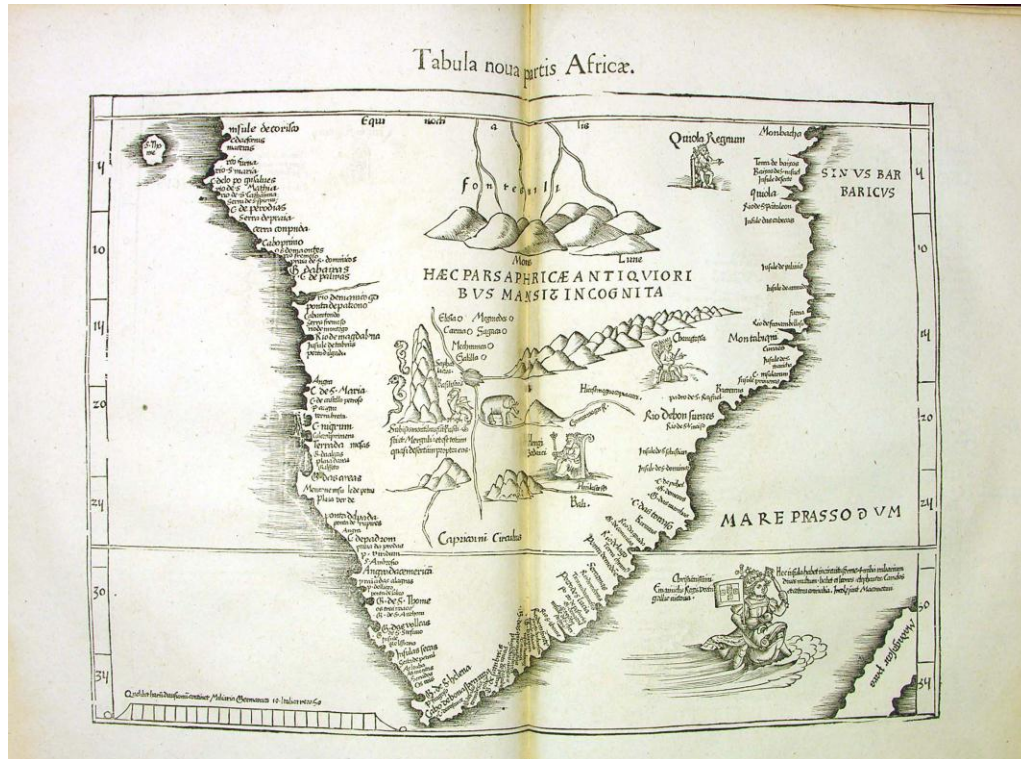


Imaginary Lands



**St John's College
Old Library**

Ptolemy's guide to geography was originally written in the 2nd century A.D. – that's almost 2000 year ago! It was the standard work on geography until the 16th century, and was still influential in the 18th century despite its inaccuracies. The maps are not from Ptolemy's original book – they were first drawn for another version, in 1522.



Imagine you're an explorer in 1550, using the *Geographia* to plan a trip to Africa. List three things you might expect to find there after studying this map:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Ii.2.26 ***World Chronicle (the ‘Nuremberg Chronicle’)***
by Hartmann Schedel, 1493

Hartmann Schedel was one of the first **cartographers** (mapmakers) to use the printing press. This enabled him to create many copies of the same map, rather than having to draw them all by hand – and so maps became less expensive, and more popular.

The illustrations beside the map show creatures that the mapmaker has imagined live in other places around the world. They look almost human... but with some surprising differences!

Draw or describe some of the people Schedel believed could be found in other lands.

Gerhard Mercator lived from 1512 to 1594, at a time when most people did not ever leave their hometown. In 1544 Mercator was actually put in prison, because the authorities were suspicious of his frequent travels – they couldn't understand why he would need to go away so often unless he was involved in a conspiracy!

Mercator was one of the first people to use the term 'atlas' in a book. What is an atlas, and where does the word originate from? (Use the dictionary definitions to help you.)

The very middle point on this map is labelled 'Polus Arcticus'. What is the English name for this place, which many explorers have attempted to visit?

What kinds of clothing and equipment would you need if you were travelling to 'Polus Arcticus'?

Where would you have to be to see the world from the perspective Mercator has used on his map?

F.1.21

Cosmographia

by Sebastian Münster, 1559 edition

Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia* was the earliest German book to give a description of the world. It became one of the most popular books of the 16th century and was translated into six different languages. The Latin edition on display shows a fantastic array of 'monsters marine and terrestrial' – those living in the sea and on the land.

Can you see any people in the picture? What are they doing, or what is happening to them?

Draw or describe your favourite creature from this picture.

Find the map showing the parts of Asia historically known as Persia, Armenia, Anatolia and Arabia. Do you know what any of these countries are called today?

The geographical features of the land are drawn onto the map. How could you describe these areas?

