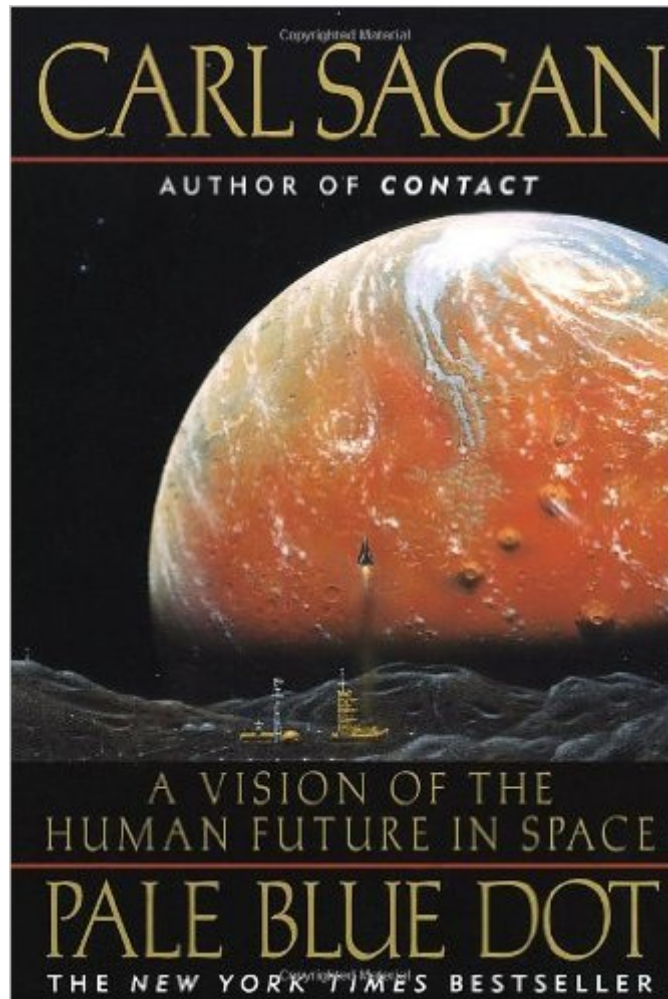


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Pale Blue Dot: A Vision Of The Human Future In Space



Synopsis

"FASCINATING . . . MEMORABLE . . . REVEALING . . . PERHAPS THE BEST OF CARL SAGAN'S BOOKS."--The Washington Post Book World (front page review) In *Cosmos*, the late astronomer Carl Sagan cast his gaze over the magnificent mystery of the Universe and made it accessible to millions of people around the world. Now in this stunning sequel, Carl Sagan completes his revolutionary journey through space and time. Future generations will look back on our epoch as the time when the human race finally broke into a radically new frontier--space. In *Pale Blue Dot* Sagan traces the spellbinding history of our launch into the cosmos and assesses the future that looms before us as we move out into our own solar system and on to distant galaxies beyond. The exploration and eventual settlement of other worlds is neither a fantasy nor luxury, insists Sagan, but rather a necessary condition for the survival of the human race. "TAKES READERS FAR BEYOND *Cosmos* . . . Sagan sees humanity's future in the stars."--Chicago Tribune

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Customer Reviews

As these pages attest, there are a number of fine writers out there providing us non-scientists with insights on nature's mysteries. None, however, quite reached the breadth of view or intensity of feeling imparted by Carl Sagan. His writings explained topics ranging from quantum particles to the extent of the cosmos. Along the way, he addressed evolution, space engineering and countless other facets of science and technology. Even fiction wasn't beyond his grasp. *Pale Blue Dot* is a journey in time and space. Beginning with the assertion that we're natural wanderers, being the only

species to settle across our world, it continues with a plea to extend further our exploration of space. The early chapters challenge restrictions on our desire to explore and learn. Sagan demonstrates how foolish minds have restrained our quest for knowledge of the cosmos. He then takes us on a tour of the solar system, exhibiting the wonders revealed by the fleet of robot probes. He reminds us of the forces the cosmos can unleash, sometimes right in our neighbourhood. Like many of the rest of us, Sagan was awed by the collision of a comet with the Jovian gas giant. It was a hint of what might lay in store for us if we fail to understand the universe better than we do now. The space probes also returned images of worlds invalidating existing theories of planetary formation. If our own neighbours can present such bizarre structures, what kinds of worlds ride beyond our ken, circling suns we can barely imagine? What Sagan can't portray, he can conjecture. With his firm working scientist's foundation, Sagan's speculations command respectful attention. This book must be shelved alongside Richard Dawkins *THE SELFISH GENE* and *THE BLIND WATCHMAKER*.

He never says it. But it's a sequel, par excellence, to the classic *Cosmos*. Sequels are usually disappointing. This is one of those rare cases where the sequel is better than the original. I had read this book in hardcover and ended up buying my own paperback copy while in Ithaca (Sagan's hometown) because I had nothing to read and a long ride back home. I'm a fan of Sagan - can't help it - because even though he's a brilliant scientist, he somehow manages to be a great writer as well. This book is no exception. Sagan's basic idea is that the destiny of humanity is to expand out to the stars. And even though this idea reeks with echoes of Manifest Destiny, I have to agree. In Manifest Destiny, there were Indians - here, no intelligent life that we know of. And if there is something out there, wouldn't we want to know about it? Like so many great works of popular science, Sagan starts out by tracing the changes in our views of the world, from our conceit that we were the center of the Universe to the backwater position that we're in today. Sagan's idea of generalized chauvinisms comes up - first in place (the obvious), then in time (if there was other intelligent life, it's not around any more), and, if I recall correctly, in chemical basis (life must be made out of carbon). He refutes all these ideas - and why not? Who said that silicon can't conquer the universe? My personal favorite part of the book is Chapter 5, "Is There Intelligent Life On Earth?" Sagan asks us to "[imagine yourself as] an alien explorer entering the Solar system after a long journey through the blackness of interstellar space". As we examine the Earth at finer and finer resolution, what do we see?

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