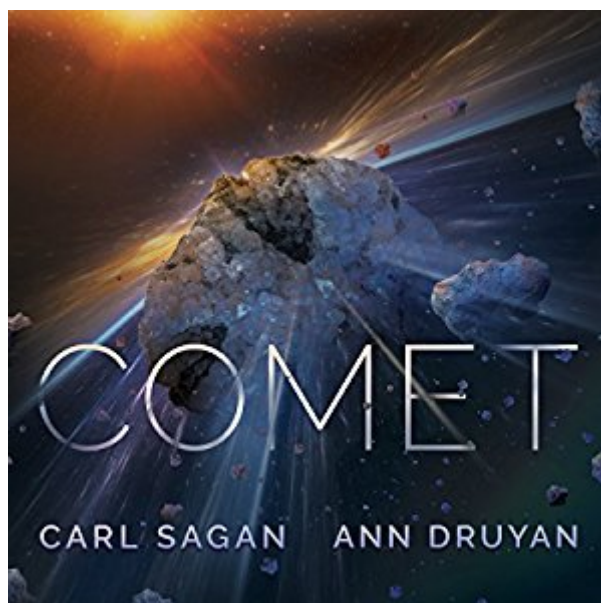


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# Comet



## Synopsis

Comet begins with a breathtaking journey through space astride a comet. Pulitzer Prize-winning astronomer Carl Sagan, author of *Cosmos* and *Contact*, and writer Ann Druyan explore the origin, nature, and future of comets, and the exotic myths and portents attached to them. The authors show how comets have spurred some of the great discoveries in the history of science and raise intriguing questions about these brilliant visitors from the interstellar dark. Were the fates of the dinosaurs and the origins of humans tied to the wanderings of a comet? Are comets the building blocks from which worlds are formed? *Comet* is an enthralling adventure, indispensable for anyone who has ever gazed up at the heavens and wondered why.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Once upon a time, the young Albert Einstein tried to imagine what it would be like to ride on a beam of light and what the universe would look like to that observer. Writing in his 1985 book, *Comet*, author Carl Sagan takes the reader on another imaginary journey. This time the observer is riding aboard a wayward comet traveling from the Solar System's outer fringe, around the sun and back into deep space again, giving the reader a birds eye view of what you would see on such a trip. Who knows where such "flights of fancy" can lead? The former; to a paradigm changing theory. And the latter; to an in depth look at a strange visitor from the depths of space. Part science, part history and, in the original hard-bound edition, a generous helping of classical and new art work. While the Kindle edition has the charts, graphs and many black & white illustrations the beautiful color paintings are either missing or rendered in B&W. While this does not diminish Sagan's text in any

way, it would have been a nice addition to the overall reading experience. You have to wonder what the publishers were thinking when they OK'd this treatment of both *Cosmos* and *Comet* for e-reader release. The text itself is stunning, Sagan's knowledge seems unlimited and his writing skills were never better. This edition is the 1997 update by co-author Ann Druyan to include any new findings (to that point) and theories on comets and astronomy but you may want to use this book as a jumping off point to more recent writings. The history of comets and how they interacted with human society is fascinating and Sagan takes you back to the beginning, to our earliest records of comet sightings. What are comets made of? How are they formed? Follow the birth and life of our Mysterious Traveler on its journey through the Solar System. The author covers the mechanics of how their orbits are created and the risk that comets may pose to our planet. If a large object, comet or meteor, ever struck the Earth it could have a devastating effect on our environment and all life, including humans. Has this ever happened? What is the connection between comets and meteorites? Sagan covers all this and more in this classic science book. The book closes with a section of extreme speculation and philosophy that the author offers up for your consideration, take it for what you will, just keep an open mind. From Sagan's point of view the future has boundless possibilities. Comets may be an unlimited resource of water, minerals and energy that we can mine for use in space-construction or colonization of other planets. All it needs is the courage to take a course of action that will benefit us in the short run and future generations in the long run as well. Whether you're reading *Comet* for the science, history, or just for nostalgic reasons it's a worthwhile read. So buy your ticket and hop aboard the Comet express. There's always room for another observer. I had no technical or formatting problems with this Kindle edition. LastRanger

