Look how Ardmore, Alabama, is only a hundred feet away from its neighbor Ardmore, Louisiana..."Really?!!!! I am no Ken Jennings, not even close, although I watched every one of his appearances of "Jeopardy!" and recall the day he wasn't able to recall H&R Block. Love this guy. But, Ken, even I know that there is a state between Alabama and

Louisiana--Mississippi. So I did a Google search. Seems there is no Ardmore, Louisiana, but the Ardmore in Alabama is in the north central. And I thought, maybe Tennessee. And sure enough, there it is, Ken, in Tennessee. So that set me on a search for more factual errors in the book. But alas, alack, I just got so sucked up in the book I forgot what my task was. This is just a delightful read. And, no, you do not need to be a geography nerd. Or a map nerd. I'm not although I do find myself Googling maps a lot. And when Ken Jennings writes about slutty place names as well as unusual geographic circumstances, I am brought back to my early life when I grew up in Derby Line, Vermont, the "line" there to indicate that the Quebec border is there. The local library, the Haskell Free, is half in the U.S. and half in Canada. And above is the opera house where the state is in Quebec and the audience--or most of it--sits in the United States. Back then we thought nothing of this, but today it is not the case. Ken Jennings missed telling this tale, so I thought I would.

One of my children's geography teachers had a saying that "Geography is Everything!" - by knowing where things were we could understand history and why people act the way they do. I'm a maphead like Ken Jennings. Sort of. Like him I grew up with a puzzle map and a cardboard globe and an album of stamps from far off places applied cautiously with little sticky semi-transparent hinges with a spot for a unobtainable penny farthing just in case. And put me in a far off city and I can figure out how to get around in under a day and get from A to B because I've presearched it through maps, though these days I'm more likely to have used MapQuest or Google Earth. So I agree. Jennings book does a good job of popularizing people's enthusiasm for maps. Beginning with the concern that Americans know less than they should about geography he relates the story of University of Miami associate professor David Helgren, who in 1983 received undue notoriety when his story of how poorly students in his first year class were able to locate items in a list of 30 place names including the cities of Miami and Chicago. Speculatively there are number of reasons to consider, including the rise in protective parents who were afraid to let their children bike and explore their neighbourhoods alone and the high % of students who are driven to and from school. There's lots of interesting map lore, and interesting segments on private map collectors, map thieves and the huge archive of maps available for perusing in public facilities such as libraries and the Smithsonian. It is humbling to realize that the 1st national survey of modern times started by Geovani Cassini in 1670 was only finished 100 years later by his grandson.

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