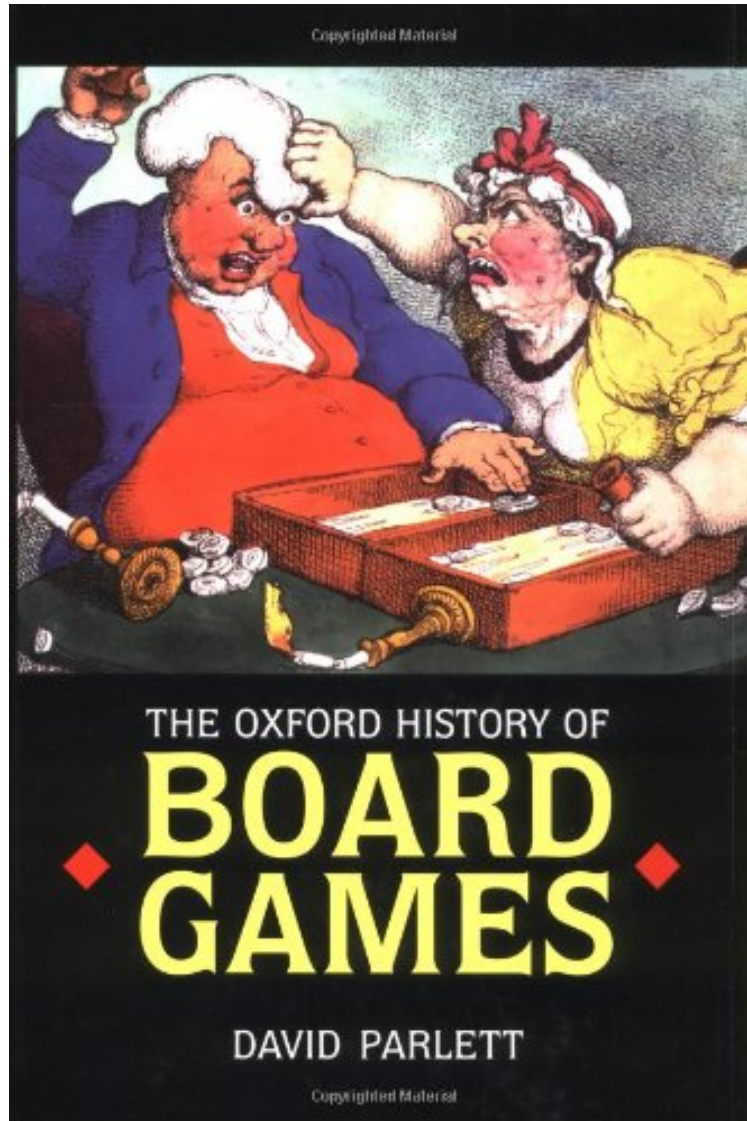


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David Parlett

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David Parlett : Oxford History of Board Games before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Oxford History of Board Games:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Daniela must have!
4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Chase, displace, space, race games-- and themes!
By John L Murphy I learned last week that my personality type seeks out pursuits not for competition or reward, but for the pleasure of the pastime. I get absorbed, as many readers of Parlett may, by the world within a game that mirrors and distorts our reality. Curious about the history of chess, and the personality quirks associated with it and other strategies occupying space on a grid, board, circuit, or

