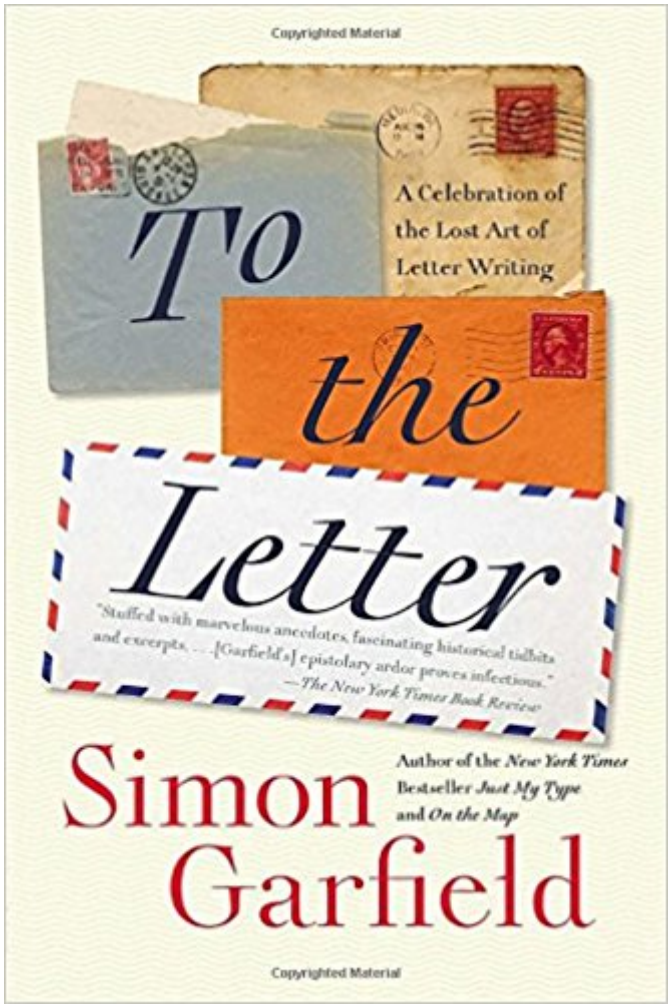
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To The Letter: A Celebration Of The Lost Art Of Letter Writing



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Synopsis

TheÃ Â New York TimesÃ Â bestselling author ofÃ Â Just My TypeÃ Â andÃ Â On the MapÃ Â offers an ode to letter writing and its possible salvation in the digital age.Ã Â Few things are as excitingÃ¢â ¬â •and potentially life-changingÃ¢â ¬â •as discovering an old letter. And while etiquette books still extol the practice, letter writing seems to be disappearing amid a flurry of e-mails, texting, and tweeting. The recent decline in letter writing marks a cultural shift so vast that in the future historians may divide time not between BC and AD but between the eras when people wrote letters and when they did not. So New York TimesÃ Â bestselling author Simon Garfield asks: Can anything be done to revive a practice that has dictated and tracked the progress of civilization for more than five hundred years?InÃ Â To the Letter, Garfield traces the fascinating history of letter writing from the love letter and the business letter to the chain letter and the letter of recommendation. He provides a tender critique of early letter-writing manuals and analyzes celebrated correspondence from Erasmus to Princess Diana. He also considers the role that letters have played as a literary device from Shakespeare to the epistolary novel, all the rage in the eighteenth century and alive and well today with bestsellers likeÃ Â The Guernsey LiteraryÃ Â andÃ Â Potato Peel Pie Society. At a time when the decline of letter writing appears to be irreversible, Garfield is the perfect candidate to inspire bibliophiles to put pen to paper and create Ã¢â ¬Å“a form of expression, emotion, and tactile delight we may clasp to our heart.Ã¢â ¬Â•

