



Alphabetical: How Every Letter Tells a Story

Michael Rosen

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From minding your Ps and Qs to wondering why X should mark the spot, Alphabetical is a book for everyone who loves words and language. Whether it's how letters are arranged on keyboards or Viking runes, textspeak or zip codes, this book will change the way you think about letters for ever. How on Earth did we fix upon our twenty-six letters, what do they really mean, and how did we come to write them down in the first place? Michael Rosen takes you on an unforgettable adventure through the history of the alphabet in twenty-six vivid chapters, fizzing with personal anecdotes and fascinating facts. Starting with the mysterious Phoenicians and how sounds first came to be written down, he races on to show how nonsense poems work, pins down the strange story of OK, traces our seven lost letters and tackles the tyranny of spelling, among many many other things. His heroes of the alphabet range from Edward Lear to Phyllis Pearsall (the inventor of the A-Z), and from the two scribes of Beowulf to rappers. Each chapter takes on a different subject - whether it's codes, umlauts or the writing of dictionaries. Rosen's enthusiasm for letters positively leaps off the page, whether it's the story of his life told through the typewriters he's owned or a chapter on jokes written in a string of gags and word games. So if you ever wondered why Hawaiian only has a thirteen-letter alphabet, why X should mark the spot or became shorthand for Christmas or how exactly to write down the sound of a wild raspberry, read on ...

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