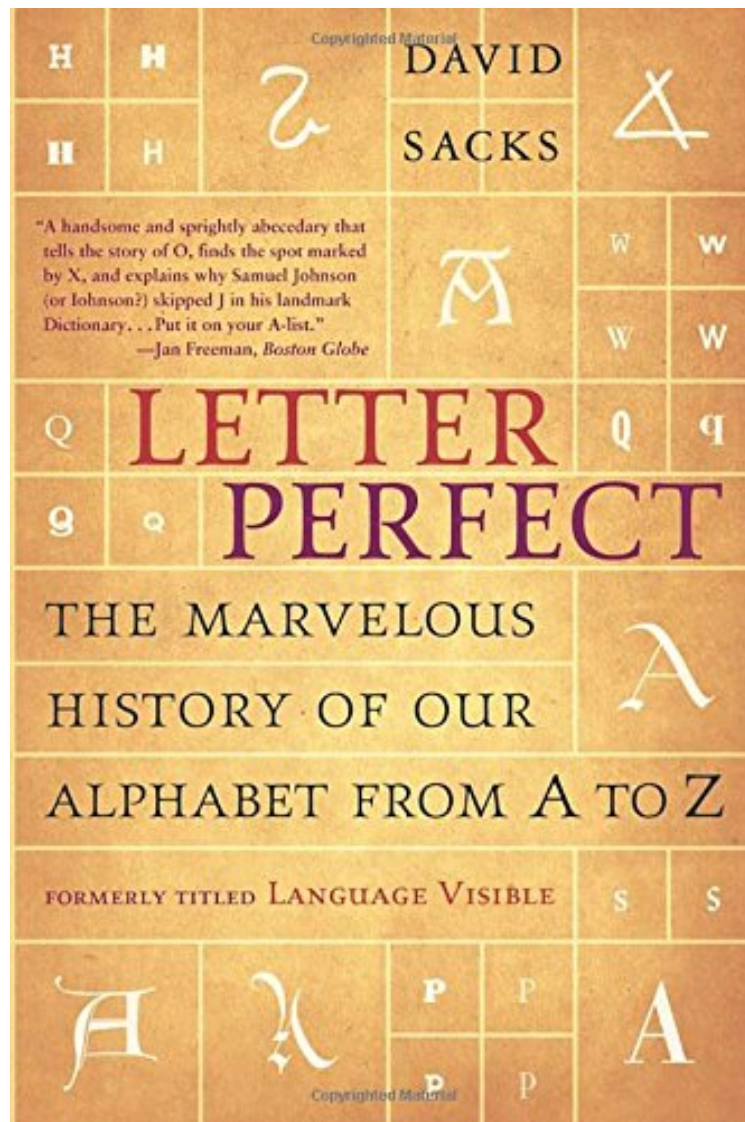


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Letter Perfect: The Marvelous History of Our Alphabet From A to Z

David Sacks

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David Sacks : Letter Perfect: The Marvelous History of Our Alphabet From A to Z before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Letter Perfect: The Marvelous History of Our Alphabet From A to Z:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Badly garbled Kindle versionBy Cap'n BobIn addition to the book's substantive deficiencies, as delineated by other reviewers, the Kindle version is badly garbled -- I've read many Kindle

books, and this is by far the worst conversion I've seen. Whole sections have been interlaced with others. Even without these egregious defects, the presentation would be hampered by the text recognition algorithm's evident inability to detect differences between different typefaces and graphic representations of proto-letters. The reader is left guessing what the book might have shown in the way of a progression from primitive letters to the ones we're familiar with. The hardcover version may have its problems, but at least it won't be hashed up the way the Kindle version is.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Repetitious and thinly researched
By Michael D
This book is based on a series of newspaper columns, and after you read a few letters, you see that it's largely saying the same thing. Author is a general purpose author, not a scholar of alphabets. Note, this is identical to 'Language Visible'.
4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Spent far too long on my To-be-read pile
By Kaeli Vandertulip
This book examines the history of the alphabet that we all know and love...and by the third chapter I could finally read it without getting the ABC song stuck in my head. Sacks examines the evolution of each letter, its relationship to the other letters, its placement in the alphabet, and pop culture images of the letters. Furthermore, pronunciation shifts and language influences to pronunciation are excellently explained. Sacks presents plenty of examples of how to pronounce certain letter sounds-so much that I think my husband is now afraid I'll be reading aloud. He also gives an entertaining introduction to linguistics-again, causing me to contort my mouth every few lines to examine the difference between voiced and unvoiced sounds, letter pairs, fricatives, sibilants, and all those other wonderful ways we make our language and accents. This is beyond a beginner's book on language (but not much beyond); having a basic understanding of world history, word origins, and foreign languages is the best way to truly enjoy this book. It is not a difficult or boring read, however. I was entertained the entire time I was reading. The only reason it took me more than a week to finish it is that I kept reading parts of it aloud to my husband because of how much I kept learning.

David Sacks has embarked on a fun, lively, and learned excursion into the alphabet and into cultural history in *Letter Perfect*. Clearly explaining the letters as symbols of precise sounds of speech, the book begins with the earliest known alphabetic inscriptions (circa 1800 b.c.), recently discovered by archaeologists in Egypt, and traces the history of our alphabet through the ancient Phoenicians, Greeks, and Romans and up through medieval Europe to the present day. But the heart of the book is the twenty-six fact-filled biographies of letters A through Z, each one identifying the letters particular significance for modern readers, tracing its development from ancient forms, and discussing its noteworthy role in literature and other media. We learn, for example, why letter X may have a sinister and sexual aura, how B came to signify second best, why the word mother in many languages starts with M. Combining facts both odd and essential, *Letter Perfect* is cultural history at its most accessible and enjoyable.

