



## Synopsis

â œ[A] mesmerizing and beautifully illustrated book.â • â "The Telegraph (London)Maps are objects of endless fascination, and the urge to map is a basic human instinct. In this masterful study, historian and cartography expert Jerry Brotton reveals how mapsâ "far from being objective documentsâ "are intimately tied to the views and agendas of particular times and places. Beginning with Ptolemyâ™s Geography and ending with the satellite-powered behemoth of Google Earth, Brotton examines a dozen world maps from around the globe and through the centuries to trace the long road to our present geographical reality. This is the kind of book map lovers and history buffs adore. Beautifully illustrated and brilliantly original, A History of the World in 12 Maps was a hit in the U.K. and certain to work its cartographic magic on American audiences.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

First paragraph ... I winced at the author's overwrought narrative style ... too many adjectives, adverbs and thesaurus derivatives ... too little Strunk & White editing. I'm perfectly comfortable reading overly complicated narrative but it wastes time wading through it ... I can't help being irritated by the style and so risk missing the substance. If you can get past the overwrought writing style, you might think that the cartographer author would have taken a lesson from his own history and replaced words with sketches and notes. Every map discussed would be improved by the authors own sketch rather than 1000 words. One would expect a map book to be well illustrated but this one is not. The 5' long Hereford Mappa Mundi for example is deconstructed in narrative fashion.

If the author had photographed his chosen maps ... imaged them with the best camera available... and then described them with side by side sketches, translations and notes, the book would be 100% better. Cartography is a reading hobby for me and there are better books. The 12 maps the author chose are interesting, but by comparison, the author makes much ado ... way to much ado, over these. I paid \$26 for the book expecting quality maps illustrations and drawings as Kindle doesn't do maps well. As there are so few maps in this hardback, and the few maps that are here are dark, illegible, and downright terrible ... if you think that you must read the book, save the hardcopy money, buy the Kindle and use wiki to bring in the higher fidelity original images this author should have included in his book. p.s. I write reviews to help consumers cut through the publishers representations and call the book as I see it. The "no" vote this review got the day after I wrote it is typical of the publisher/author money making side of the transaction punishing a less than flattering review and hiding behind an anon "No" vote with no comments. These aren't going to make the work any better. I would have preferred to write a glowing review that might attract more readers to this arcane subject. But ... I said it's "OK" ... it' is just as easily tipped to 2 stars= I don't like it but give it the benefit of doubt because I want to see more authors writing great books in this genre.

To my regret I gave up on geography very early on in Schools days, map reading to me was a real chore and somewhat abstract. It was not until later on in life did I realise that maps could be much more, and the ideas presented by Jerry Brotton book 'A History of the World in Twelve Maps'; manages to illustrate in an academic fashion, but not convoluted or highbrow, but rather palatable form the complexities behind maps in terms of their political, economic, social and very philosophical make-up. By looking at the people that put these paradigms together, and their need/reasons, that made put the maps they were working on in the first - but also the ideological pressures behind their decisions. I give two broad examples; firstly the way in which European nations fought over Africa in the 19th and 20th century's used their cultural and diplomatic bias to 'carve up' the so-called 'Dark Continent', these boundaries and so called countries within Africa are still reeling from effects of these map makers. There is Hitler's use of Maps, to help prescribe the need for 'Lebensraum' - Living Space in the East and claims over Sudetenland. His use of maps to attain further concessions from those in Europe who thought they could somehow placate him through diplomatic appeasement. Ultimately Hitler had a map in mind for Europe and much larger Germany at its center. Mr Brotton's book is not necessarily a light read, but I found it fascinating, it throws out interesting ideas and concepts. Maps are not boring dusty items but full of

information that may not always be self-evident; as one reviewer put it succinctly an 'intelligent read' and I would recommend it.

The 12 maps Brotton has selected to represent the history of the world is interesting, with ample opportunity to discuss whether his selections are the most important representations of specific cultures. It is interesting to contrast his book with the related BBC series, "Maps: Power, Plunder and Possession" (2010). While Brotton's vast expertise, knowledge, and passion for maps is unquestionable, his book occasionally bogs down under the weight of events supporting the development of each map, but not directly related. IMHO, there is sometimes too much emphasis on politics, at the expense of technological and scientific advances in the art and sciences of geodesy, physics, and cartography. I understand Brotton's choices in this regard; I just feel he could have been more succinct with much of the politics. The result is, in places, a cumbersome narrative. In all, however, Brotton's book is a compelling analysis of maps as artifacts of art, culture, and power, and the way humanity views itself in the world.

This is a very interesting and beautifully presented book. Jerry Brotton manages to present very scholarly and deeply thoughtful ideas in an accessible way, although you do need to concentrate hard as this is not a filleted digest but a full development of his theses - among them that that maps are political and ideological constructs and say a great deal about their makers and the society they live in as well as about the places they depict. Dense and somewhat challenging but well worth the effort is probably the closest I can get to an overall description of the book, so if you like a thoroughly intelligent read which will make you think about things you hadn't really considered before, this is definitely for you

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