

Original Typescript Scroll of "On the Road"

Date

1951

Primary Maker

Jack Kerouac

Medium

Paper; Ink

Description

The original manuscript of *On the Road* by Jack Kerouac, 1951. A typescript "scroll" consisting of taped pieces of paper, roughly 12 feet each in length, with the overall scroll measuring 119.5 feet. The scroll consists of unbroken, single-spaced prose. Some corrections, strikethroughs, and additions are made in pencil throughout. Jack Kerouac began working on what would become *On the Road* in the late-1940s, ultimately culminating in being published by Viking Press in 1957. The novel follows the semi-autobiographical travels of Kerouac, as narrator Sal Paradise, and other members of the Beat Generation movement (also represented with pseudonyms). Kerouac's spontaneous prose ushered in a new generation of writing. Its themes of freedom of thought and eschewing traditional American culture helped usher in the new wave of Beat Generation thinking. The published version of the novel differed from the scroll's original manuscript. Viking Press worried that its discussion of sex, drugs, and other explicit topics were too taboo for the times. Jack Kerouac (1922-1969), born Jean-Louis Lebris de K  rouac, was a novelist and poet who was a pioneer of the Beat movement in the mid-20th century. Kerouac's second book, *On the Road*, is credited as one of the seminal writings of the Beat and American Counterculture movements, and his influence was wide-ranging into the popular music of the 1960s and



beyond. Kerouac was born on March 12, 1922, in Lowell, Massachusetts. He attended Columbia University in New York City, where he met several of his future Beat Generation collaborators, including Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs, and Neal Cassady. Kerouac wrote his first novel, *The Town and the City*, in 1950, which was met with limited critical reception. His second novel, *On the Road*, was written in 1951, but was not published until 1957. *On the Road* was hailed as a defining work in the counterculture movement that became known as the Beat Generation, owing to its spontaneous and stream of consciousness style that reflected jazz and bop music of the era. *On the Road* was a semi-autobiographical tale of Kerouac and his friends travels throughout the United States, which espoused independent thinking and lifestyles that went against the conventional thinking of the time. This novel, along with Ginsberg's *Howl* (1956) and Burroughs' *Naked Lunch* (1959), formed the basis for the Beat Generation. Kerouac's follow up novel, *The Dharma Bums* (1958), expanded upon his work in *On the Road*, and explored a Buddhist approach to Kerouac's lived experiences. *On the Road* and *The Dharma Bums* served as direct influences to the hippie and anti-establishment counterculture of the 1960s, where social and sexual freedom pushed up against traditional authority in similar ways to the earlier Beat Generation. Kerouac published 13 novels and numerous works of poetry throughout his lifetime, with several more novels and compiled works being released posthumously. Numerous artists credit Kerouac as an influence for their work, including Bob Dylan, The Beatles, the Grateful Dead, and the Doors. Kerouac died on October 21, 1969, aged 47.

Dimensions

Overall: 119 13/16 ft. x 6 in. (3,651.3 x 15.2 cm)

