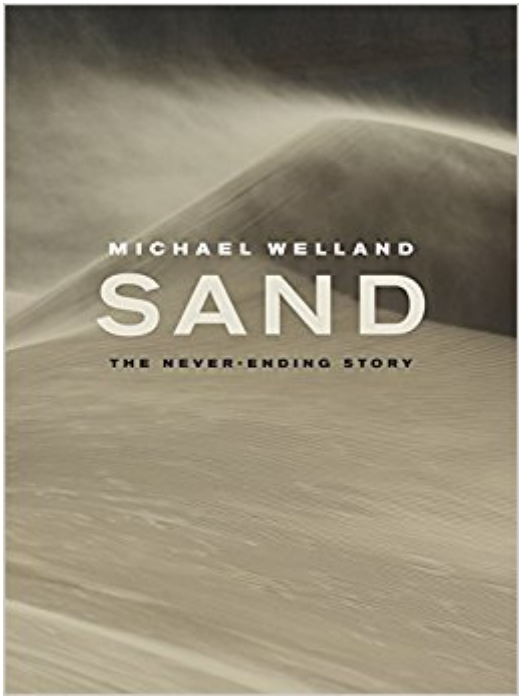
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Sand: The Never-Ending Story



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Synopsis

From individual grains to desert dunes, from the bottom of the sea to the landscapes of Mars, and from billions of years in the past to the future, this is the extraordinary story of one of nature’s humblest, most powerful, and most ubiquitous materials. Told by a geologist with a novelist’s sense of language and narrative, Sand examines the science—sand forensics, the physics of granular materials, sedimentology, paleontology and archaeology, planetary exploration—and at the same time explores the rich human context of sand. Interwoven with tales of artists, mathematicians, explorers, and even a vampire, the story of sand is an epic of environmental construction and destruction, an adventure in staggering scales of time and distance, yet a tale that encompasses the ordinary and everyday. Sand, in fact, is all around us—it has made possible our computers, buildings and windows, toothpaste, cosmetics, and paper, and it has played dramatic roles in human history, commerce, and imagination. In this luminous, kinetic, revelatory account, we do indeed find the world in a grain of sand.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Though we rarely consider the implications of the sand we encounter daily (as wind-borne grit or the beach on which we walk), geologist Welland finds much that’s relevant and fascinating in the ancient history and present role of sand. In precise and poetic prose, Welland ponders sand’s strict definition (based on particle size) and multifarious composition (from quartz grains to calcareous microfossils) Before addressing the subject from every other angle, from the

strange fluid mechanics of moving sand masses to the bizarre elegance of sand art. Unsurprisingly, sand's history encompasses much of geological, biological and human history: how mountains grow and crumble, how rivers move the earth, how minute creatures keep beaches clean, how desert winds shape dunes and the impact of sand migration on humanity. In a clever framing device, Welland follows a single particle of sand down the valley of the Susquehanna River and out into the depths of the sea, which keeps his far-flung investigation on track from elemental force to industrial-era necessity (Chapter 9, "Servant of Our Lives," is an entertaining A-to-Z list of the ways sand and humans interact). Welland's work even manages to sift some romance from the subject, firmly cementing this fun-to-read text as a worthy science title for the masses. Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Ã¢â ¬Å“Anyone who has walked on a beach, run up a sand dune, or built a sand castle will be fascinated.Ã¢â ¬Â• STARRED REVIEW (Library Journal 2008-12-01)Welland's multidisciplinary portrait is as versatile as the element itself. (Chronicle Review 2009-01-09)Ã¢â ¬Å“Relevant and fascinating . . . . Fun-to-read . . . . A worthy science title for the masses.Ã¢â ¬Â• STARRED REVIEW (Publishers Weekly 2009-01-27)Ã¢â ¬Å“There are worlds to see in a grain of sand, and a world of fascinating information in this book.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Science News 2009-02-28)Ã¢â ¬Å“There have been many Ã¢â ¬Å“single subjectÃ¢â ¬Â• books, but WellandÃ¢â ¬â„¢s is a masterpiece of readability. . . .Accessible, charming, and full of story.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Orion 2009-05-01)Ã¢â ¬Å“Few of us are lucky enough to know sand as well as Michael Welland, but with this book, we can begin to learn.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Earth Magazine 2009-06-01)Ã¢â ¬Å“An exploration of the ubiquitous granules in all their glory.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Bookforum 2009-12-15)Ã¢â ¬Å“Welland has touched seemingly all of history, Earth and space . . . a rare achievement that guarantees the pleasure of learning with every rereading.Ã¢â ¬Â• (About.com 2010-02-04)Ã¢â ¬Å“An awareness book, opening readers' eyes to the many sides of sand, (and) its importance to our quality of life.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Science (AAAS) 2009-03-06)Ã¢â ¬Å“A fascinating book. . . . Masterful, imaginative and thoughtful. . . . extraordinary.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Aeolian Research 2009-11-19)Ã¢â ¬Å“Fascinating.Ã¢â ¬Â• (The Link 2009-10-20)

Geology, physics, chemistry, hydrology, mechanics, oceanography, plus history and literary references. More new ideas/information per page than anything I've read in years! Maps and charts are good.

Wonderful book. Looking forward to his new book on deserts due in print in February 2015.

Extremely interesting book that is well written. Learned things about the nature of sand that I never knew existed.Highly recommended.

I liked this for being easier to flow with than others. It should stimulate the curious without burying them in quicksand.

As a sand collector by avocation and a materials engineer by profession, I found this book fascinating on several levels. Not only does it contain useful scientific content and definitions, but it also presents a mixture of interesting historical references to expand the reader's awareness of the role of sand in history and everyday life. The reason I didn't give the book a full five stars was that, as a collector, I wanted to see more microscope images. There were some color plates showing close-ups, but would have liked to see more examples of the tremendous variety of sand's colors and shapes. The book tends to treat sand more on a global level in terms of its properties, movements, and its role in shaping the earth. Don't get me wrong. I'm glad I bought the book and intend to refer to it often as a general and easy-reading reference. And by all means, buy one for your favorite arenophile!

Interesting read.

Sand is a substance we tend to take for granted: it's underfoot, gets in our food and bodily orifices at the beach. As a sand collector for 40 years, I've found an incredible array of shapes and composition. Much sand is eroded granite, but here in Hawaii, there's basalt and the remains of living organisms that make our beaches.The author takes the reader through a fascinating path about properties of sand, and seems very passionate about his topic. There is poetry throughout, and the book explores the characteristics, uses and dynamics of a substance that many dismiss as a nuisance.

I thought that this book was a phenomenal read because it takes the concept of sand and turns it into something worthy of your time. Sand and dirt is not something students and educators want to focus on because it is not important in our classrooms. In many cases, educators spend very little time on this topic and tend to relate it to water resources as a more important and relatable topic.

However, this book proves otherwise because sand plays such a big role in how many communities live their lives depending on sand for food, for technology, and for entertainment. This book shows how the uses of sand can impact so many lives with just one grain at a time. Geologists and arenophiles spend so much time and money to collect sand and complete research on what sand components can add to life, which is an side of science that not very many people understand.

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