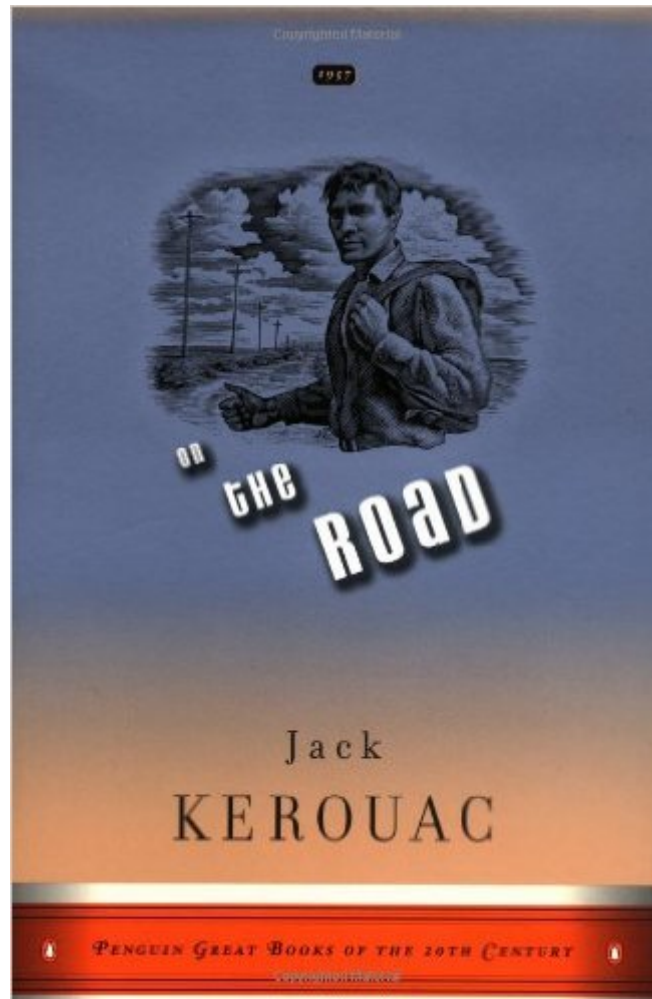


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On The Road



Synopsis

In its time Jack Kerouac's masterpiece was the bible of the Beat Generation, the essential prose accompaniment to Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*. While it stunned the public and literary establishment when it was published in 1957, it is now recognized as an American classic. With *On the Road*, Kerouac discovered his voice and his true subject—the search for a place as an outsider in America. *On the Road* swings to the rhythms of fifties underground America, jazz, sex, generosity, chill dawn, and drugs, with Sal Paradise and his hero Dean Moriarty, traveler and mystic, the living epitome of Beat. "Life is great, and few can put the zest and wonder and sadness and humor of it on paper more interestingly than Kerouac." —Luther Nichols, *San Francisco Examiner* "Just as, more than any other novel of the Twenties, *The Sun Also Rises* came to be regarded as the testament of the Lost Generation, so it seems certain that *On the Road* will come to be known as that of the Beat Generation." —Gilbert Millstein, *The New York Times*

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The 50th anniversary of the publication of Jack Kerouac's "On The Road" is commemorated by the release of three major volumes. They are a designated 50th Anniversary edition; "On The Road: The Original Scroll", the long-awaited controversial release of the uncensored 120-foot alleged "teletype roll" on which Kerouac blazingly blasted out his masterwork in just three weeks, six years before its publication; and a handsome Library of America edition, "Jack Kerouac: Road Novels 1957-1960", edited with textual notes by historian Douglas Brinkley, featuring *Road* and four other

of his best known novels along with selections from his journals. (See separate review). Whether this literary blitz will lead to a grand revival of interest in Kerouac's work by both old and new generations has yet to be seen. But it secures his reputation as a major American writer because his voice resonates with the great poignant prose of Walt Whitman, Mark Twain, and John Steinbeck, celebrating the wonders and adventures of youthful travels on the open road. In the book's first major favorable review, Gilbert Millstein of The New York Times praised "On The Road" as being to the Beat Generation what Hemingway's "The Sun Also Rises" was to its precedent bohemian Lost Generation. Millions of readers and generations of authors have been influenced by the "On The Road", typically discovered by readers in their adolescence. Almost everyone who has read the book remembers when and where they first encountered it, the way one indelibly recalls the loss of virginity. Praise for Kerouac's work is far from universal.

Published in 1957, this autobiographical novel by Jack Kerouac captured the spirit that was seething underneath 1950s conformity. Myth has it that he typed it non-stop for three weeks, using one long continuous sheet of paper. I understand it went through several drafts after that but it still holds the immediacy of that marathon typing session, the staccato rhythm of the words creating improvised rhythm across the page with little, if any punctuation. The narrator, Sal Paradise, is on an epic quest, one that takes him back and forth across the country with Dean Moriarty who is based on the real-life Neal Cassady. Dean, the reform school escapee who specializes in stealing cars, is Sal's mentor. And it is the automobile that is their chariot, which keeps them constantly in motion. Dean's madness is glorified, as is his ability to do whatever he pleases. There are a lot of drugs in the book, but liquor seems to be their drug of choice. They leave the heroin for a character loosely based on the real William Burroughs. Women drift in and out of the story, usually as one of Dean's lovers who he treats terribly. Dean treats everyone terribly though, abandoning Sal on several occasions, once while Sal was suffering from dysentery while they were in Mexico. Sal, however, always forgives Dean, seeing him as a god-like hero, no matter what he does. There's more to the book than the story though. The book is a trip, in every sense of the word. With the simple force of his writing, Kerouac took me on an adventure. With him I crisscrossed America, hitchhiking, walking, taking buses. With him I sat in a car driven by Dean Moriarty, speeding for hours at 110 miles an hour and not even thinking about a seatbelt.

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