I'm a big fan of the late great scientist/astronomer Carl Sagan. I've read most of his books and most are 5 stars...see my reviews. As a 40 year amateur astronomer I found *Comet* by Carl Sagan and Ann Druyan done fantastically well. Carl was always great at explaining a complex subject for the non scientist and keeping a complex subject interesting and allowing the reader to want to continue reading. *Comet* has loads of beautiful pictures, drawings, and diagrams by very good artists especially my favorite Jon Lomberg (I bought a lithograph from him "First Baby on Mars"...absolutely wonderful). Back to *Comet*! Carl Sagan and Ann Druyan give a great 1/3 of the book to the history of what mankind thought comets were, from evil things that foretold famine, death for armies, earthquakes and any number of disasters, to gradually a more modern "dirty ice ball" approach. Then we learn the composition of comets. Some rich in organic matter with ices of methane, ammonia, carbon dioxide and mostly regular water ice plus some heavy water isotopes

and a little silicates and metals. A huge "dirty iceball". We see the near comets with orbits starting beyond Jupiter to comets way way out in the far reaches of the Oort cloud where orbits around the sun may take 10 million years. We see the different "ices" that boil off at different spacings from the sun, with regular water ice being the last to go as comets get closer to the sun. We learn about comet comas, their tails and their nucleus heads. We learn some asteroids may be worn out comets as each time comets get close enough to the sun they slowly "die" as a meter or so of ice is boiled off until rocky silicates, and heavy metals like iron are left. We see the various extinction ages where most of the species on Earth were eliminated with comets crashing into the Earth as main contributors. We see about 69 million years ago, the extinction of the dinosaurs possibly by a comet impact, allowing mammals to evolve with no competition from the dinosaurs, allowing the evolution of man. Lots of history about many famous and not so famous scientists and ancient theorists, and how different religions from different countries perceived comets. Lots of theories on comet formation, where they come from, how many there are, and where they are now. Are we in danger of getting hit by one now! Explanation of the inner and outer Oort cloud and the far distant comets formed from the very beginning of the solar system. These comets have been in the cold (about 10 degrees above absolute zero) for billions of years and the extreme low temperatures and extreme distance from the sun have allowed them no interaction with other solar bodies. This allows their composition to be basically unchanged since the beginning of the solar system. We see man's quest to find the composition of comets using high altitude U2 planes to get cosmic dust for study. Many spacecraft shot up for photos of comets, solar wind detection, and trying to get any comet particles. Fascinating stuff. Lots of info on the favorite comet Halley plus lots of information on the scientist Halley. Lots of other comets mentioned plus their orbits shown. Talk of possible future colonization of the comets in the Oort cloud and growing gigantic trees on the comet... miles high and wide! Kind of Sci Fi to me but interesting. Comet is a fascinating book both for the novice who has never seen a comet, the 40 year amateur astronomer like me, and the professional astronomer/scientist. All will appreciate this book. There is no difficult math. All will enjoy the many pictures and parents can show and tell their child from this book. Would make a great book for middle school, high school or a college astronomy 101 course. Also got out of this book there is so much that we don't know about comets, especially about the extreme orbit comets but we are learning more everyday. Do yourself and family a favor. Next time a naked eye comet event happens enjoy it. You may not even need binoculars or a telescope. Halley comes around every 75 years, some comets less time, some more time and some are never seen again (explosion, decomposition or flung out of their orbits by gravitation slingshot effect by Jupiter or more reasons). Just a fascinating sight to see out your

backyard sky. If you have the chance enjoy. I sure miss Carl Sagan. Even though he never knew of me, I knew of him and consider him a friend.

This book tells you a lot that you never thought to wonder about. What color are comets? Black. Why? Because ices are driven off by the sun, leaving dark carbon and silicon dust. Sagan and Druyan cover comets in world history as well as in the present day. And the only weak spot in my view is the pontificating that Carl can't resist inserting. But maybe you like that stuff. If not, there is plenty else to appreciate. Having said all that, the book is somewhat dated. Perhaps Ann Druyan will produce another update incorporating recent findings about comets and the Kuiper belt.

When I saw that there was a revised version out of Carl Sagan's wonderful book COMET, even though it is in paperback, I hurried to snatch it up. I noticed that the date of publication was close upon Sagan's death so perhaps that explains why there doesn't seem to be much that was different in it from the first edition. By all means, get the original edition, in hardback if possible, as it has wonderful color illustrations. This edition is fine for someone who needs to read Carl Sagan's wonderful writing on comets-its just that the original is so much better.

It was advertised as a hardbound book. It is a paperback. The inside of the book is fine. Very disappointed in the cover.

Superb!

Excellent resource material on everything we know about comets/

Druyan co-wrote Sagan's Cosmos series, and she is just as brilliant in her own way as the great scientist is in his. A terrific exposition and a marvelous read.

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