pattern, I found Parlett's guide. As with so much of gaming scholarship, throughout his entries, Parlett nods to the massive but uneven, now partially superseded, research of H.J.R. Murray on the origins of chess and varieties of other board games. I might add how it's easier to consult and use than Murray's exhaustive compendia. Now out-of-print, a companion to Parlett's card games history, this 1999 study deserves reprinting in paperback by OUP. "The aim of this book is primarily to present a historical survey of positional board games, but extending the story to modern and proprietary games whenever they can be shown to advance or expand on a traditional idea," Parlett explains (p. 7). He suggests that "the power of involvement of its underlying abstract structure" determines, no matter the label, its abstract content or representational surface, the success long-term for a theme game. "What makes people want to go on playing a game once its theme is past its sell-by date is the fact that it remains engaging and exciting despite its outdated appearance and loss of topicality." For example, we do not go into battle with elephants, take counsel with bishops, or ride as knights into the pawns that comprise the enemy's ranks-- yet we still play chess with these pieces. As Parlett cautions in his lively introduction, this erudite yet accessible survey's not meant to be read front-to-back, although I did so, at least to get the gist of it all. Its nineteen chapters range widely as they investigate varieties of race, chase, displace, and space games. Theme games conclude this compact yet dense enough volume. While not submerged by descriptions, those unfamiliar with specific games may find this better suited for reference about one's chosen pastimes; I found for my own interests those on "tafl" or Northern European strategy games and the section on chess most engaging. After a while, relying on print rather than observation, your mind bogs down in details, inevitably, of games that elude your easy comprehension when locked into words and a few illustrations, however instructive. The reason it's a reference rather than a chronological narrative? It's likely you'll skip to the type of games here most appealing to your own sensibility. He breaks them down into roughly theme games and four related forms of chase, displace, space, and race! As an inventor ("Hares Tortoises") as well as historian (he also publishes on card and word games), Parlett brings an enthusiasm for the process of how games evolve and how new ones appear I found contagious. Not that I'll ever figure out the game of "Go" any more than chess at my advanced age, but it's instructive to ponder how we tend to gravitate towards passing the time with imaginary hunts, wars, chases, captures, and climbs, no matter the culture or terrain we live in. I've heard that such criss-crosses, dots, squares, and lines as cave dwellers made show these deeply grooved patterns in our minds. Parlett's brisk survey, often acerbic and well-written, takes you into the mystery of how such games mutate and shift as new ones appear while only those that speak to a lasting need for meaning and shape beneath the holiday season's latest movie tie-in or promotional throwaway fade. It might have been entertaining to include games that have been conceived of on boards but that exist in speculative fiction. What about "Das Glasperlenspiel", the "Glass Bead Game" of Hermann Hesse's *Castalia*, for example, or fantasy games played only in novels? However, as there's plenty of more easily obtained real games in these pages to ponder, the scope of this book may have precluded such forays into the imaginative realm of pursuits. There's enough deserving ones to locate out there on the shelves. Or, to make up, as Parlett shows. Mancala, chess, checkers (or draughts), go, backgammon: in many forms across many lands, what drives people towards these time-tested winners? They transcend trends, and outlast fashions. They coax from us, as Parlett documents neatly without too much withering detail, long-lasting satisfaction as we mimic our ancestors dashing about the savannah-- or substitute more safely for the hazards of the battlefield. 33 of 33 people found the following review helpful. A must buy for anyone interested in games! By dan.glimne@swipnet.se "The Oxford History of Board Games", the latest book from British writer and games expert David Parlett, is a magnificent overview of the development of games over the millenia. Such a book is long overdue - the previous similar work was H.J.R. Murray's "A History of Board-Games", published back in 1952. Parlett however has the distinct advantage of another half a century of research, and this shows: His book even includes and discusses (not to say dissects) the Roman board game recently excavated by archeologists in Colchester, and rounds off with a chapter on modern board game design: Risk, Monopoly, Diplomacy, Scrabble, Trivial Pursuit and a host of others are to be found right there. Parlett is thus able to correct a number of the mistakes made by Murray, and adds considerably to the store of knowledge in the field of games. Parlett also in his book divides the games by a very logical classification, and tells about the historical development of each in turn. This book is in short a long-overdue milestone, and an absolute must for anyone with the slightest interest in games. Despite the thoroughness with which Parlett treats the subject, the writing is lucid, sprinkled with interesting cultural references and topped with occasional flashes of dry British humour. I cannot recommend it highly enough - and as a collector of books on games, with 1100 titles on my shelves, I should know. - Dan Glimne

For thousands of years, people have been planning attacks, captures, chases, and conquests--in short, they've been playing board games. Now, in *The Oxford History of Board Games*, David Parlett investigates the myriad board games that have developed through the ages and around the world. Here are the origins and development of our favorite games, from the Egyptian and Asian ancestors of Chess, Checkers, and Backgammon, to the invention of such modern classics as Monopoly, Clue, and Scrabble. Parlett groups the games in different families--such as those based on races or chases, wars or hunts, capture or blockade--and then provides a fascinating history of each family. Throughout the book, Parlett pays close--indeed, loving--attention to traditional games, the charming folk

entertainments that have grown up through the centuries, and which exhibit endless local variations. Likewise, he devotes enthusiastic coverage to lesser-known and experimental games. Thus the book is no mere catalog of the familiar, but takes the reader into a world a games they have never known before. And not only does he describe the rules and strategies of the games, but Parlett also draws on 20 year's experience as a professional games researcher, critic, and inventor, to offer many perceptive insights into the thinking involved in creating these games. And, finally, Parlett also illuminates the significance of game-playing as a central part of human experience--as vital to a culture as its music, dance, and literature. Written with great affection and authority, and beautifully illustrated with period art and helpful diagrams that show the finer points of the games, this is a fascinating and accessible guide to a richly rewarding subject.

From Library Journal This book by Parlett (*A Dictionary of Card Games*, Oxford Univ., 1992) is a superb work that succeeds in defining board games from their ancient inception to the present day. The most basic games were of a race nature (from point A to point B). Board games then evolved by implementing dice, cards, extra pieces, and territories. This exhaustive work is more an informative reference than an easy read, with subjects divided into Race Games, Space Games, Chase Games, Displace Games, and War Games (such as chess). The book gets high marks for historical depth, and includes game varieties from every country. Readers will find one shortcoming, however: a lack of "how-to" strategies for winning play. Instead, there is detailed research on the mechanisms of games. This is a worthy updating of H.J.R. Murray's classic *A History of Board Games Other Than Chess* (1952). Great tidbits or obscure, entertaining facts can be found on any given page. The game mechanisms can also be applied with little ingenuity. Highly recommended. AMarty Soven, Woodside, NY Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. The most enjoyable thing about this book is that it describes the rules for hundreds of board games.... This book will require you to think in ways you never before though possible. For the same reason, though, you probably won't be able to put this one down. -- Steven Robert Allen, *Weekly Alibi*, July 21, 1999 About the Author David Parlett is a games expert of international reputation. A former editor of *Games Puzzles* magazine, he has written many books on card and word games, and has himself invented many games, including *Hare Tortoise*, which has been published in ten languages and won many awards, including Germany's prestigious Game of the Year award for 1979.