



On the Road

Jack Kerouac

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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 dawns, and drugs, with Sal Paradise and his hero Dean Moriarty, traveler and mystic, the living epitome of Beat.

On the Road Details

Date : Published June 1st 1999 by Penguin Books (first published 1955)

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Author : Jack Kerouac

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Genre : Classics, Fiction, Travel, Literature

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From Reader Review On the Road for online ebook

Jessica says

This is probably the worst book I have ever finished, and I'm forever indebted to the deeply personality-disordered college professor who assigned it, because if it hadn't been for that class I never would've gotten through, and I gotta tell you, this is the book I love to hate.

I deeply cherish but don't know that I fully agree with Truman Capote's assessment: that *_On the Road_* "is not writing at all -- it's typing."

Lovely, Turman, but let's be clear: typing by itself is fairly innocuous -- this book is so awful it's actually offensive, and even incredibly damaging.

I'd be lying if I said there aren't parts of this book that're so bad they're good -- good as in morbidly fascinating, in the manner of advanced-stage syphilis slides from seventh-grade health class. Keroac's ode to the sad-eyed Negro is actually an incredible, incredible example of.... something I'm glad has been typed. For the record. So we can all see it clearly, and KNOW.

Please don't get me wrong! My disproportionately massive loathing for Jack Kerouac has zero to do with his unenlightened racial views. I mean, it was written in the fifties, and anyway, it's great that he was able to articulate these ideas so honestly. No, the real reason I hate this book so much is that it established a deeply retarded model of European-American male coolness that continues to plague our culture today.

I could go into a lot more depth on this topic, but it's come to my attention that I've been using my horrible addiction to Bookster to avoid the many obligations and responsibilities of my daily life, to which I should now return. So, in closing: this book SUCKS. This book is UNBELIEVABLY TERRIBLE. And for that very reason, especially considering its serious and detrimental impact on western civilization, I definitely recommend that you read it, if you have not suffered that grave misfortune already.

Fabian says

Herein lies that gnarly root of the all-American Sense of Entitlement. Coupling this with "Huck Finn" as THE quintessential American Novel is One Enormous mistake: Twain at least entertains, at least follows through with his intention, with his American take on the Quixotean legend; Kerouac might just be the biggest literary quack of the 20th century! The book is awkward, structured not as ONE single trip, but composed of a few coast-to-coast coastings, all having to do with this (now) overused motif.

I despise it. (Living in Denver, Kerouacville, makes me hate him more!) A tale of a closeted individual who really has nothing to say. He has glorified a ruffian (DEAN DEAN DEANDEAN...!) whose selfishness sits well with him. What Sal does say, however, ever so dully, is just how Cool those around him are, how his only addition to this incomprehensible BEAT movement is as lame as those of a newspaper photographer: he sees and reports, jots idle musings down. What he fails to understand (the main guy is not even YOUNG... [he is old & stupid, desperate & pathetic]!!!!) is how entirely false this sense of freedom can be: Can a sheep really outwit the shepherd? Here is a supreme example of the blind leading... I sternly refuse to follow such idiotic drivel. This is a book for followers written by a Conformist, for one can always be some

selfproclaimed comfortable conformist of nonconformism.

Nothing sticks. Everything "On the Road" is transitory, & although this works fine in the everyday, in Literature its seen as nothing more than a burden: a plotless restlessness to achieve permanence without that crucial element: mainly, the artist's virtue of Talent.

Ian "Marvin" Graye says

A View from the Couch

OTR has received some negative reviews lately, so I thought I would try to explain my rating.

This novel deserves to lounge around in a five star hotel rather than languish in a lone star saloon.

Disclaimer

Please forgive my review. It is early morning and I have just woken up with a sore head, an empty bed and a full bladder.

Confession

Let me begin with a confession that dearly wants to become an assertion.

I probably read this book before most of you were born.

So there!

Wouldn't you love to say that!

If only I had the courage of my convictions.

