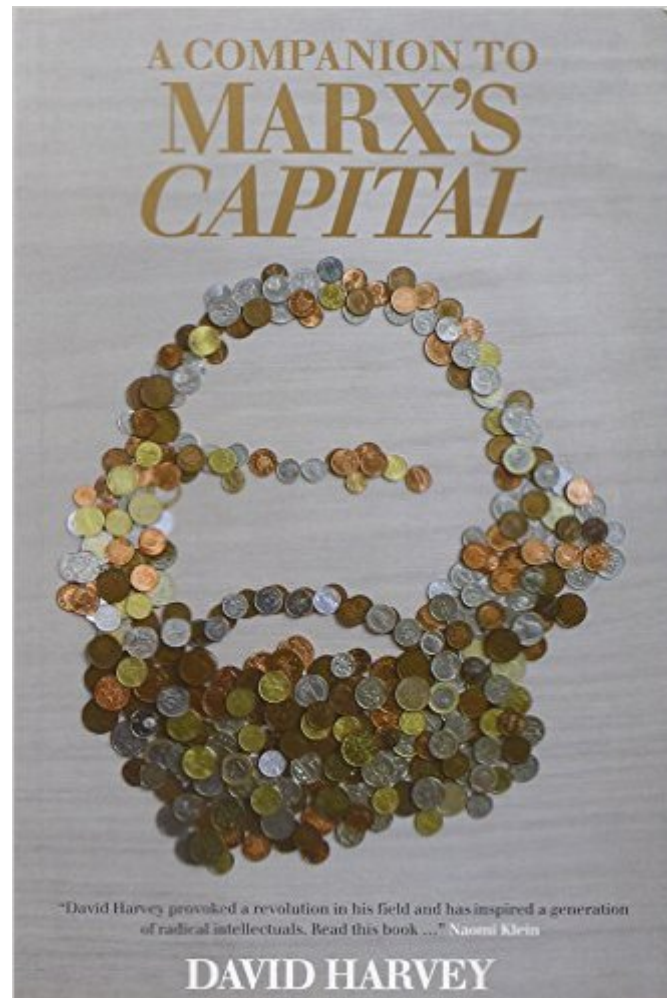


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A Companion To Marx's Capital



Synopsis

My aim is to get you to read a book by Karl Marx called Capital, Volume 1, and to read it on Marx's own terms. The biggest financial crisis since the Great Depression has generated a surge of interest in Marx's work in the effort to understand the origins of our current predicament. For nearly forty years, David Harvey has written and lectured on Capital, becoming one of the world's most foremost Marx scholars. Based on his recent lectures, this current volume aims to bring this depth of learning to a broader audience, guiding first-time readers through a fascinating and deeply rewarding text. A Companion to Marx's Capital offers fresh, original and sometimes critical interpretations of a book that changed the course of history and, as Harvey intimates, may do so again. David Harvey's video lecture course can be found here: davidharvey.org/reading-capital/

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Customer Reviews

David Harvey is not just one of the world's foremost social and economic geographers, but is also one of the world's foremost Marx interpreters. "A Companion to Marx's Capital" is the book form of a series of lectures on Capital, Volume 1, that he has annually held with his college students and which has famously been made available publicly in video format (he is currently fundraising for volume 2). Because of this, the book is not just only about Volume 1, but it is also written to be as accessible to a general public as possible. Moreover, it seeks only to explain, not to defend. Sometimes, this does lead to trouble - Harvey does not entirely seem to grasp that to explain the

way a certain figure thought about a topic also means you have to show what arguments he himself would have used to defend his perspective, and when Harvey tries to substitute his own arguments for those of Marx, they are often not the more convincing for it. The book is somewhat weak on making the entirety seem convincing for that reason, but that is something easily solved by referring to his excellent other work, "The Limits to Capital" (The Limits to Capital (New and updated edition)). That said, the book is a systematic, clear and engaging explanation of the work, built on a chapter-by-chapter approach. Harvey recommends, especially for the difficult and abstract first chapters, to have a copy of Marx's "Capital", Vol. 1, with you while reading it - the Penguin edition is generally recommended (

For more than twenty years David Harvey has taught a profoundly popular course on reading Marx's Capital, Volume I, at the City University of New York. This book is a published version of those lectures and the clearest possible introduction to the subject. Marx's Capital is one of the classics of world literature, one of the "Great Books of the Western World." It is much discussed but seldom read, even among the ostensibly educated among us. The reason it is seldom read is not because it is particularly difficult, it isn't. It is just too long. 1000 pages of sometimes tedious, sometimes obscure, and often repetitive explication and analysis of the 19th century capitalist mode of production is more than most readers want to know about the subject, and so it remains unread. It's too bad it isn't read because, as Harvey points out, global capitalism today is far closer to what Marx described than was the 19th century capitalism at the time his book was published in 1867. The events of the last 20 or 30 years have made Marx more relevant than he has ever been and understanding his project is the road to understand global capitalism today. This Companion to Marx's Capital makes the book accessible to anyone with a real interest in the subject. I was attracted to the book from a review in the London Review of Books (3 Feb 2011), in which Harvey's CNY lecture series was mentioned along with the fact that the lectures are available free, on-line. I ordered the Companion, and a copy of Capital itself and listened to all thirteen of the lectures. I read the Companion along with the lecture series (although I admit I did not read all of the Chapters in Capital, only some of them).

Although well into it, I have not yet finished my study of this wonderful exposition of and commentary on vol. 1 of Marx's CAPITAL, which have indeed motivated me to restudy the three volumes of Marx's great masterpiece. Among the many good things in Harvey's book are his various discussions of dialectic, especially in his chapter 7, "What Technology Reveals". In this

chapter Harvey unpacks Marx's footnote 4 in chapter 15 of Cap., v. 1. I can do no better than quote Harvey. Harvey sees the second part of this footnote as constituting an important statement that requires elaboration--and here you will see how helpful Harvey can be in helping us to approach and gain the work of Marx. He cites Marx's statement: "Technology reveals the active relation of man to nature, the direct process of the production of his life, and thereby it also lays bare the process of the production of the social relations of his life, and of the mental conceptions that flow from those relations." (It seems that one cannot gloss over anything in Marx: one must pay close attention to everything.) Here is part of Harvey's commentary on this quotation. "Marx here links in one sentence six identifiable conceptual elements. There is, first of all, technology. There is the relation to nature. There is the actual process of production and then, in rather shadowy form, the production and reproduction of daily life. There are social relations and mental conceptions. These elements are plainly not static but in motion, linked through 'processes of production' that guide human evolution. The only element he doesn't explicitly describe in production terms is the relation to nature. Obviously, the relation to nature has been evolving over time.

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