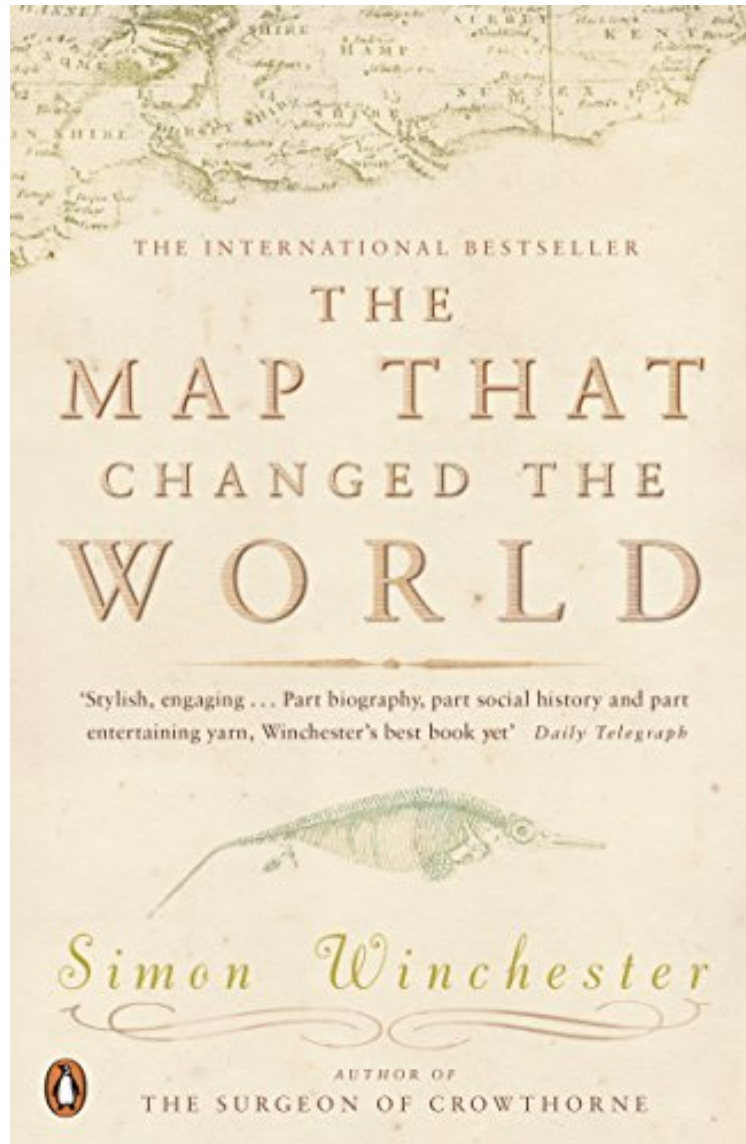


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The Map That Changed the World: A Tale of Rocks, Ruin and Redemption

Von Simon Winchester
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Von Simon Winchester : **The Map That Changed the World: A Tale of Rocks, Ruin and Redemption** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Map That Changed the World: A Tale of Rocks, Ruin and Redemption:

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen4 von 4 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich.