Instead, I have only convictions, and they are many and varied.

However, I am sure that by the end of my (this) sentence, I shall be released.

Elevated to the Bar

I read OTR in my teens, which were spread all over the end of the 60's and the beginning of the 70's.

My life was dominated by Scouting for Boys.

I mean the book, not the activity.

My mantra was "be prepared", although at the time I didn't realise that this actually meant "be prepared for war".

After reading OTR, my new mantra was "be inebriated".

Mind you, I had no idea what alcohol tasted like, but it sounded good.

Gone were two boys in a tent and three men in a boat.

OTR was about trying to get four beats in a bar, no matter how far you'd travelled that day.

Typing or Writing

Forget whether it was just typing rather than writing.

That was just Truman Capote trying to dot one of Dorothy Parker's eyes.

This is like focusing on the mince instead of the sausage.

All Drums and Symbols

You have to appreciate what OTR symbolised for people like me.

It was "On the Road", not "In the House" or "In the Burbs".

It was about dynamism, not passivity.

It wasn't about a stream of consciousness, it was about a river of activity.

It was about "white light, white heat", not "white picket fences".

Savouring the Sausage

OK, your impressions are probably more recent than mine.

Mine are memories that have been influenced by years of indulgence. (I do maintain that alcohol kills the unhealthy brain cells first, so it is actually purifying your brain.)

I simply ask that you overlook the mince and savour the sausage.

Beyond Ephemerality

I would like to make one last parting metaphor.

I have misappropriated it from the musician, Dave Graney.

He talks about "feeling ephemeral, but looking eternal".

Dave comes from the Church of the Latter Day Hipsters.

He is way cooler than me, he even looks great in leather pants, in a spivvy kinda way.

However, I think the point he was making (if not, then the point I am making) is that most of life is ephemeral. It just happens and it's gone forever.

However, in Dave's case, the way he looks, the way he feels, he turns it into something eternal.

It's his art, his music, our pleasure, our memories (at least until we die).

Footnotes on Cool

Creativity and style are our last chance attempt to defy ephemerality and mortality and become eternal.

Yes, all that stuff between the bookends of OTR might be typing, it might be preserving ephemerality that wasn't worthy or deserving.

However, the point is the attempt to be your own personal version of cool.

Heck, no way am I cool like the Beats or James Dean or Marlon Brando or Jack Nicholson or Clint Eastwood or Keith Richards or Camille Paglia.

However, I am trying to live life beyond the ephemeral.

That's what OTR means to me.

If it doesn't mean that to you, hey, that's alright. I'm OK, you're OK. It's cool.

Original posted: March 01, 2011

Mike Puma says

I tried; I really tried. Everything was telling me—I was telling me—this is one I'm going to like. Instead, I got *Pablum for the Young Rebel Soul*. I suspect I approached this novel with the same myopic nostalgia that, occasionally, contributes to the delusion that young people who are just getting their driver's licenses and I are 'roughly' the same age. More random thoughts to follow.

So you want to write a novel, huh? But, dammit, you just don't know how to start? No problem, man; it's cool, daddy-o. Just get writing, use your friends, maybe call it *autobiographical*? Like it so far? Nice, man, yes, yes, yes. Now, throw in a group of sexist and homophobic racists who party to their own demise, plop 'em in the story. Still with me, brother? Tell the story any way you want. Tedious prose? Don't worryaboutit. If you're smart, you'll throw in a musical theme; give it a beat, a beat, a beat; hell, dude, the musicians (and their groupies and fans will be lining up). Promote your tale as one that captures "the voice of an era" and ...AND be sure to mention that the protagonists are "rebels" then just stand back and wait; a certain portion of the 'disaffiliated' and 'disaffected' youth population will beat a path to your door (or your bookstore) ready to snatch up a copies like anxious toot-heads panting to get their faces to the coke lines laid-out on a mirror. Oh, and whatever you do, don't forget to send your heroes across the country, hell, send 'em back and forth, repeatedly, then do it again. Still with me, brutha? Well, if that's not a recipe for a contemporary 'classic' then it's a sure-fire recipe for a lawsuit brought by Penguin Books and the estate of Jack Kerouac. (Just between you and me, that was fun.)

