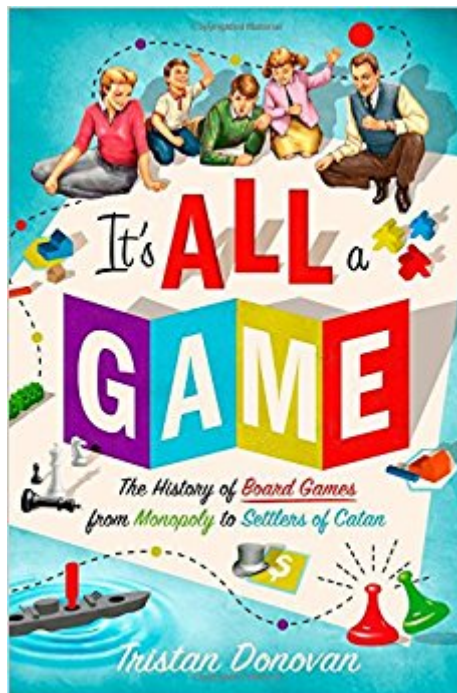




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It's All A Game: The History Of Board Games From Monopoly To Settlers Of Catan



Synopsis

"[A] timely book...It's All a Game provides a wonderfully entertaining trip around the board, through 4,000 years of game history." —The Wall Street Journal
Board games have been with us longer than even the written word. But what is it about this pastime that continues to captivate us well into the age of smartphones and instant gratification? In *It's All a Game*, British journalist and renowned games expert Tristan Donovan opens the box on the incredible and often surprising history and psychology of board games. He traces the evolution of the game across cultures, time periods, and continents, from the paranoid Chicago toy genius behind classics like *Operation* and *Mouse Trap*, to the role of *Monopoly* in helping prisoners of war escape the Nazis, and even the scientific use of board games today to teach artificial intelligence how to reason and how to win. With these compelling stories and characters, Donovan ultimately reveals why board games have captured hearts and minds all over the world for generations.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"[A] timely book...It's All a Game provides a wonderfully entertaining trip around the board, through 4,000 years of game history." —The Wall Street Journal
"[A] splendid new book...A quick and breezy read, it doesn't just tell the fascinating stories of the (often struggling) individuals who created our favorite games. It also manages to convey the entire sweep of boardgame history, from the earliest forms of Checkers to modern-day surprise hits like *Settlers of Catan*." —Mashable
"Throw away your preconceived notions and dive into this rich story that informs who we are by the games we play...Each chapter is a thematic essay that stands

alone but also artfully weaves together culture, business, and ways games impact society... This history of games is perfect for the budding social scientist, the casual reader, or someone looking to impress party guests with trivia knowledge." [Booklist](#) "a fascinating and insightful discussion not only of games past, but the socioeconomic and historical factors that contributed to their popularity" [Chicago Review of Books](#) "There is both reason and rhyme for every one of Donovan's historical installments, and the biographical bits are intriguing, revealing the kind of person who invents a board game... What Donovan has done with *It's All a Game* is write a social history through board games." [Paste Magazine](#) "Offering more than a nostalgic trip through the attic, this book will appeal to readers interested in a comprehensive history of board games" [Library Journal](#) "Tristan Donovan takes what might seem like a dull topic and brings it to life. Turning a hobby into a fascinating history subject, *It's All a Game* manages to cover the entire realm of tabletop games in an easy-to-read yet fascinating tale. Think you know everything about board games? Read this to find otherwise!" [Tom Vasel, Host, The Dice Tower](#)

TRISTAN DONOVAN is a British author and journalist. His books include *It's All a Game* and his writing has appeared in numerous publications, including BBC News Online, The Atlantic, The Times of London, Stuff, Wired, The Guardian, Eurogamer, Kotaku, Community Care, and The Big Issue. He lives in the UK.

The chapters are of uneven quality. It dives very deep into the obscure revival of backgammon in the late 70's, and has probably the most in depth discussion of the Game of Life ever printed. The last two chapters that cover the modern boardgame renaissance are fairly sparse and tacked on. It misses most of the gaming that was going on in America prior to the introduction of Settlers of Catan that wasn't Monopoly or Twister. A good second edition would expand the last two chapters to cover their topics at the same level of depth as earlier chapters. This would, however, probably make the book 500 or so pages long.

Tristan knows how to take a journalistic eye to game concepts. Great read.

We like to play board games at my house so I was eager to read *It's All a Game* to learn more about the creation of some of our favorite games. For the most part, the book was interesting and entertaining, and I learned a lot of fascinating facts that I have been imparting to my

family and friends. My one caveat is that occasionally Donovan spends way too much time on one particular subject such as the Russian domination of chess for decades; I found that out of place in a book on the history of various games. I just skimmed those sections and moved on. The histories of games such as Clue, The Game of Life, Monopoly, Trivial Pursuit, and Scrabble are much more complicated and creative than one might think. Truly for me, it was actually a subject I had never thought about at all. Each game follows a path that seems to be a combination of ingenuity, luck, and timing, and each individual story is quite intriguing and speaks to what society valued at the time of the creation of that particular game. I was also amazed to learn that Monopoly was used to funnel escape kits to the Allied prisoners during World War 2. The cardboard base of the game had small compartments cut into the board to stash a small compass, two files and a silk map and then the playing area was glued back on. Money in the currency the prisoners would need was hidden among the Monopoly money. How cool is that?! I really enjoyed the section on German games, particularly The Settlers of Catan and Ticket to Ride, because we play those a fair amount. I wish the author had included a few other popular games such as Blokus and Sequence to round out the book, but overall he covered a good list of games. I recommend this book for those who enjoy playing board games; I learned so many cool details that add another dimension to my enjoyment of playing those games. Thanks to Thomas Dunne Books and NetGalley for the chance to read this ARC in exchange for an honest review.

Most baby boomers who grew up playing games on a board with pieces rather than a computer screen will find Donovan's history of board games fascinating, and for those who only know a high-tech, low-touch world, very informative as well. Among the many favorite board games examined include Monopoly, Chess, Backgammon, Mouse Trap, Operation and Scrabble. We think this interesting overview of how generations have spent their leisure hours may inspire a resurgence of interest in many of the classic board games played around the dinner table.

Great book. Even if you are not particularly into board games, you will always come back for one more chapter.

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