Exquisite Intellectual, Scientific and Social History! Von Donald Mitchell This book deserves more than five stars! I enjoy intellectual, scientific, and social history, and was delighted to see all three forms combined in one outstanding book. The result provides many interesting and helpful perspectives on the development of three-dimensional geological maps and their later use in the sciences of geology and biology, and in looking for mineral reserves. The details of this book are lovingly developed. Let's begin with the illustrations. The jacket dust cover can be unfolded to display a large, colored replica of William Smith's first geological map of Great Britain. Each stratum is colored in so it is darkest near the bottom and lightest near the top. You also get two smaller versions on color plates within the book. In identifying similar strata, he relied on differences in ammonite fossils, and 18 line drawings open 18 chapters so you can see how these compare to one another. You also get line drawings of oolitic limestone in which fossils are often found, and the types of fossils used as weighing stones and marbles on the farm where Mr. Smith grew up. To make the connection to Mr. Smith's thought process, the author has visited many of the sites where Mr. Smith made his initial observations that led him to develop the concept of the modern geological map. One particularly interesting one is a chapter about the author's own youth and finding a perfect fossil sample. Mr. Smith was not part of the gentry, which regularly provided the scientific advances of those days. Mostly self-taught, he was first a surveyor and later learned enough engineering to work on canals and projects like draining swamps. The gentry alternately encouraged and spurned him, which made the task more difficult. Mr. Smith's thought process basically involved noting that the order of strata in collieries were often the same. Mr. Smith began to theorize that the strata were connected over vast sections of land. Later work with canals proved him right, where he could expose considerable lengths of land to see the connections. Close observation led him to realize the potential use of fossils for strata identification at a time when *The Origin of Species* had not been written and Darwin was still a Creationist. From there, he worked mostly alone over decades to fill in the geological map with his own observations. It was an enormous task that no one would today consider doing alone! The problems of getting the first maps published are well described, as well. The book also puts the challenge that this work made to Creationism into a helpful perspective. The illustrations include a Bible page showing the date of the Creation as 4004 B.C. The subtle social interactions are also interesting, as Mr. Smith was considered someone to meet with for some purposes and not for others. He was snubbed during the founding of the Geological Society and the same people later plagiarized his work! Mr. Smith overspent his financial resources in pursuing the project, and fell into a ruinous debt and a disastrous marriage. The combination led him into debtor's prison just before the first map was published. He came out of prison to find his home boarded up and his possessions gone. He proceeded to live in obscurity for the next 12 years until scholarly praises for his work once again drew attention to him. In his last few years, he received honors (such as the first Wollaston Medal and a pension from the king). I also enjoyed reading about the books that Mr. Smith read to learn about how to create maps and overlay survey results. The process in use in those days often meant that he had to carry 40 maps with him while he traveled around the countryside to check outcroppings. Anyone who has studied geology will want to read this book. People who are fascinated by what one dedicated person can do will find the story inspirational. Those who enjoy understanding how important ideas developed will enjoy how observation led to new conclusions by Mr. Smith. Those who are interested in how evolution became accepted will enjoy how the explanation for fossils changed from God's way of showing his omnipotence to their being seen as the crystalized remnants of ancient sea creatures. After you finish enjoying this magnificent volume, I encourage you to look around and consider where the current explanations don't match what actually seems to be going on. For example, many people have forecast problems of various sorts that have never occurred, while many actual problems have arrived unannounced. Why are these misperceptions occurring? Help make the view of our world clearer for all!

3 von 3 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. *Divided Earths Layers and Beliefs* Von taking a rest When William Smith was born and even well in to his journey of discovery, the age of the Earth was well documented. A person had only to turn to a Bible to find the exact year, day and hour that "time began". That date today would fall within the area of Creationism, a topic that is still held to be true by many who do not believe the Bible is open to interpretation, and believe that the Theory of Evolution is little more than a fiction. If your beliefs fall in to the former group this book will be of no interest to you, and lest you think Creationists are an insignificant group, the author quotes one study that shows up to 100 million people in The USA are inclined to the Bible's explanation of the Earth's beginnings as opposed to those of science. "The Map That Changed The World", is a great addition to books on a variety of scientific disciplines that bring a subject to a wide range of readers and not just those devoted to the topic. The author Simon Winchester describes this book as a hors d'oeuvre in comparison to the work of Professor Torrens who is writing what Mr. Winchester believes will be the definitive book on William Smith and his life's work. Far from using Professor's Torrens' work, the Professor was an active participant and advisor for Mr. Winchester in producing this much smaller volume for those of us that are not students of geology. William Smith paved the way for men like Darwin and Wallace who would build upon what Smith had created, and then greatly expand the concept that there have been great changes to living creatures over nearly unimaginable periods of time, and that by knowing where a fossil could and would be found could begin to create a History of our planet that was exponentially older than believed at the time. While this book is firmly on the side of evolution the author does explain the theories that accounted for fossils and their apparently random location throughout the Earth's crust. There locale

was compared to the stars, if God could randomly place stars wherever He chose why could He not also place these remnants of long dead animals where He chose as well? For those who take the Bible literally such an explanation is not a great leap. This was a time of "Phlogiston, Ether", a time when it was held by many that mountains were as organic as trees and grew upward and outward just as their branched counterparts. This book did slow down a bit when the author retraced some of William's Smith's travels. The writer is clearly enamored of William Smith and geology for his writing, at times, appears to cross the line from descriptive to a celebratory type of prose. William Smith had a wild ride of a life, and the end is comparable to what Hollywood would have conjured to make the audience feel good. It may not read as well and be accepted in a book as it would in a theater, but this is a fine piece of writing on a man that most know little or nothing about. And for bringing William Smith to us we can thank Simon Winchester. 0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Geburt der Geologie als Lebensgeschichte von W. Smith Von Jens Sehr detailliert und gut geschrieben. Da ein reicher Wortschatz verwendet wird, braucht man schon ein fters mal ein Wrterbuch oder Leo. Also eher was fr Leute die sehr gut in Englisch sind. (Daher nicht 5 Punkte -- Aber das kann man dem Autor natrlich nicht vorwerfen)

