



How to Draw Fantasy Art and RPG Maps: Step by Step Cartography for Gamers and Fans

Jared Blando

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The power of creation is at your fingertips!

Orcs prepare for battle against high Elves, Dwarves retreat to the mountains and men march to the sea to reclaim crumbling fortresses. Fortunes are decided. Kingdoms are lost. Entire worlds are created. This book will teach you to bring your fictional realm to life with simple step-by-step instructions on how to draw authentic fantasy maps. Set the stage for adventure by illustrating domains, castles and battle lines, mountains, forests and sea monsters! Learn to create completely unique and fully functional RPG maps time and time again on which your world can unfold.

All the skills necessary to create awe-inspiring maps are covered!

Landscapes. Add depth, balance and plausibility with rocky coastlines, towering mountains, dark forests and rolling plains. Iconography. Mark important places--towns and cities, fortresses and bridges--with symbolic iconography for easy-to-understand maps. Typography. Learn how to place readable text and the basics of decorative script. Bonus instruction teaches you to create fonts for Orcs, Elves, Vikings and dragons. Heraldry and shield design. Depict cultural and political boundaries with shields and colors. Advanced cartography. Includes how to draw landmarks, country boundaries and political lines. Build roads to connect merchants and troops, troll cairns and dragon lairs. And complete your maps with creative backgrounds, elaborate compasses and thematic legends. 30+ step-by-step demonstrations illustrate how to construct an entire fantasy world map from start to finish--both digitally and by hand!

How to Draw Fantasy Art and RPG Maps: Step by Step Cartography for Gamers and Fans Details

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Maps: Step by Step Cartography for Gamers
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From Reader Review How to Draw Fantasy Art and RPG Maps: Step by Step Cartography for Gamers and Fans for online ebook

Matt Dyson-Bird says

Good instructive guide

A nice step by step exploration of fantasy map design. I'm looking forward to re-drawing a few of my maps with the help of some of the techniques here.

Shaun Hatelly says

An excellent resource, but perhaps assumes a little more natural talent than most people have.

Candice Landau says

You don't even need to be an artist to create amazing fantasy maps. This book will take you through the process, step-by-step. I use it to create maps for the fantasy stories I write.

Stephen Simpson says

Looks fantastic and gives some solid "how to draw " advice. It is nearly worthless in terms of real cartography, though, so you'll learn how to draw pretty maps but you won't really learn anything about how/where/why in terms of locating topographical features (there are reasons that swamps, prairies, and so on form where they do.

But to be fair, the title is "How to draw..." and it does deliver on that.

Sam says

This was a good step by step guide for creating a nice and detailed map, whether for a fantasy book series or an rpg. It was also a quick read because it is around 80% images.

Rafael says

A great instruction and introduction into map making. All you need now is the art supplies, patience and either talent or practice. It's a nice niche hobby I picked up very recently.

Luke says

This exquisitely beautiful book was lacking in substance to me when it came to its utility as an educational tool. Like many "how-to" books, it showcases both the unique talents and style of a gifted artist, but comes up short when it comes to breadth of technique.

I was looking for a more advanced fantasy cartography tutorial that communicated a wider variety of techniques and cartographic options, and situated this kind of art a little more closely with the history of the art. The author's maps are quite beautiful and the book is full of lovely work, but it works best as an extremely basic guide that essentially teaches the basics of the author's own preferred methods in very broad detail.

Anyone who's already working as a professional cartographer might be better off scouring the DeviantArt and YouTube artist communities for free cartography pointers from a variety of artists. The ideal market for this book is young fans of fantasy, YA gamers, and people who are just starting out. I would have LOVED to get this book when I was 11 or 12 years old -- so I guess I'll bump my review from 2 stars up to 3, depending on who the target audience is. It's classier and more attractive than most of the endless how-to-draw books for kids, and more basic & accessible (and cheaper!) than many art textbooks. For better or worse, it's just about the only book in the sub-sub-genre of RPG mapmaking, and so if you are starting from scratch with zero technique at any age, it's pretty indispensable.

It just wasn't really for me, and didn't give me much that I wasn't already able to find online from places like the cartogersguild.com community; If you absolutely want to have some solid beginner tutorials in an attractive bound volume, you're very likelier to get more use out of this book than I was, and so I can recommend it even if it didn't work for me personally.

Darina says

Good, I just wish there was a little more.

Andrea says

Excellent guide for making fantasy map. I am ugly at drawing but with this book I got wonderful works

Darren says

Less "how to draw fantasy and rpg maps" and more "how to draw two fantasy rpg maps exactly as I drew them." In other words, less of a tutorial than a walkthrough.