It's not surprising that so many people admire this book—the ones who "get it"—the young, the hopeful, the

dreamers. Combine a ‘quest’ with a Bohemian narrator, and *voilà*, instant relevance to the inexperienced. But they should know that older readers often do ‘get it’ because we’ve already ‘got it’—‘got it’ and moved on. The lure of the quest—the trek—whether across the country or to the city or back to nature, has already occurred for many of us, and for many of us, that trek was merely a first step. Those who ‘get it’ should realize they’re not the first to ‘get it’ and they won’t be the last; in time, other readers—*younger* readers—will ‘get it’ in ways that no longer seem as important to those who are ‘getting it’ now. I admire the confidence of the reader who ‘gets it’ but I’m also aware that one person’s *confidence* is another person’s *arrogance* (I prefer to stick with the less judgmental *confidence*).

Quest stories often appeal to optimistic youth; they’re tailor-made for the searchers. It’s not surprising, then, to find younger readers responding positively to *On the Road*, or *The Hobbit* and its derivative sequels, or *The Catcher in the Rye*. It’s also not surprising that many older readers find Kerouac self-indulgent and narcissistic, Tolkien tedious (why am I hearing Judy Garland and Ray Bolger singing “goblins, and Golem, and orcs, oh my!?”) and Salinger quite literate by comparison—there are great quest stories to be had, think Salinger, Cervantes, Cormac McCarthy, etc.

If it sounds like I’m dumping on the young, I apologize, it’s not my intent. Consider what Kerouac says: “Teenagers, drunk, disheveled, excited—they ruined our party” (Chapter 9, Part I). It makes me wonder if he’d want to know his current crop of fans.

For some of us, whether we regret the life of the partier or are merely nostalgic when we remember that time of life, boozing and drugs no longer shine with the quite the same bright light. Thankfully, some of us no longer endure the hangovers; some of us no longer feel the *buzz* as it begins and wonder “WTF did I just take?” (even if we continue to enjoy our moments of ‘appetite enhancement’ we’re well-past thinking those moments matter of themselves or that that ‘feeling’ matters more than the moment it’s a part of).

There’s a problem inherent with autobiographical novels; if they’re bad, you’re stuck knowing that the author/narrator isn’t going to die at the end of it. Harsh? Maybe, but only if the narrator’s own deathwish, or his hero’s, haven’t already predominated the novel.

I kept finding myself eagerly moving toward the end of chapters—chapters that might only have a half or a third of a page of text. Blank pages between Parts—priceless!

I started writing this review, such as it is, when I was barely 25 pages into Kerouac’s autobiographical novel, so if my thoughts seem a little jumpy or disorganized, chalk it up to that, besides if you’ve just read *OtR*, you should be used to it. It had become such a plod early on that I needed to get some of my thoughts down so I could set them aside and finish this thing. BTW, since *OtR* *has* become such an effort already, I’m kicking myself for not doing *Infinite Jest* instead and thinking “maybe next time I actually *can* finish *Ulysses*.”

I found this quote on Goodreads, “The cruellest thing you can do to Kerouac is reread him at thirty-eight.” — Hanif Kureishi (*The Buddha of Suburbia*) To that I’d add, or 48, or 58...

Final thoughts and wish: Good reading to you, young idealist; good luck, fellow geezer.

Meredith Holley says

The other day I was talking to someone and he said, "Well, I'm no pie expert . . . Wait! No! I *am* a pie expert. I am an expert at pie!"

Another person asked, "How did you become a pie expert?"

"One time I ate only pie for an entire week. I was driving across the country with my buddies, and we decided to eat only pie."

"Like Jack Kerouac in *On the Road*!" I said.