Kurzbeschreibung The extraordinary tale of the father of modern geology. Hidden behind velvet curtains above a stairway in a house in London's Piccadilly is an enormous and beautiful hand-coloured map - the first geological map of anywhere in the world. Its maker was a farmer's son named William Smith. Born in 1769 his life was beset by troubles: he was imprisoned for debt, turned out of his home, his work was plagiarised, his wife went insane and the scientific establishment shunned him. It was not until 1829, when a Yorkshire aristocrat recognised his genius, that he was returned to London in triumph: The Map That Changed the World is his story..de Once upon a time there lived a man who discovered the secrets of the earth. He traveled far and wide, learning about the world below the surface. After years of toil, he created a great map of the underworld and expected to live happily ever after. But did he? Simon Winchester (The Professor and the Madman) tells the fossil-friendly fairy tale life of William Smith in The Map That Changed the World. Born to humble parents, Smith was also a child of the Industrial Revolution (the year of his birth, 1769, also saw Josiah Wedgwood open his great factory, Etruria, Richard Arkwright create his first water-powered cotton-spinning frame, and James Watt receive the patent for the first condensing steam engine). While working as surveyor in a coal mine, Smith noticed the abrupt changes in the layers of rock as he was lowered into the depths. He came to understand that the different layers--in part as revealed by the fossils they contained--always appeared in the same order, no matter where they were found. He also realized that geology required a three-dimensional approach. Smith spent the next 20 some years traveling throughout Britain, observing the land, gathering data, and chattering away about his theories to those he met along the way, thus acquiring the nickname "Strata Smith." In 1815 he published his masterpiece: an 8.5- by 6-foot, hand-tinted map revealing "A Delineation of the Strata of England and Wales." Despite this triumph, Smith's road remained more rocky than smooth. Snubbed by the gentlemanly Geological Society, Smith complained that "the theory of geology is in the possession of one class of men, the practice in another." Indeed, some members of the society went further than mere ostracism--they stole Smith's work. These cartographic plagiarists produced their own map, remarkably similar to Smith's, in 1819. Meanwhile the chronically cash-strapped Smith had been forced to sell his prized fossil collection and was eventually consigned to debtor's prison. In the end, the villains are foiled, our hero restored, and science triumphs. Winchester clearly relishes his happy ending, and his honey-tinged prose ("that most attractively lovable lusterlike Paleozoic arthropod known as the trilobite") injects a lot of life into what seems, on the surface, a rather dry tale. Like Smith, however, Winchester delves into the strata beneath the surface and reveals a remarkable world. --Sunny Delaney.co.uk Simon Winchester has a very simple formula, of which The Map That Changed the World is a perfect example--namely that the history we have forgotten is infinitely more interesting than the history with which we are all familiar. After the success of The Surgeon of Crowthorne, which documented the life of WC Minor, the American surgeon and major contributor to the first Oxford English Dictionary, Winchester now turns his attention to William Smith, the 19th-century Briton who can justly lay claim to being the founding father of geology. The book has all the usual attributes of a pacy historical read: a self-educated, unrecognised scientist spends years roaming the British countryside, compiling a map of the geological layers beneath the surface, only to have his ideas ripped off and to wind up homeless and penniless in Yorkshire with a wife who is going bonkers. And it gets better: in a bizarre Dickensian twist, Smith finally gets his just accolades when he is recognised by a kindly liberal nobleman and is reintroduced to London society as the geologist par excellence. Of itself, the story would be more than enough recommendation but there is a subtext running though the book that is in many ways just as compelling--namely, how some parts of history get written in stone and others in dust. Most secondary-school students get to learn of Charles Darwin and The Voyage of the Beagle. Yet how many people could stick their hands up and say they had heard of Smith? But is evolution any more important a field as geology? Is history ultimately an exercise in who has the best PR? Winchester may not have the

answer, but he'll certainly make you think.--John Crace