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review Garfield is a best-selling writer of irresistible enthusiasm. He has energetically and

knowledgeably celebrated stamps (The Error World, 2008), typefaces (Just My Type, 2011), and maps (On the Map, 2012). Now he champions the infinitely expressive and influential tradition of letter writing. For centuries, Garfield observes, letters have been Ã¢â ¬Å“the lubricant of human interaction and the free fall of ideas,Ã¢â ¬Â• and he presents many provocative examples, from letters written by the Romans in Britain two thousand years ago, establishing the conventions of Ã¢â ¬Å“greetings and farewells,Ã¢â ¬Â• to the correspondence of Cicero, Madame de SÃƒÂ©vignÃƒÂ©, Virginia Woolf, and Jack Kerouac. Garfield covers the evolution of various postal services, tells curious tales about how letters end up in auction houses and libraries, contrasts letters and e-mails (a Ã¢â ¬Å“hybrid between a letter and a phone callÃ¢â ¬Â•), and ponders the challenges of maintaining digital archives. Threaded throughout is a suspenseful British WWII epistolary love story: the courtship-by-mail between post-office employees Chris Barker, serving in the Royal Air Force and stationed in Libya, Italy, and Greece, and Bessie Moore, transferred to the Foreign Office on the home front. GarfieldÃ¢â ¬â„¢s robust and propulsive engagement with letters as an essential embodiment of the human spirit and a driving cultural force makes for exciting reading and thoughtful speculation about the future of scholarship and communication. --Donna Seaman

Praise for Simon Garfield’s To the Letter:"Stuffed with marvelous anecdotes, fascinating historical tidbits and excerpts...[GarfieldÃ¢â ¬â„¢s] epistolary ardor proves infectious."Ã¢â ¬â •The New York Times Book ReviewÃ Â "Garfield’s masterstroke is to intersperse his historical sections with a series of letters written by an ordinary British couple... With Chris and Bessie it is the sheer, unclouded openness that captivates... his book is a shining success."Ã¢â ¬â •Sunday Times"A wonderfully elegant history."Ã¢â ¬â •Observer"Fascinating Ã¢â ¬Â| provides a moving and illuminating insight into a world that will soon be far from our own."Ã¢â ¬â •HeraldÃ¢â ¬Å“Garfield is a best-selling writer of irresistible enthusiasmÃ¢â ¬Â|.[His] robust and propulsive engagement with letters as an essential embodiment of the human spirit and a driving cultural force makes for exciting reading and thoughtful speculation about the future of scholarship and communication.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Booklist"GarfieldÃ¢â ¬â„¢s knowledge is wide and his enthusiasm endless."Ã¢â ¬â •The Times"Wonderful... One of the things which makes this book so attractive is GarfieldÃ¢â ¬â„¢s enjoyment of his subject. He writes with a winning informality and freshness... Apart from its authorÃ¢â ¬â„¢s erudition and stylishness, the great strength of this book Ã¢â ¬â œ the aspect of it which conveys most poignantly what we are losing as letter writing becomes a thing of the past Ã¢â ¬â œ lies in GarfieldÃ¢â ¬â„¢s use of a correspondence between two unknown

people."Ã¢â ¬â •Literary Review"This endlessly informative book from one of Britain's best non-fiction writers provides a heartfelt reminder of just how much we'd lose... the book serves up any number of vivid examples from people famous and unknown"Ã¢â ¬â •ReaderÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Digest"Read this brilliant account of a lost artÃ¢â ¬Â¦ and weep... such fun... engaging"Ã¢â ¬â •Mail on SundayÃ Â Ã¢â ¬Å“He offers hope for the letter as a form of writing Ã¢â ¬â œ though it is not his theme Ã¢â ¬â œ because he makes clear that peopleÃ¢â ¬â„¢s instinct to share, discuss, and transmit their deepest, most strongly held feelings survives and adapts, even as technology changes.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Financial TimesÃ Â "An addictive account of a dying artform."Ã¢â ¬â •RedPraise for Simon Garfield's On the Map:Ã Â "Innumerable modes of seeing the world unfold in this exuberant history of maps. [...] His droll humor and infectious curiosity will keep readers engrossed as he uncovers surprising ways in which maps chart our imaginations as much as they do the ground underfoot."Ã¢â ¬â •Publishers WeeklyÃ¢â ¬Å“A vivid foray into the romance of maps. [...] A fine, fun presentation of the brand of cartography that continues to whet our imaginations.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Kirkus Reviews"Delightful... If maps be the fuel of wanderlust, read on."Ã¢â ¬â •From the foreword by Dava Sobel, author of LongitudesÃ¢â ¬Å“There couldnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t be anyone better to write about our love for maps than Simon Garfield, who is a master at unearthing strange facts and mixing them with a lively personal narrative...fascinating.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Giles Foden, CondÃƒÂ© Nast Traveller (UK)Praise for Simon Garfield's Just My Type:Ã¢â ¬Å“This is a smart, funny, accessible book that does for typography what Lynne TrussÃ¢â ¬â„¢s best-selling Eats, Shoots & Leaves did for punctuation: made it noticeable for people who had no idea they were interested in such things.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Janet Maslin, The New York Times "An engaging look at the world of fonts. [Ã¢â ¬Â¦] Just My Type urges us to put on the brakes and take in the scenery as far as typography goes. Whether you're a graphic designer or a layperson with no background in this area, reading what Garfield has to say will change the way you perceive the written word forever."Ã¢â ¬â •The Los Angeles TimesÃ Â Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“Reading Simon GarfieldÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Just My Type can transform your daily life into an endless quest for knowledge of the typefaces in which signs, books, magazines, newspapers, etc. are set.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •The Washington PostÃ¢â ¬Å“Highly entertaining Ã¢â ¬Â¦ Garfield takes readers on a rollicking tour of the world of typography, from book jackets to road signs, TV shows to computers.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •USA TodayÃ Â Ã¢â ¬Å“A deliriously clever and entertaining bookÃ¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •The Boston GlobeÃ¢â ¬Å“Informative, delightful Ã¢â ¬â • and essential reading for word geeks everywhere.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •The Seattle TimesÃ Â Ã¢â ¬Å“Lively [Ã¢â ¬Â¦] intriguing [Ã¢â ¬Â¦] a cheeky book about the human side and