"Yes! Exactly! That's exactly what we were doing. We were reading *On the Road*, and we decided he was so smart when he realized pie is the best solution when you're traveling and have no money."

"He 'knew it was nutritious, and of course delicious.'"

"Yes! It has all of the food groups - especially if you have it with ice cream." He paused. "Except pie isn't as filling as you would think it would be, so we had to drink a lot of beer to make up for that. And we ate a lot of multi-vitamins because we felt terrible. We would stop and camp out by the road, eating pie and drinking beer with multi-vitamins.

"We got to my girlfriend's house, and we looked like shit. We hadn't shaved and we had the pie sweats. But, it made me an expert at pie."

"mmmm, pie."

Other than his advice about pie, I find Jack Kerouac to be one of those useless, narcissistic, cult-leader types. He's pretty hot, though, and he does have correct opinions about pie.

Samadrita says

This is the book which has given me anxiety attacks on sleepless nights.

This is the book which has glared at me from its high pedestal of classical importance in an effort to browbeat me into finally finishing it.

And this is that book which has shamed me into feigning an air of ignorance every time I browsed any of the countless *1001-books-to-read-before-you-die* lists.

Yes Jack Kerouac, you have tormented me for the past 3 years and every day I couldn't summon the strength to open another page of 'On the Road' and subject my brain to the all-too-familiar torture of Sal's sleep-inducing, infuriatingly monotonous narration.

Finally, I conquer you after nearly 3 years of dithering. I am the victorious one in the battle in which you have relentlessly assaulted my finer senses with your crassness and innate insipidity and dared me to plod on. I can finally beat my chest in triumph (ugh pardon the Tarzan-ish metaphor but a 1-star review deserves no better) and announce to the world that I have finished reading '*On the Road*'. Oh what an achievement! And

what a monumental waste of my time.

Dear Beat Generation classic, I can finally state without any fear of being called out on my ignorance that I absolutely hated reading you. Every moment of it.

Alternatively, this book can be named *White Heterosexual Man's Misadventures and Chauvinistic Musings*. And even that makes it sound much more interesting and less offensive than it actually is.

In terms of geographical sweep, the narrative covers nearly the whole of America in the 50s weaving its way in and out of Los Angeles and New York and San Francisco and many other major American cities. Through the eyes of Salvatore 'Sal' Paradise, a professional bum, we are given an extended peek into the lives of a band of merry have-nots, their hapless trysts with women, booze, drugs, homelessness, destitution, jazz as they hitchhike and motor their way through the heart of America.

Sounds fascinating right? (Ayn Rand will vehemently disagree though).

But no, it's anything but that. Instead this one just shoves Jack Kerouac's internalized white superiority, sexism and homophobia right in the reader's face in the form of some truly bad writing. This book might as well come with a caption warning any potential reader who isn't White or male or straight. I understand that this was written way before it became politically incorrect to portray women in such a poor light or wistfully contemplate living a "Negro's life" in the antebellum South. But there's an obvious limit to the amount of his vile ruminations I can tolerate.

"There was an old Negro couple in the field with us. They picked cotton with the same God-blessed patience their grandfathers had practiced in ante-bellum Alabama."

Seriously? God-blessed patience?

Every female character in this one is a vague silhouette or a caricature of a proper human being. Marylou, Camille, Terry, Galatea are all frighteningly one-dimensional - they never come alive for the reader through Sal's myopic vision. They are merely there as inanimate props reduced to the status of languishing in the background and occasionally allowed to be in the limelight when the men begin referring to them as if they were objects.

Either they are 'whores' for being as sexually liberated as the men are or they are screaming wives who throw their husbands out of the house for being jobless, cheating drunks or they are opportunistic and evil simply because they do not find Sal or Dean or Remy or Ed or any of the men in their lives to be deserving of their trust and respect, which they truly aren't.

