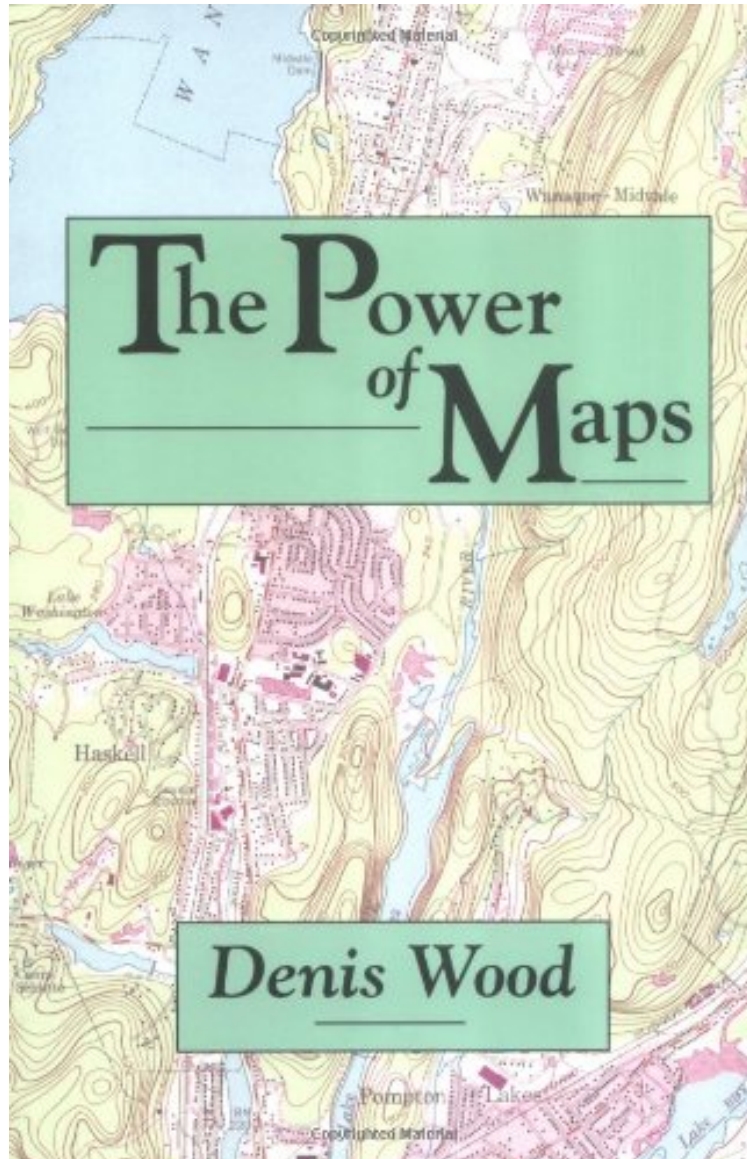


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The Power of Maps

Denis Wood

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Denis Wood : The Power of Maps before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Power of Maps:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Power of Maps is powerful By Ralph L. Wahlstrom I read Wood's The Power of Maps a few years ago, and I've just come back to it. It is not light reading (although it's well written and

a pleasure to read), and it isn't just about cartography. It is about the ways in which we use symbols to reflect our world's biases, power structures, hopes, fears and more. Maps are forms of cultural language, and Wood does not shrink from pulling the curtain away from the fact that they are also often arbitrary, manipulative, and simply wrong. At the same time, he celebrates them, and he encourages readers to come to maps with their critical antennae raised. So, maps can tell us much more about our world than most people realize. This is real scholarship, and it is intellectually rigorous, but it is also accessible, relevant and rich in content. It's a wonderful book. 24 of 25 people found the following review helpful. A great multidisciplinary rant about maps and their uses. By A Customer Ranging from strident politics to Eco-like semiotics, this book considers the map in all its forms, intents and uses. The text is a little too preachy for much of the book, but the quality of some of the ideas and the enthusiasm with which Wood presents them makes this bearable. Wood's basic point is that maps are human constructs that come with points of view. As such, questions about the qualities of a map can't be answered without also asking what the map was constructed for. With examples ranging from the Peters Projection controversies, to election gerrymandering, to natural resource utilization, he shows how all maps are designed to both include and to exclude, and how they embody a representation of the world in the best tradition of Eco's "signs". A great book, slightly marred by the writing style. 13 of 19 people found the following review helpful. Somebody get this man an editor! Quick! By F. Gibbons I bought Wood's more recent book on maps (*Seeing Through Maps: Many Ways to See the World*) through , and was somewhat disappointed (see my review there). So, this time around, I decided to get this book from my public library (yay for public libraries!). Boy am I glad I did! (Because I would have kicked myself if I had paid money for this one.) It appears that this book was later condensed to provide much of the material for "*Seeing Through Maps...*". I can agree with most of what other reviewers have said about this book: The Ferris-Bueller moments (what an apt description!) caused by excessive use of ellipsis, the use of drawings by a three-year-old (literally) on many pages, the post-modernist over-intellectualized ramblings that tend to detract from what are perfectly valid and interesting points: the people in power really *do* draw the maps, and maps *do* give some people power (and take it away from others) by manipulating our conception of the world. It's too bad that someone didn't reign the author in, in both of those books. He's really his own worst enemy. The writing is rambling and repetitive: you find yourself muttering "OK! OK! I *get* it! Can we move ON please!". With apologies to Blaise Pascal, it seems if the author had had more time, he could have written a shorter book. I think it's really a shame that both books lack even a single colour plate, since maps possess beauty in addition to power, but perhaps it was appropriate to de-emphasize the beauty and focus on the power for the purposes of this book. Prospective readers should know that the "power" referred to in the title is of an ethereal, intellectual kind, that is perceived in the mind, not in the eyes.

This volume ventures into terrain where even the most sophisticated map fails to lead--through the mapmaker's bias. Denis Wood shows how maps are not impartial reference objects, but rather instruments of communication, persuasion, and power. Like paintings, they express a point of view. By connecting us to a reality that could not exist in the absence of maps--a world of property lines and voting rights, taxation districts and enterprise zones--they embody and project the interests of their creators. Sampling the scope of maps available today, illustrations include Peter Gould's AIDS map, Tom Van Sant's map of the earth, U.S. Geological Survey maps, and a child's drawing of the world. *THE POWER OF MAPS* was published in conjunction with an exhibition at the Cooper Hewitt Museum, the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Design.