



Mason & Dixon: A Novel

By Thomas Pynchon

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Charles Mason (1728-1786) and Jeremiah Dixon (1733-1779) were the British surveyors best remembered for running the boundary between Pennsylvania and Maryland that we know today as the Mason-Dixon Line. Here is their story as re-imagined by Thomas Pynchon, featuring Native Americans and frontier folk, ripped bodices, naval warfare, conspiracies erotic and political, and major caffeine abuse. We follow the mismatched pair--one rollicking, the other depressive; one Gothic, the other pre-Romantic--from their first journey together to the Cape of Good Hope, to pre-Revolutionary America and back, through the strange yet redemptive turns of fortune in their later lives, on a grand tour of the Enlightenment's dark hemisphere, as they observe and participate in the many opportunities for insanity presented them by the Age of Reason.

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Mason & Dixon: A Novel By Thomas Pynchon Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

A sprawling, complex, and comic work from one of the country's most celebrated and idiosyncratic authors, *Mason & Dixon* is Thomas Pynchon's Most Magickal reinvention of the 18th-century novel. It follows the lifelong partnership and adventures of the English surveyors Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon (of Mason-Dixon Line fame) as they travel the world mapping and measuring through an uncharted pre-Revolutionary America of Native Americans, white settlers, taverns, and bawdy establishments of ill-repute. Fans of the postmodern master of paranoia will recognize Pynchon's personality in the novel's first phrase: "Snow-Balls have flown their Arcs," a brief echo of the rockets that curve across the skies in the writer's masterpiece *Gravity's Rainbow*.

From Library Journal

The publication of Pynchon's fifth novel is certain to be a highlight of the literary year. To try and summarize it would be an exercise in futility. Like his previous works, this one is complex?much more than a simple, rollicking tale of 18th-century surveyors as they wend their way south (to the Cape of Good Hope) and west (to America, where they drew the line for which they will ever be famous?the boundary that came to define North and South). Indeed, it is this line, this artificial border, that lies at the heart of the novel. When Mason confides to Captain Zhang that the unremitting forest disturbs him, his exotic companion replies that given that Adam and Eve, Buddha and Newton were all enlightened while sitting beneath trees, "A quick review would suggest that Trees produce Enlightenment. Trees are not the Problem. The Forest is not an Agent of Darkness. But it may be your Visto [line] is. ...Nothing will produce Bad History more directly nor brutally, than drawing a line." This belief in the danger of artificial boundaries?be they political, literary, or philosophical?is reflected in the very structure of Pynchon's novels, in his efforts not to let "rules" get in the way of what it is he is trying to say. His novel is often poetic, sometimes tedious, and occasionally arcane. The digressions may temporarily confuse, but the humor is sure to amuse (even Star Trek gets a nod). More accessible than *Gravity's Rainbow*, this is still not a novel to be read quickly. It is a work that grows on one, and as the reader follows from tree to tree, a forest truly does begin to emerge?with an important message for our "scientific" age. From one of the most unique, thoughtful, and challenging of contemporary authors, a work that is essential for every public and academic library.

-?David W. Henderson, Eckerd Coll. Lib., St. Petersburg, Fla.

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From [Booklist](#)

Pynchon, an elusive, erudite, and manic satirist, has weighed in with another big book, another romp through the wild frontier of his imagination. As he did in his most celebrated work, *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), and in *Vineland* (1990), Pynchon explores the paradoxes of a transitional era, this time harking back to the mid-eighteenth century and the so-called Age of Reason. His heroes are the English astronomers Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon, the men responsible for establishing the Mason-Dixon line, and who, in his magic-making hands, embody their time's eager devotion to logic and precision even in the face of life's daunting chaos. As Pynchon chronicles their cultural and scientific adventures from their first meeting in London through their journey to Sumatra and the arduous surveying of the famous boundary line that carries their names, he considers such complex issues as colonization, slavery, the massacre of American Indians, and the conflicts between religion and science. But he also has fun, gleefully improvising on the assertive language of the time, taking sly liberties with the lives and personalities of the melancholy Mason and carefree Dixon, reveling in the buzz of pubs and coffeehouses, and animating a great cast of whimsical secondary characters. While Mason and Dixon survive all manner of extremes in weather, terrain, and human behavior, Pynchon

transforms their world into a fun-house-mirror reflection of our own, reminding us that we still search for meaning in celestial events, that racism is still alive and virulent, and that friendship and love can and do transcend the dividing lines of prejudice and politics. *Donna Seaman*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Robert Robertson:

This Mason & Dixon: A Novel book is just not ordinary book, you have after that it the world is in your hands. The benefit you have by reading this book is actually information inside this reserve incredible fresh, you will get facts which is getting deeper you read a lot of information you will get. This Mason & Dixon: A Novel without we realize teach the one who reading it become critical in pondering and analyzing. Don't possibly be worry Mason & Dixon: A Novel can bring any time you are and not make your bag space or bookshelves' come to be full because you can have it in the lovely laptop even mobile phone. This Mason & Dixon: A Novel having excellent arrangement in word and also layout, so you will not truly feel uninterested in reading.

Helen Leavitt:

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