And sometimes, they are only worthy of only a one or two-line description like the following:-

"...I had been attending school and romancing around with a girl called Lucille, a beautiful Italian honey-haired darling that I actually wanted to marry"

Look at Sal talking about a woman as if she were a breed of cat he wanted to rescue from the animal shelter.

"Finally he came out with it: he wanted me to work Marylou."

Is Marylou a wrench or a machine of some kind?

And this is not to mention the countless instances of '*get you a girl*', '*get girls*', '*Let's get a girl*' and other minor variations of the same strewn throughout the length of the book and some of Sal's thoughts about 'queers' which are equally revolting.

Maybe I am too much of a non-American with no ties to a real person who sees the Beat era through the lenses of pure nostalgia or maybe I am simply incapable of appreciating the themes of youthful wanderlust and living life with a perverse aimlessness or maybe it's the flat writing and appalling representation of women. Whatever the real reason(s) maybe, I can state with conviction that this is the only American classic which I tried to the best of my abilities to appreciate but failed.

Michael Finocchiaro says

Kerouac's masterpiece breathes youth and vigor for the duration and created the American bohemian "beat" lifestyle which has been the subject of innumerable subsequent books, songs, and movies. I have read this at least two or three times and always feel a bit breathless and invigorated because of the restlessness of the text and the vibrance of the characters. There was an extraordinary exhibit at the Pompidou Center earlier this year where the original draft in Kerouac's handwriting was laid out end to end in a glass case. It was like seeing the original copy of *Don Quixote* in the royal palace in Madrid - very moving. In any case, there is no excuse not to read this wonderful high point of mid-20th century American literature.

Re-read and found both beauty and sadness in this work. The sadness stems from the sexism, racism, and homophobia expressed throughout the book. Sign of the times, I know, but it is still painful to see that these Beat visionaries - for all their open-mindedness towards other religions and sex and drugs - still expressed such backwards views and attitudes sometimes

As for the beauty, the story of Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty crossing the US again and again with a last trip down to Mexico City is epic.

"I pictured myself in a Denver bar that night, with all the gang, and in their eyes I would be strange and ragged and like the Prophet who has walked across the land to bring the dark Word, and the only Word I had was "Wow!" (P. 37)

I have driven from Florida to San Francisco by myself and back again when I was in college and felt that Kerouac captured the enthusiasm that the memory still evokes in me:

"I thought, and looked every, as I had looked everywhere in the little world below. And before me was the great raw bulge and bulk of my American continent" (P. 79)

The descriptions of bebop jazz are absolutely astounding throughout as they listen to Prez, Bird, Dizzy... "The pianist was only pounding the keys with spread-eagled fingers, chords, or at intervals when the great tenorman was drawing breath for another blast--Chinese chords, shuddering the piano in every timber, chink, and wire, boing!" (P. 197)

The writing makes you feel the musics energy pulsating and driving - that is one of my favorite aspects of On the Road:

"Holy flowers floating in the air, were all these tired forms in the dawn of Jazz America." (P. 204)

Other moments are surreal and yet moments I have known many times:

"Just about that time a strange thing began to haunt me. It was this: I had forgotten something. There was a decision that I was about to make before Dean showed up, and now it was driven clear out of my mind but still hung on the tip of my mind's tongue." (P. 124)

Or the feeling of mystery:

"This was a manuscript of the night that we couldn't read." (P. 158) and those that do not share their trip on the road "they stand uncertainly underneath immense skies, and everything about them is drowned." (P. 167)

I perhaps just ignored it in my previous readings, but this time I was struck by the heroin references. Old Bill was off in the bathroom tying up and yet taking care of his kids (alarming!)