Dave says

Very comprehensive. I was surprised at how much work goes into making generic fantasy maps.

intrepideddie says

Bottom Line Up Front

A great introductory how-to for drawing overland maps. It's just the basics, but that's all you need to get started. Sadly, it's just overland maps.

The Review

This book is a basic introductory how-to for drawing overland maps of a traditional fantasy flavour. The tutorials in the book are organized into chapters, ostensibly in the order you'd draw them on a map.

The book is a nicely presented softcover with every page in full colour. There are many excellent illustrations throughout. The layout, while nice, is a bit expansive. The use of space isn't very good and there's relatively little actual instruction on most pages (though there are lots of illustrations). There just wasn't as much actual writing or content as I expected.

I can't say I wholly approve of the title; it's misleading (or, at best, too encompassing). This book covers how to draw overland maps and that's it. No dungeons. No cities. No castles. I was quite disappointed by that.

Anyway, here's a chapter-by-chapter summary and review of the book:

Introduction

The introduction can go f**k itself. It's a photographic list of things you need to draw maps. Some people genuinely appreciate them, but these types of "here's what you need to do this" lists have always come across to me as somewhat pretentious. I only draw on canvas made from the stretched skin of an albino wombat that was hit by a road train with 10 trailers of pink diamonds and then passed through the digestive tract of a wedge-tailed eagle. Oh, and use this \$500 pencil with a special core made of ground unicorn shit or you might as well not bother drawing. Rubbish. Grab a freaking pencil and a sheet of paper and draw. (Fortunately, this is limited to only two pages, and is by no means as egregious as others I've seen.)

Chapter 1: Building Your World

Could be summed up with "draw a shape for the main area you're mapping". This is probably the one chapter where there are too many steps; felt like it was padded to get another couple pages.

Chapter 2: Mountains, Forests, Rivers and Water

(Yes, the lack of Oxford comma annoys the sh!t out of me.) To me, this chapter was just about right. Shows ways of drawing the various features without overwhelming you with different styles. Perfect for beginning fantasy cartographers.

Chapter 3: Town and City Icons

Not a terribly detailed chapter, but as the intent is only to draw icons or representations of cities/towns/castles on a map, it's perfectly fine.

Chapter 4: Typography

Hoooo, boy. Typographers everywhere are cringing. Well, f**k them. This isn't a comprehensive treatise on use-cases for fonts in cartography; it's just to throw some ideas out there for putting text on the map -- font and style, placement, etc. There's some good (if perhaps obvious) tips, but it only scratches the surface of the topic and doesn't really get into font design or even provide a full sample alphabet.

Chapter 5: Landmarks

Roads, caves, ruins, towers... this chapter is really a continuation of Chapter 3. The tutorials are a bit less detailed here. They all consist of three steps: draw the thing, add details, final details. I shit you not. It's basically eight pages of this.

Chapter 6: Iconography

Map symbols. There are some ideas for alternative visuals for those items covered in Chapters 3 and 5.

Chapter 7: Heraldry and Shields

Nothing in-depth, but some potential inspiration for political designations on a map. I can see putting this information to good use on a battlefield type of map.

Chapter 8: Political Boundaries

Nutshell: Use different types of dashed lines and different colours. Why did this take more than one page?

Chapter 9: Backgrounds

Weird title for this chapter. It covers adding decorative borders, corners, compasses, legends, and other flourishes to make it prettier. This and Chapter 2 are my favourites.

Chapter 10: Painting Techniques

Provides very brief tips for inking, shading, painting, and using digital media (PhotoShop, GIMP, etc). I suspect few people will find much of value in this chapter.

Chapter 11: Putting It All Together

An entire chapter of unnecessary fluff. Steps through all (well, most) of the previous tutorials to create a map. It's of practically zero value. A better idea would have been to include a sampling of completed maps showcasing various of the previously-discussed techniques.

So, what's my opinion of this book? I like it. I have a lot of issues with it that are more personal taste than anything, but my map drawing has significantly improved thanks to this book. I even intend to try my hand at drawing a full-on properly decorated map. Inked, painted, the whole bit. Might take me a while to work up to that.

Jennifer Linsky says

One of the better art books I've read; it actually lives up to the title. After reading it, I think my game maps and so forth will indeed be higher quality than before.

Brianna Silva says

I learned a lot from this! ^_^ Now I'm excited to work on my own (official and detailed) fantasy maps very soon! :O

Jessica says

K says only 4 stars, but he's happily making a new map now, so it's a 5 in my book. ;)
