

On the Road: the Original Scroll

By Jack Kerouac

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The legendary 1951 scroll draft of *On the Road*, published as Kerouac originally composed it

IN THREE WEEKS in April of 1951, Jack Kerouac wrote his first full draft of *On the Road*—typed as a single-spaced paragraph on eight long sheets of tracing paper, which he later taped together to form a 120-foot scroll. A major literary event when it was published in Viking hardcover in 2007, this is the uncut version of an American classic—rougher, wilder, and more provocative than the official work that appeared, heavily edited, in 1957. This version, capturing a moment in creative history, represents the first full expression of Kerouac’s revolutionary aesthetic.

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On the Road: the Original Scroll By Jack Kerouac Bibliography

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Editorial Review

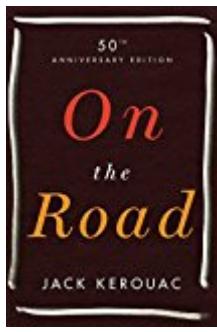
Amazon.com Review

The legendary 1951 scroll draft of *On the Road*, published word for word as Kerouac originally composed it

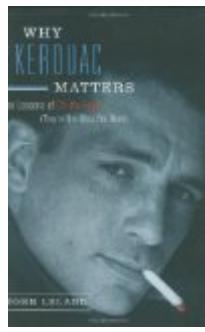
Though Jack Kerouac began thinking about the novel that was to become *On the Road* as early as 1947, it was not until three weeks in April 1951, in an apartment on West Twentieth Street in Manhattan, that he wrote the first full draft that was satisfactory to him. Typed out as one long, single-spaced paragraph on eight long sheets of tracing paper that he later taped together to form a 120-foot scroll, this document is among the most significant, celebrated, and provocative artifacts in contemporary American literary history. It represents the first full expression of Kerouac's revolutionary aesthetic, the identifiable point at which his thematic vision and narrative voice came together in a sustained burst of creative energy. It was also part of a wider vital experimentation in the American literary, musical, and visual arts in the post-World War II period.

It was not until more than six years later, and several new drafts, that Viking published, in 1957, the novel known to us today. On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of *On the Road*, Viking will publish the 1951 scroll in a standard book format. The differences between the two versions are principally ones of significant detail and altered emphasis. The scroll is slightly longer and has a heightened linguistic virtuosity and a more sexually frenetic tone. It also uses the real names of Kerouac's friends instead of the fictional names he later invented for them. The transcription of the scroll was done by Howard Cunnell who, along with Joshua Kupetz, George Mouratidis, and Penny Vlagopoulos, provides a critical introduction that explains the fascinating compositional and publication history of *On the Road* and anchors the text in its historical, political, and social context.

Celebrating 50 Years of *On the Road*



A 50th anniversary hardcover edition of Kerouac's classic novel that defined a generation. *On the Road* is the quintessential American vision of freedom and hope, a book that changed American literature and changed anyone who has ever picked it up.



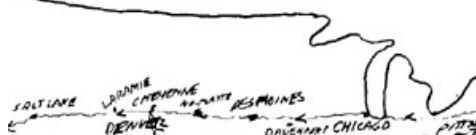
Why Kerouac Matters: The Lessons of On the Road (They're Not What You Think): John Leland, author of *Hip: A History* argues that *On the Road* still matters not for its youthful rebellion but because it is full of lessons about how to grow up.



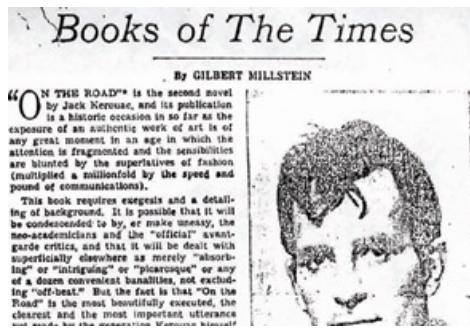
From the back cover of *On the Road: The Original Scroll*:
Jack Kerouac displaying one of his later scroll manuscripts,
most likely *The Dharma Bums*

WINTER 1947-'48

Hitch-hiking trip July - Oct. 1947



Kerouac's map of his first hitchhiking trip, July-October 1947 (click image to see the full map)



Original New York Times review of *On the Road*
(click image to see the full review)

From Publishers Weekly

In introducing the fabled first draft of Kerouac's autobiographical novel-written on a single giant roll of paper, without breaks in the text, in an amphetamine-fueled marathon-editor Howard Cunnell refers to Allen Ginsberg's claim that "the published novel is not at all like the wild book Kerouac typed in '51." Characters are identified by their real names (rather than the 1957 version's apt pseudonyms) and their love affairs are more explicit, giving the book a juicy memoir-like feel, especially where Cassady and Ginsberg are concerned. The plot, however, is identical. Neal Cassady joins Kerouac and Ginsberg's bohemian circle in New York in the late 1940's, and inspires and cons them into traveling around the country, "searching for a lost inheritance, for fathers, for family, for home, even for America." The death of Kerouac's father plays a larger role in the story than in the 1957 version; and Justin W. Brierly, a teacher who served as mentor to Cassady and has a cameo in the published book, makes a series of recurring appearances in the scroll. The lack of paragraphs or chapters emphasizes the breathless intensity of Kerouac's prose. The anniversary publicity will introduce this classic to a new generation of readers, and while the scroll probably won't displace the novel's more familiar, polished incarnation, it will be of keen interest to beat aficionados and scholars.

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From Booklist

The mythology surrounding *On the Road* begins with a tantalizing creation story: in a 20-day marathon in April 1951, Kerouac speed-typed the single-spaced manuscript on long sheets of tracing paper he taped together to form a 120-foot scroll. Truly a remarkable feat, although Kerouac, who was not exactly the wild

man his image as king of the Beats suggests, had already spent years working on what ultimately became On the Road. The legendary scroll, purchased by Jim Irsay, owner of the Indianapolis Colts, for \$2.43 million, is currently being exhibited across the country. To celebrate the novel's fiftieth anniversary, the scroll has finally been fully transcribed and thoroughly explicated in four superb introductory essays. Given that the manuscript diverges from the book in the very first sentence, and that Kerouac used the real names of the friends who inspired his characters and wrote unused sexually explicit passages, this is an intriguing read to say the least. Seaman, Donna

Users Review

From reader reviews:

James Batts:

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Willie Adams:

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