Perhaps the predominant mood and attitude of the book and Kerouac's view of the period is summarized on Sal's 3rd trip to San Francisco:

"I realized that I had died and been reborn numberless times but just didn't remember especially because the transitions from life to death and back to life are so ghostly easy, a magical action for naught, like falling asleep and waking up again a million times, the utter casualness and deep ignorance of it. I realized it was only because of the stability of the intrinsic Mind that these ripples of birth and death took place, like the action of wind on a sheet of pure, serene, mirror-like water. I felt a sweet, swinging bliss like a big shot of heroin in the mainline vein; like a gulp of wine late in the afternoon and it makes you shudder; my feet tingled." (P. 173)

Kerouac captured the spirit of the Beats who would later become the hippies of the 60's (but without the Vietnam War) in both its glory and its squalor. The book is both beautiful and uplifting and desperate and depressing. Regardless of how one reacts to it, it is truly one of the great works of the expression of the American spirit in the post-WWII period.

Ahmad Sharabiani says

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Based on the travels of Kerouac and his friends across the United States.

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Matthew says

This was a 4 star book based on what it represents, the history of the genre, and my enjoyment of travel.

From the get go, this is a stream of consciousness romp through North America. It seems like almost every city in the United States is mentioned at least once as Sal Paradise tells of his travels, the people he meets, those who join him, and his wild vagabond companion Dean Moriarity. I don't feel like the style of this book will appeal to everyone and I can easily see many losing interest part way in. But, if you are a fan of travelling in America, a scholar of literary genres, a hipster, and/or grew up in the 50s travelling the great American highways before interstates, you will find something in here for you.

There is also a lot of jazz influence in the writing. Several times the writing comes to a stop for an onomatopoedic side trip to a jazz club. This was especially interesting as I was listening to the audio.

Dean Moriarity - if nothing else, this book is worth it for Dean. The fact that Dean was based on a real person (Kerouac's friend Neal Cassady) makes his hijinks and destructive personality even more interesting. I am sure that he is a character that is idolized by some who read this, which is a bit scary! (Reminds me of those who idolize Alexander Supertramp from Into the Wild)

An interesting thing that happened while listening to this is twice I thought "this is reminding me of Hemingway" and less than a minute later, Hemingway is mentioned. It really reminded me of The Sun Also Rises and Wikipedia mentions that Kerouac did intentionally use the style of that book for On The Road.

Finally, as mentioned above, Kerouac based this on his life. While listed as fiction, up until the final draft, the main characters had real names. The draft the Kerouac used was on long scroll without formatting or paragraph breaks. I mentioned the jazz influence and Kerouac apparently used the scroll in this way to mimic improvisational jazz. Sometimes the scroll can be seen on display - see photo below:

All in all a very interesting book with very interesting characters and a very interesting history.

Jahn Sood says

I've been thinking about this book a lot lately, so I figured that I'd go back and write something about it.

When I first read this book, I loved it as a piece of art, but its effect on me was different than I expected. So many people hail Kerouac as the artist who made them quit their jobs and go to the road, become a hippie or a beat and give up the rest. When I read it though, I had been completely obsessed with hippie culture for a long time, and it caused me to steer away from it for a while. While I thought that it would be a rollicking tale of freedom and glory, I found that all of Dean's conquests were tainted by the fact that he had to take advantage of other people every step of the way. He was a hugely entertaining character, but would have been a terrible friend, lover, or even acquaintance. From the women he married to gas station attendants,

right down to Sal Paradise himself, Dean drained everything that he was right out of other people, and it eventually ruined him. It left him beat...not heart beating exhilarated, but beat up, dead beat and alone. Once I stepped back a little from the awe at Dean's greatness, this book was really sad, and it caused me to put away that romanticism for a while.

