



# The King of Infinite Space: Euclid and His Elements

By David Berlinski

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## The King of Infinite Space: Euclid and His Elements By David Berlinski

For more than two thousand years, geometry has been equated with Euclid's *Elements*, the world's first mathematical treatise. The system of shapes and space it describes is at once so powerful and so natural that it has intrigued men and women for centuries, and continues to be taught in classrooms around the world. In *The King of Infinite Space*, David Berlinski pays homage to Euclid and the vision that he created, showing how Euclid has achieved a hold on our imagination for reasons that go beyond the details of his proofs. Euclid provided mathematicians with a way of life, a technique of proceeding from what must be assumed to what can be demonstrated. The circumstances under which Euclid composed the *Elements* remain largely unknown, and the details of his life have long since vanished. But through his masterpiece, Euclid—and the mathematical tradition he established—have achieved immortality. Written with Berlinski's characteristic lyricism and verve, *The King of Infinite Space* offers a rich, accessible treatment of Euclid and his *Elements*.

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## The King of Infinite Space: Euclid and His Elements By David Berlinski Bibliography

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### Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

**\*Starred Review\*** “As dazzling as first love” is how Bertrand Russell described his initial encounter with Euclid. As a mathematician who understands what Russell felt, Berlinski guides his readers through the intellectual wonderland that the ancient Greek geometer created in his epoch-making treatise, the *Elements*. In writing at once geometrically precise and disarmingly conversational, Berlinski explores the imposing edifice that Euclid erected on a foundation of just five deceptively simple axioms. Each of these axioms receives careful scrutiny, allowing readers to share in the excitement of mapping out the dimensions of an audacious new human enterprise, inscribing sharp boundaries around key concepts yet opening onto the infinite. Only an author who thinks both mathematically and philosophically could infer—as Berlinski does—the intellectual and even moral substance of the mental perspective that Euclid unfolds. Readers thus come to realize how Euclid’s pioneering thought made possible the rigor of a mathematical proof—and the discipline of a mathematical life. Even in the revolutionary modern theorizing of non-Euclidian geometers such as Lobachevsky, Bolyai, and Poincaré, readers will discern Euclid’s abiding influence as a visionary who glimpsed the mathematical unities hidden beneath chaotic appearances. An impressively concise distillation of the wizardry that transforms points, lines, and planes into sheer genius. --Bryce Christensen

Review

***Booklist***, Starred Review

“In writing at once geometrically precise and disarmingly conversational, Berlinski explores the imposing edifice that Euclid erected on a foundation of just five deceptively simple axioms.... An impressively concise distillation of the wizardry that transforms points, lines, and planes into sheer genius.”

***Library Journal***

“Berlinski has produced a volume that will entertain and enlighten many of today's readers—even those who do not treasure their memories of geometry class.”

***The Weekly Standard***

“Written with David Berlinski's characteristic mix of hothouse prose and standup comedy.”

***Nature***

“[A] pared and elegant homage to the peerless geometer [Euclid] and his magnum opus.”

***New York Journal of Books***

“For anyone who cares about Euclid, geometry, the philosophy of mathematics and most especially, for those who appreciate fine writing.”

***The Wall Street Journal***

“Reading this brief, lively work is like sitting with the author in a French café with too many carafes of red wine and the smoke of hundreds of Gauloises swirling inside your head.”

***The New Yorker***

“Lively....Berlinski guides us through an austere world of shapes and numbers with enthusiasm, assurance,

and mischievous humor. He presents difficult ideas in straightforward terms, even when he moves into the strange and forbidding realm of non-Euclidean geometry.”

***Publishers Weekly*, Starred Review**

“In this brief, accessible foray, popular math/science writer Berlinski breathes life into an ancient mathematician and the world of axioms and theorems he created—a geometric world that became the basis for much of modern math, from analytic geometry to the idea of curved space-time.... Even the most math-averse [will] be enthralled by Berlinski's rich, vibrant language.... Berlinski's book succeeds not only as a history of geometry but also as an exploration of the power of ideas, masterfully replacing cold abstraction with humor and humanity.”

About the Author

**David Berlinski** holds a Ph.D. from Princeton University and has taught mathematics and philosophy at universities in the United States and in France. He is the bestselling author of such books as *A Tour of the Calculus*, *The Advent of the Algorithm*, and *Newton's Gift*. A senior fellow at the Discovery Institute in Seattle and a former fellow at the Institute for Applied Systems Analysis and the Institut des Hautes Études Scientifiques, Berlinski writes frequently for *Commentary*, among other journals.

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