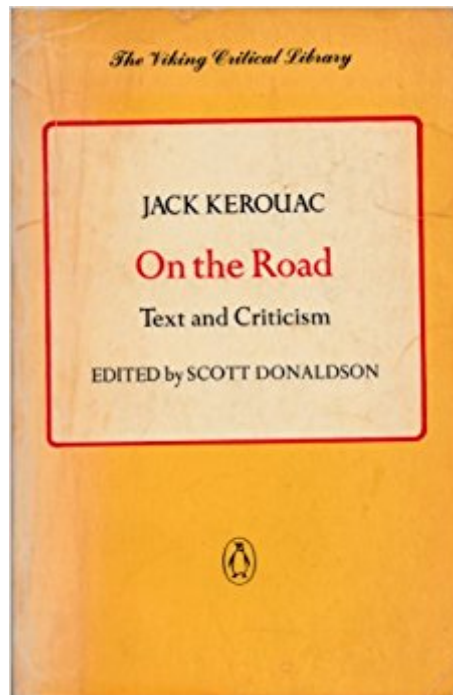




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On The Road (The Viking Critical Library)



Synopsis

"On the Road" swings to the rhythms of 1950s underground America: jazz, sex, generosity, chill dawns and drugs. It chronicles Jack Kerouac's years travelling North America with his friend Neal Cassady. As "Sal Paradise" and "Dean Moriarty", they are the living epitome of the Beat Generation, roaming the country in a quest for self-knowledge and experience. Now recognized as a modern classic, the narrative races towards the sunset with unforgettable exuberance, poignancy and passion. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Book Information

Series: The Viking Critical Library

Paperback: 605 pages

Publisher: Penguin Books (January 25, 1979)

Language: English

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Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (1,405 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #2,002,126 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #141 inÂ Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Movements & Periods > Beat Generation #28503 inÂ Books > Textbooks > Humanities > Literature #38254 inÂ Books > Literature & Fiction > Classics

Customer Reviews

On the Road, Jack Kerouac's epic of road travel and search for meaning in the late 1940s, was written in three weeks time, typed on a long scroll, which was really several pieces of paper taped together. Kerouac's writing has a stream of conscious, spastic nature, although it went through many years of revisions before being published. The story fictionally recounts true events in the writer's life, particularly those with Neal Cassidy (Dean Moriarty in the book), whom Sal, the Kerouac character, seems to have had an infatuated crush on. From New York to California and Mexico Sal drives, or rather rides, and comes across various characters and cities. The novel helped to launch the Beat movement and has influenced countless writers, artists, and readers alike, and has been deemed one of the best novels of 20th-century American literature.

Significantly, it made America a literary subject. I wanted to like this book. I really, really did. I was prepared to be blown away and taken on a literary adventure of meaning and wonder, excitement

and energy. I read, and waited, to no avail. I read some more, but it soon became apparent that this would not be the book for me. Despite this, I grudgingly soldiered on and completed it a few days later than I had anticipated to (I usually breeze through fiction without struggle), as I continuously put it back on my shelf only to talk myself into trying again. I'm glad I did, but found that the book's legend is far more interesting than the actual story. Split into four sections, each consecutive one involving a different road trip with more details and a shorter time-span, I found myself also becoming consecutively more involved as the book went on.

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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