Now, 2 years later, though, *On the Road* is coming back to me full on. I didn't escape the total wonder at the Beats and the road. I have been on the road myself for the last 2 months and have a long way to go before I get back home, and I am constantly aware that the way was paved by Kerouac and the rest of the crazy geniuses of his generation. The road is every bit as romantic as Sal Paradise made it out to be, and its glory far out weighs the short comings of Dean as a friend. I mean, the road is a lot like Dean, it takes a lot out of you, but you get addicted to it and obsessed with it and can't let it go, and I don't think there's any other way about it. I am in love with America for the first time. Now that I've seen it, driven across and up and down, around and over America, I find it sublime and incredible. I think that Kerouac and his friends might've been the first to see that. Maybe not. Maybe they are just part of all of American history...they translated the world of Western expansion and canvas covered wagons into the way of the modern world. America is something to dream about. It is worthy every exuberant and formerly offensive "I'm proud" sticker that's plastered on the back of a pick up truck. And Kerouac saw that first hand. So, it seems, that there is a certain tragedy in this book, but that it is less important than the unavoidable glory that you come to associate with the road and freedom after following these guys on their crazy adventure. I think this book should be read by everyone who wants to know about America.

Adam says

Although the ideas hold a certain appeal, this book is ultimately just a half-assed justification of some pretty stupid, self-destructive, irresponsible, and juvenile tendencies and attitudes, the end result of which is a validation of being a deadbeat loser, a perpetual child. This validation is dressed up as a celebration of freedom etc.

As literary art, stylistically, the book is pretty bad. The analogies to bebop or even free jazz are misguided. That improvisation was by talented musicians, or at least musicians who understood music, had a remarkable ear. Kerouac is just rambling and he thinks that qualifies as the literary equivalent of jazz improv. It doesn't. It's just tiresome. DeLillo's prose is an example of prose that more accurately can be described as analogous to bebop.

I'm not going to hold it against anyone that they like this book. I know that it influenced some important and serious artists, who were many times Kerouac's superiors. I understand its appeal, and even its historical importance. But reading it today, and not being 16 anymore, it really is a bit of a joke.

Its importance in itself, too, has faded. The Beats live on as myth that surpasses, for the most part, their actual output in both resonance and quality. Moreover, their myth has been adapted, especially in popular music, so well that it has rendered a lot of their actual work trivial, especially the lesser Beats (in terms of talent), eg. Kerouac. Nobody needs to read *On the Road* anymore, and all it's going to do is perpetuate some pretty idiotic notions we already have enough of, and lead to a lot of ripoffs of ripoffs of Whitman thinking their poetry is important and crowding bars I don't want to have to see them at.

Just look at contemporary literature, the voices we have, the stuff that's selling well on the literary market. A lot of that stuff is just workshop fiction that isn't going to last long in particular well-regard, but a lot of it is

brilliant stuff, and far more literate, intelligent, and interesting than what this guy had to offer.

This book's time is up. Aside from youth clinging to a false nostalgia for a nonexistent time and place and crowd, its appeal is pretty much done too.

Katerina says

“Nothing behind me, everything ahead of me, as is ever so on the road.”

I am not really into classics.

I always preferred the fantasy genre, due to an innate escapism, a vivid imagination and a constant longing for magic. But as you may tell, I didn't cast spells while reading On the Road. I didn't climb the dark wizard's tower, nor heard prophecies whispered in the dark. I set my sword aside for a while, and hushed my heart's desire to experience passionate romances. After a dear friend's raving about Jack Kerouac, I succumbed to peer pressure. And I am rather glad that I did.

“I was surprised, as always, by how easy the act of leaving was, and how good it felt. The world was suddenly rich with possibility.”

If you must know one thing about On the Road, is that it doesn't stand out because of its mind-blowing plot. In fact, **it is not a plot-driven novel at all**. You follow Jack Kerouac's travels throughout America and Mexico, and that's it. What captivates you is his **writing style**, a writing style the likes of which I had never encountered. You'll notice a plethora of **contradictions**: it can be **lyrical** and so beautiful it makes you hold your breath, and want to absorb every detail, every smell and sound and feeling, and then you'll come across so many traces of oral speech, that you're certain you're listening to a conversation full of curse words and half-finished sentences right next to you; you can sense Kerouac's admiration towards his country and at the same time his bitterness and disappointment; you can feel his loneliness to your marrow, and then the camaraderie that keeps him going. You will find your lips curling into a smile, but then a heaviness will settle on your chest, a near sadness because you see those people searching for *something*, anything, and when they find it, it slips from their fingers. You contemplate your own morality and mortality, question the meaning of ideals when life is too short and full of misery. When the road lies ahead full of possibilities, and you're lost and bound and torn.