our reaction to fonts.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Seattle Post IntelligencerÃ Â Ã¢â ¬Å“This is a book for typography lovers who just can’t get enough of their favorite fonts. In this well-researched book, Garfield takes a look back at the history of typefaces and how they’ve influenced consumers throughout the years. Using specific examples, Garfield shows just how powerful different fonts can be.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Philadelphia IntelligencerÃ Â Ã¢â ¬Å“For typomaniacs [Ã¢â ¬Â] who can’t rest until they’ve identified a font, Garfield’s engaging history of letter design will be eye candy.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •NPR.orgÃ Â "Irresistable."Ã¢â ¬â •The Huffington PostÃ Â Ã¢â ¬Å“GarfieldÃ¢â ¬â„¢s romping history (with multitype text) is zestfully informative.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •BooklistÃ Â Ã¢â ¬Å“Garfield dances across 560 years of typographic history, sprinkled with fascinating anecdotes and vignettes, to infect you with his own inability to walk past a sign without identifying the typeface and some curious factoid about it. Funny and fascinating, irreverent and playful yet endlessly illuminating, the book is an absolute treat for the type-nerd, design history geek, and general lover of intelligent writing with humor.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •The AtlanticÃ Â Ã¢â ¬Å“A thoroughly entertaining, well-informed tour of typefacesÃ¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •KirkusÃ Â ReviewsA Ã¢â ¬Å“lively romp through the history of fonts. GarfieldÃ¢â ¬â„¢s evocative prose entices us to see letters instead of just reading them.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Publishers WeeklyÃ Â Ã¢â ¬Å“Whether youÃ¢â ¬â„¢re a hardcore typophile or a type-tyro, thereÃ¢â ¬â„¢s something here for you: be it the eye-opening revelations of Eric GillÃ¢â ¬â„¢s utter and complete perversity, or the creation of the typeface that helped Mr. Obama gain entrance to the White House.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Chip KiddÃ Â "Just My Type is an entertaining romp through the world of type design. Mr. Garfield explains the angst and the joy of typography; this is a great book for design geeks to press into the hands of the uninitiated in hopes of conversions, like missionaries with a religious tract."Ã¢â ¬â •Audrey Niffenegger, author of The Time Traveler’s WifeÃ Â Ã¢â ¬Å“With wit, grace and intelligence, Simon Garfield tells the fascinating stories behind the letters that we encounter every day on our street corners, our bookstore shelves, and our computer screens. As someone who’s worked with typography for over three decades, I kept finding lots of surprises.Ã Â So will anyone who cares about the culture of reading and writing and this most ubiquitous of design forms.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Michael Bierut, Partner, Pentagram Design, New York"There is even a photograph of a quick brown fox literally jumping over a lazy dog. What a clever, clever book."Ã¢â ¬â •Lynne TrussÃ Â Ã¢â ¬Å“Did I love this book? My daughter’s middle name is Bodoni. Enough said.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Maira KalmanÃ Â "Mapping out the historical intricacies of the ampersand and the short-lived interrobang, the serif and the sans serif, Simon Garfield reveals an invisible world behind the printed word. From

