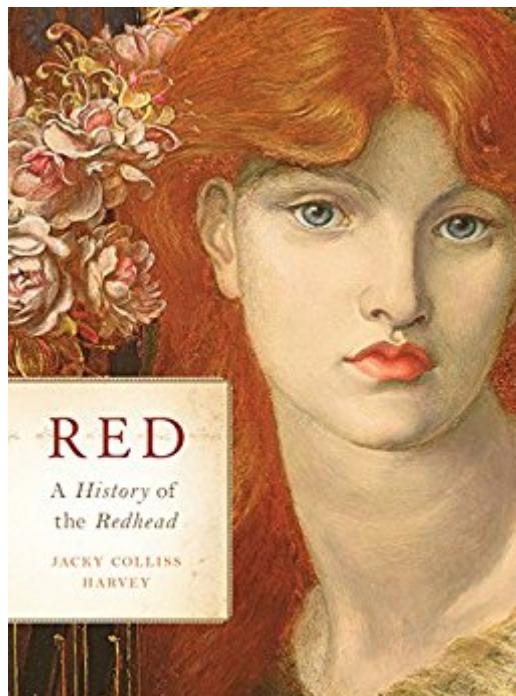


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# Red: A History Of The Redhead



## **Synopsis**

RED: A HISTORY OF THE REDHEAD is the first book to explore the history of red hair and red-headedness throughout the world. With an obsessive fascination that is as contagious as it is compelling, author Jacky Colliss Harvey begins her quest in prehistory and traces the redhead gene as it made its way out of Africa with the early human diaspora, to its emergence under Northern skies. She goes on to explore red hair in the ancient world (from the Tarim mummies in China to the Islamic kingdom of the Khazars); the prejudice manifested against red hair across medieval Europe; red hair during the Renaissance as both an indicator of Jewishness during the Inquisition and the height of fashion in Protestant England, where it was made famous by the Henry VIII and Elizabeth I; the modern age of art, and literature, and the first positive symbols of red hair in children's characters; modern medicine and science and the genetic and chemical decoding of red hair; and finally, red hair in contemporary culture, from advertising and exploitation to "gingerism"; and the new movement against bullying. More than a book for redheads, RED is the exploration of evolution and gene mutation, as well as a compelling social and cultural study of how prejudice and misconceptions of "other"; evolve across centuries and continents and from one culture to another.

## **Book Information**

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## Customer Reviews

I spent a good part of my childhood explaining to people that my sister and I, two red heads, were not adopted or kidnapped but did really belong to our parents, two people with very dark brown hair. I probably became a geneticist because I spent so much time explaining the pedigree of my hair to people. As I got older, the comments changed and everything became linked to my hair. If it I got mad, it was because I was a red head. If I was in the sun, strangers would offer me sunscreen because I was a red head. The moment I walked into a room full of strangers, I would instinctively scan for another red head. Someone in that room would eventually comment on the hair color. I have walked down streets and had people make the sign against the devil. I have always thought all of these incidents were in my head. Jacky Colliss Harvey's *Red: A History of the Redhead* affirmed my suspicions that a bias truly exists against red heads. Harvey begins by explaining the history of the red head gene and its place in evolution in one of the best and clearest explanation of genetic drift ever written for a layperson. She then details the history of the red head through art and reveals how the modern attitudes are as ancient as the Bible. I found myself nodding along with Harvey as she detailed the biases and stereotypes red heads encounter on a daily basis. My one criticism of the book is that Harvey spent too much time discussing the art and not enough time discussing the modern plight and interpretations of the red head. Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed the book and would recommend it to anyone with red head as a reminder that you are not alone. I received this book as part of the GoodReads First Read program. This does not influence my review at all.

Full disclosure: I originally bought this book because I've recently become friends with the author, and I thought it might be mildly interesting. I was wrong. It's fascinating. Around the central topic of red hair Jacky Colliss Harvey makes connections with genetics, evolutionary theory, history, mythology, art, literature, religion, and popular culture. All these topics are woven together as a narrative; you're reading a scholarly work (with an incredible amount of research) but you read it as a story, so well organized is it. The writing is superb; even complex sentences go smoothly and her descriptions of places and works of art are works of art themselves. Moreover, although a scholarly work, the personality of the author comes through. There is the perfect balance of academic fact with a conversational tone, treating the reader with respect. And you interact with the book (rather than reading it passively); I had fun realizing I knew some of the historical or factual or popular

references, but equal fun looking up the ones I didn't know and, thus, learning even more. Finally, although I can't speak for most of the topics in the book, the areas that are my professional specialty (human evolution, genetics, and evolutionary theory) were all accurate and up-to-date. In short, one of the most pleasurable reading experiences of a nonfiction book I've had in a very long time.

It's almost worth buying this book just to gaze upon the cover, it's just lovely. I certainly did learn a lot about redheads with this book. There is so much history on the subject it's a bit overwhelming. As much as I love history, I found it a bit daunting to go through so much information. This is a pretty readable book though, it's written almost as if a friend was talking to you about redheads. My own personal favorites for redheads are Carol Burnett and Deborah Kerr. Two very talented women that I always admired. A very enjoyable read about a fascinating subject.

I heard the author interviewed on NPR and since I am a red head and come from a long line of "gingers" I thought it would make a nice gift for my mother. I my very tiny public library ordered it and let me read it before putting it on the shelves. It is a tough read and not what I thought based on the interview I listened to. Quite a bit of incredible research, but not my cup of tea, too bad for me.

Did you know that the first evidence of red haired people was found in Asia? I heard about this book on an NPR interview. It is fascinating and full of info I didn't know about the "red head gene." I'm not finished yet, but can already recommend it for anyone who enjoys learning random history but **ESPECIALLY** for anyone with the gene. It's confidence inspiring for those of us who have struggled coming to terms with our light complexion or reddish hair.

Delightful and serious at the same time. Jacky Colliss Harvey writes with a sense of humor and a historian's attention to facts. She's a redhead. She knows the emotions and delights of "being different." The book has excellent footnotes, an index, a reading list and good four-color illustrations. Ms. Harvey's research is impressive. I'm a redhead, lots of my family are redheads. If you know a ginger, this book would be a great gift.

I am not a redhead, but I have friends and a couple of relatives who are, and I found this book enlightening and such fun to read that I became completely absorbed in it and lost all track of time. I don't usually read books more than once, but this one was so enjoyable, that I'm sure I will pick it up again as a relaxing and interesting diversion.

Bought from the author at a National Redhead Festival near Chicago. Focus is more on art and history due to the author's background, and there was a lot of stuff I already knew from other sources. Overall, a good read and "must-have" for redheads or those who love them.

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