“Because he had no place he could stay in without getting tired of it and because there was nowhere to go but everywhere, keep rolling under the stars...”

When you read On the Road, at first you're a little judgmental towards the characters. But as the story progresses, you are envious of their **carelessness**, their **crazy and wild abandon**, their desire to live even when they don't know what they live for. You don't read it for the plot, but you read it for its moments, its **vigorous, bright and mesmerising moments**, mornings eating apple-pie with ice-cream, dirty streets in an alcohol frenzy, a young man on the top of a mountain with the world at his feet, a mexican brothel shaking by the sounds of mambo, cold nights drinking scotch under a crystal clear sky. In the end, it all comes to one thing: **we are the sum of the people we meet**. Some of them are destined to change us, draw us to them like moths to the flame. Other pass by like fleeting stars, or constitute a constant and reassuring presence. But all

of them, without exception, **are pieces of the puzzle of our existence.**

"The only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars and in the middle you see the blue centerlight pop and everybody goes "Awww!"

And this is On the Road.

karen says

in september, this book will turn sixty years old! while i do not care for it personally, and the celebration of a couple of self-satisfied pseudo-intellectual doofuses and their buffet-style spirituality traveling across the country, leaving a number of pregnancies in their wake and exploiting underage mexican prostitutes makes me wonder why this book endures, endure it does. so i have made a road trip booklist with less ickiness and more cannibalism. enjoy!

<https://www.rifflebooks.com/list/237494>

Adam says

I'm supposed to like *On the Road*, right? Well, I don't. I hate it and I always have. There are a lot of reasons why I hate it. I find Kerouac's attitude toward the world pathetically limited and paternalistic. In *On the Road* he actually muses about how much he wishes that he could have been born "a Negro in the antebellum South," living a simple life free from worry, and does so seemingly without any sense of irony. On every page, the book is about how Kerouac (a young, white, middle-class, solipsistic alcoholic) feels, and nothing more. But that's only one reason I hate this book. The main reason I hate it is because, for me, reading Kerouac's prose is almost physically painful. I love the ramblings of self-centered drunks when they're self-deprecating, ironic, and/or funny, but Kerouac was none of these things. He was a pretentious, self-important bore who produced some of the most painfully bad and inconsequential prose of the 20th century. Or any century.

Jacob says

I read *On The Road* when I was 16. When I was 16, I was so depressed. I went to a high school that had a moat around it and a seige mentality. *On The Road* made me not depressed. In fact ... it made me want to hitchhike, hop freight trains, and more importantly to write. If I were still 16 I would give *On The Road* 5 stars. I would say, go! Go! Read this book and be mad for life, delirious, exploding outward into the big uncovered road! Consume vanilla ice cream and apple pie. Drink black coffee. Fuck a million times on a small bed and smoke cigarettes all night for a thousand years! Go!

When I was 21 I re-read *On The Road*. At this point in my life, I smoked so much pot that I can't really

remember the exact effect it had on me, other than the fact that I was very impressed with the glowing red eyes of Chicago and the book in general left a sort of a rumbling phantasmagoric wake in my fuzzy brain. If I were still 21, I would forget to give *On The Road* a rating. I would say, hey, borrow this book, you'll like it. And then you would borrow it but you would never bring it back or you would read it but trash the copy on accident on a fishing boat, luckily, in this instance, you not only would have read the book but you also would have enjoyed it very much. You would tell me that later.

When I was 26 I re-read *On The Road* again. It was not the same book. I found it naive, verbose in a really bloated and unconvincing way, sappy, and really not that good. I would give it two stars. I would not actually finish reading the book.