At a time when it has become more important than ever to read clearly and intelligently in order to dismantle the daily traps of propaganda, this delightful book lays bare for us, with wit and wisdom, the very building-blocks of our culture: the mysterious letters of the alphabet that rule our language and thought.

Alberto Manguel, author of *A History of Reading*
Reading David Sacks's wonderful *Letter Perfect* is like sitting rapt before the coolest teacher in school. Sacks's excursion through the alphabet is witty and smart. I was reluctant to finally leave the classroom.

Mark Dunn, author of *Ella Minnow Pea*
[*Letter Perfect*] is distinguished by its remarkably long and broad view of the topic and its omnivorous sense of fun. [A] clear and appealing discussion. [A] dazzlingly diverse array of facts. From discussions of the letter A's role in meat grading, bond rating, student ranking, and punishment for adultery to Z's exotic associations with Zorro, Sacks makes the history of the alphabet a joy to read. Recommended for most libraries.

Library Journal (US)
An always clever -- but rarely too clever -- educational and entertaining history of the alphabet. A refreshing combination of erudition and breeziness.

Kirkus
Sacks unfolds the romance and magic of the English alphabet. Although Sacks writes for non-specialists, he distills an impressive range of scholarship into his examination of the alphabets complex cultural history. This is a delightfully entertaining and engrossing tale of how the score of roman letters that arrived in England in the seventh century eventually gave us everything from the poetry of William Shakespeare to the official grades used by meat inspectors to evaluate chicken.

Booklist
As fun to read as it is enlightening...Sacks's obsession with language is contagious, and I can imagine few readers whose lives would not be enriched by what he calls his voyage of discovery.

Julie Walton Shaver, *The New York Times Book Review*
Sacks is at his best when he opens a world, and the worlds within worlds that shape-shift as written language moves...*Letter Perfect* is a valuable addition (edition?) for anyone who wants to know how Anglophones got from there to here.

The Globe and Mail
[*Letter Perfect*] is distinguished by its remarkably long and broad view of the topic and its omnivorous sense of fun. [A] clear and appealing discussion. [A] dazzlingly diverse array of facts. From discussions of the letter A's role in meat grading, bond rating, student ranking, and punishment for adultery to Z's exotic associations with Zorro, Sacks makes the history of the alphabet a joy to read. Recommended for most libraries.

Library Journal (US)
Beautifully illustrated [A] gem of popular linguistic history [Letter Perfect] avoids taking itself too seriously.

Publishers Weekly
[A] cultural history of A to Z. *Letter Perfect* unravels the mystery of the alphabets ancient origins, and explores its effects on the modern world.

Citizens Weekly
Sacks writes in a jokey, conversational style anthropomorphiz[ing] the letters to make their biographies even more exciting.

Winnipeg Free Press
A delightful exploration of the roots, stalks and

branches of the letter forms that proved to be so remarkably adaptable to so many diverse, unrelated languages. The Edmonton Journal Sacks does an excellent job tracing each letter's history. Well-researched and very readable. Quill and Quire [A] delightful journey into the history of our alphabet. With a breezy tone and a passion for letters, Sacks tells the life story of all 26 of them from A, the first and best, to Z, the least-used letter in printed English. Each of these 26 biographies is filled with entertaining and fascinating facts. In this rich history, Sacks offers answers to all of the mysteries of the alphabet, and a long-overdue examination of the origins of our ABCs. The Baltimore Sun Journalist Sacks unfolds the romance and magic of the English alphabet. Although Sacks writes for nonspecialists, he distills an impressive range of scholarship into his examination of the alphabet's complex cultural history. Delightfully entertaining and engrossing. Booklist An always clever but rarely too clever educational and entertaining history of the alphabet. A refreshing combination of erudition and breeziness. Kirkus Sacks often witty, always scientific and eminently historical approach draws us into mysteries of time and humanity. Contra Costa Times (California) [A] gem of popular linguistic history. Publishers Weekly Letter Perfect is a fun bit of popular scholarship, a diverting reference book filled with illustrations and sidebars that both entertain and inform. It is also a success story the story of a spectacularly successful invention (the alphabet), culminating in the global triumph of a spectacularly successful language (English). Kitchener-Waterloo Record (Dec. 13, 2003) From the Inside Flap David Sacks has embarked on a fun, lively, and learned excursion into the alphabet-and into cultural history-in "Letter Perfect. Clearly explaining the letters as symbols of precise sounds of speech, the book begins with the earliest known alphabetic inscriptions (circa 1800 b.c.), recently discovered by archaeologists in Egypt, and traces the history of our alphabet through the ancient Phoenicians, Greeks, and Romans and up through medieval Europe to the present day. But the heart of the book is the twenty-six fact-filled "biographies" of letters A through Z, each one identifying the letter's particular significance for modern readers, tracing its development from ancient forms, and discussing its noteworthy role in literature and other media. We learn, for example, why letter X may have a sinister and sexual aura, how B came to signify second best, why the word "mother" in many languages starts with M. Combining facts both odd and essential, "Letter Perfect is cultural history at its most accessible and enjoyable. About the Author DAVID SACKS is author of the Encyclopedia of the Ancient Greek World. His articles mainly on cultural topics have appeared in the New York Times Book Review, the Wall Street Journal, the Ottawa Citizen, and dozens of magazines. He lives in Ottawa, Ontario.