Trajan’s Column to the ubiquitous Helvetica to the latest typefaces, like Dirtyfax, the lives of the designers and the letters they’ve created have never been more clearly detailed with so much flair."Ã¢â ¬â •Jessica Kerwin Jenkins, author of Encyclopedia of the ExquisiteÃ Â Ã Â Ã Â

Many folks today have no concept what a "letter" is in comparison to the fast, instantaneous modes of communication everyone seems to use. Folks think of "letters" as a formal document coming from a lawyer or government. If people in today’s world have seen an actual letter, it was probably in a museum or library. For those of us who were raised in the time of letter writing, this book is a wonderful tribute to the letter and the art of letter writing. In grade school we were taught cursive writing so our handwriting would be legible for us to write letters to friends and family. Today I still write letters to friends using fountain pen and nice stationery. I have files full of letters written to me by friends and family which will someday be turned over to a library. Simon Garfield is to be congratulated and praised for his "love letter" about writing letters. Anyone who loves to write and receive letters should give this book a permanent place on their bookshelf.

This is a ’big’ book. By that I mean it is a book full of wonderful information and fact as well as entertaining snippets of letters from persons we all know about as well as an on going series of love letters written during a time of war. As an avid letter write, and a reader with interest in epistolary novels I was drawn into this book early on and was captivated by it to the very end page. It wasn’t long into the book when I decided I needed to write a hand written letter, something I hadn’t done in some years since the keys are so handy and quick. The book also got me enthused about some other works by this author and I am waiting delivery of those now.

I received this product today in the regular mail,and was quite astonished at its bulky edition! I hope to read it thoroughly by each chapter, and absorb the history slowly since I’m a history buff! Thank you so much for delivering it to me!

Very interesting book--I loved it. Item came on time and in excellent condition.

Not a bad little book, just not what I was expecting. I thought there would be more letters but there is a lot of commentary.

This was a christmas present for my mom, who is totally into letter writing, and she loves it. I didn’t

actually read it myself but it made a great present!

Really enjoyed it!!!

In many ways, I feel a throwback to a previous era with my Victorian novels, my book collection of actual books made from paper, and my penchant for writing letters with pen and paper. So, when I saw this bookÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“a Celebration of the Lost Art of Letter WritingÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •I couldnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t pass it up. For the most part, it is a real pleasure.There is so much excellent history here. We get information about how societies like the ancient Romans and Greeks used to send letters. We learn how, for most of history, sending a letter was a shot in the dark, entrusted to traveling merchants, diplomats, or semi-trustworthy postal services often towards a moving target. We see the rise of a more trustworthy postal service, the penny post, and more modern postal services. We learn how volumes of books were written on appropriate forms of address and signing. One of my favorite sections, in fact, is on the lengthy forms of address used in the Middle Ages between scholars and student, which I have borrowed for some of my own correspondence.Interspersed with this, we also get plenty of quotations from some of the great letter writersÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •Cicero, Petrarch, Dickinson, Woolf, Hughes, and moreÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •and background on how letters often become another insight into the famous as they make their way into the public domain. For someone who writes letters, there are a lot of varying ideas on how to write the best letters possible.My only real complaint is the series of letters he interweaves between chapters. They are a mostly one-sided conversation between a British soldier in World War II, Chris Barker, and his future wife, Bessie. Though they show a growing passionate relationship and hint at the difficulties of writing during war, for the most part, I found them an uninteresting distraction. Certainly, Mr. Garfield sees something in them but I do not find them as compelling. I find them to personal to be of wide interest.At various points, Mr. Garfield has nods to the present and future change in correspondence thanks to e-mails, texting, and the like. I donÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t think he is any more anti-technology than I am (with my physics degree and blogs and online book reviews), but he recognizes that change means loss as well as gain. This book is a nice look back at some of the things we have lost or are in the process of losing. It is a good thing to have.

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