Which tiny symbol has the mapmaker used to indicate a town or settlement? (Look very carefully and you'll notice it all over the map.)

From the illustrations around the edge of the map, what do you think the climate is like? What are the people like? Which animals can you see there?

Aa/G.17.21

Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus
(History of the Northern Peoples)

by Olaus Magnus, 1558 edition

Olaus Magnus came from Sweden. His book is about the customs and folklore of the Northern countries we now call 'Scandinavia'. It's quite different from what we expect history books to be like today!

His descriptions of the dark winters, violent sea currents and the beasts that inhabited the waters amazed European readers, who didn't know Sweden had sea monsters...

Describe or draw one of the 'horribilibus monstribus' Olaus Magnus has written about. Don't forget to give your monster a name!

Kk.6.34

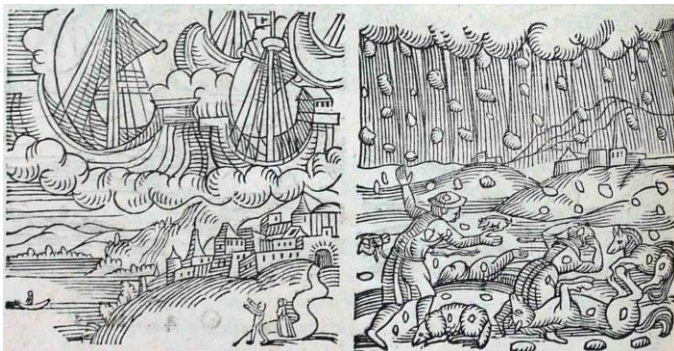
Prodigiorum ac ostentorum chronicon

by Konrad Lykosthenes, 1557

This 'chronicle of omens and portents' from the 16th century tells of hundreds of mysterious and fantastic events, and sights which people reported seeing just before bad things happened.

The illustrations helped readers to imagine the kinds of things they might find in far away and mysterious places.

What strange occurrences do these pictures show?



F.12.12

Gerania: a new discovery of a little sort of people anciently discoursed of, called pygmies

by Joshua Barnes, 1673

What is special about a pygmy?



A copy of the book's introduction is on top of the case. Can you read the 17th-century print? Have a go!

It might help you to know that in the 17th century the letter **ſ** was another way of writing **s**, and sometimes **y** was used instead of **i**.

The author tells us that we should believe pygmies exist if we believe that their opposite exists. What is the opposite of a pygmy?

The Mercator *Atlas* in this exhibition shows where Pygmies “actually” live. Which places or world features do they supposedly live near?

Find the illustration showing the island of Utopia. Here is the author's description of his imaginary land:

'The island of Utopia is 200 miles broad in the middle...
Eleven miles breadth of sea washeth its horns and formeth a considerable bay, encompassed by a shore about 500 miles in extent, and well sheltered from storms. ...

In the middle is a rock which appeareth above water, on whose top is a tower inhabited by a garrison. The other rocks lie under water, and are very dangerous. The channel is known only by the natives, and a stranger entering the bay without one of their pilots would be in imminent danger of shipwreck. ...'

'**Utopia**' is a Greek word meaning '**no place**' – so the name of the island hints to the reader that the book is about a fictional (imagined) land. However, people often use 'Utopia' to mean a **good place**, or even the ideal (perfect) place.

Imagine your ideal place. What would it be like? Think about the location, landscape, weather, who (or what!) else lives there, which foods you can eat there, what kinds of activities you can do...

List some of its features:



You might have heard of *Gulliver's Travels*... it's a very popular book about a man who sails around the world and discovers not just one but many strange and unreal lands.

In **Lilliput** the people are only **12** centimetres tall...

In **Brobdingnag** the people are more than **20** metres tall!

In one land he visits, horse-like creatures called **Houyhnhms** rule over humans...

In another the people are known as **Struldbrugs** and are all *very* old, because they can never die.

When Gulliver escapes from Brobdingnag his boat gets attacked by pirates, who leave him marooned on a rocky island near India. This picture shows what happens next.

What do you think is happening? What can Gulliver see approaching him in the sky? How is it going to rescue him? What will he discover when he gets up there?

Erewhon was invented by the writer Samuel Butler in 1872. Although Butler made up all the details of his imaginary land, he based it on a real country. Look at the map: which country was Butler thinking of?

Now look closely at the name of his imaginary country: **EREWTHON**. It's an anagram of another word. Rearrange the letters to find out where Erewhon really is, and write your answer below:

In the chapter you can see on display, the narrator climbs over the top of a huge mountain and suddenly finds himself in Erewhon. From the picture or his description on the page, what do you think he first sees?

Can you think of any other writers who have imagined new lands, worlds or people? Perhaps they involve magic, witches and wizards, or talking animals... or they might be set in the future, or in space...

List some imaginary lands from stories you have read or films you have seen: