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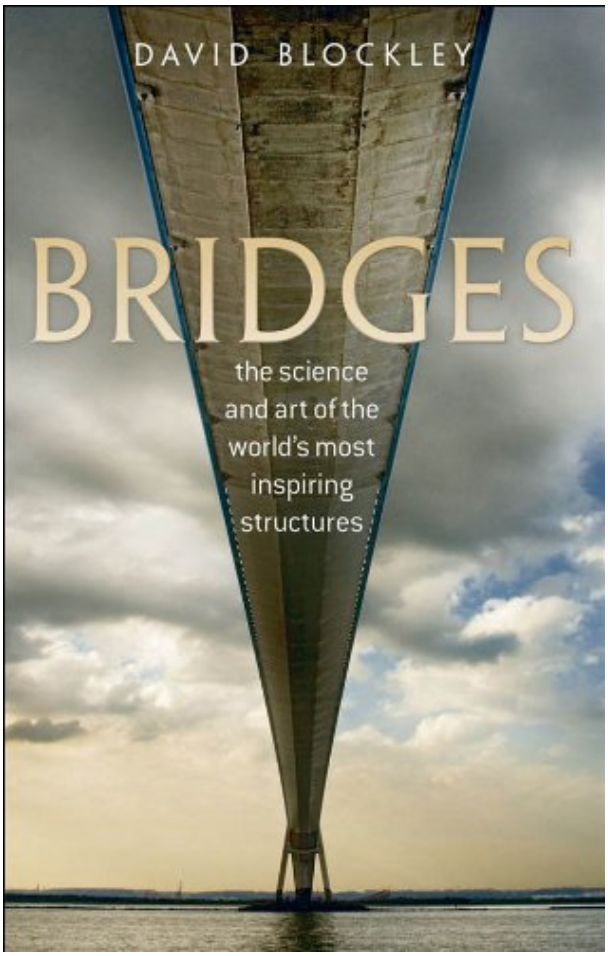

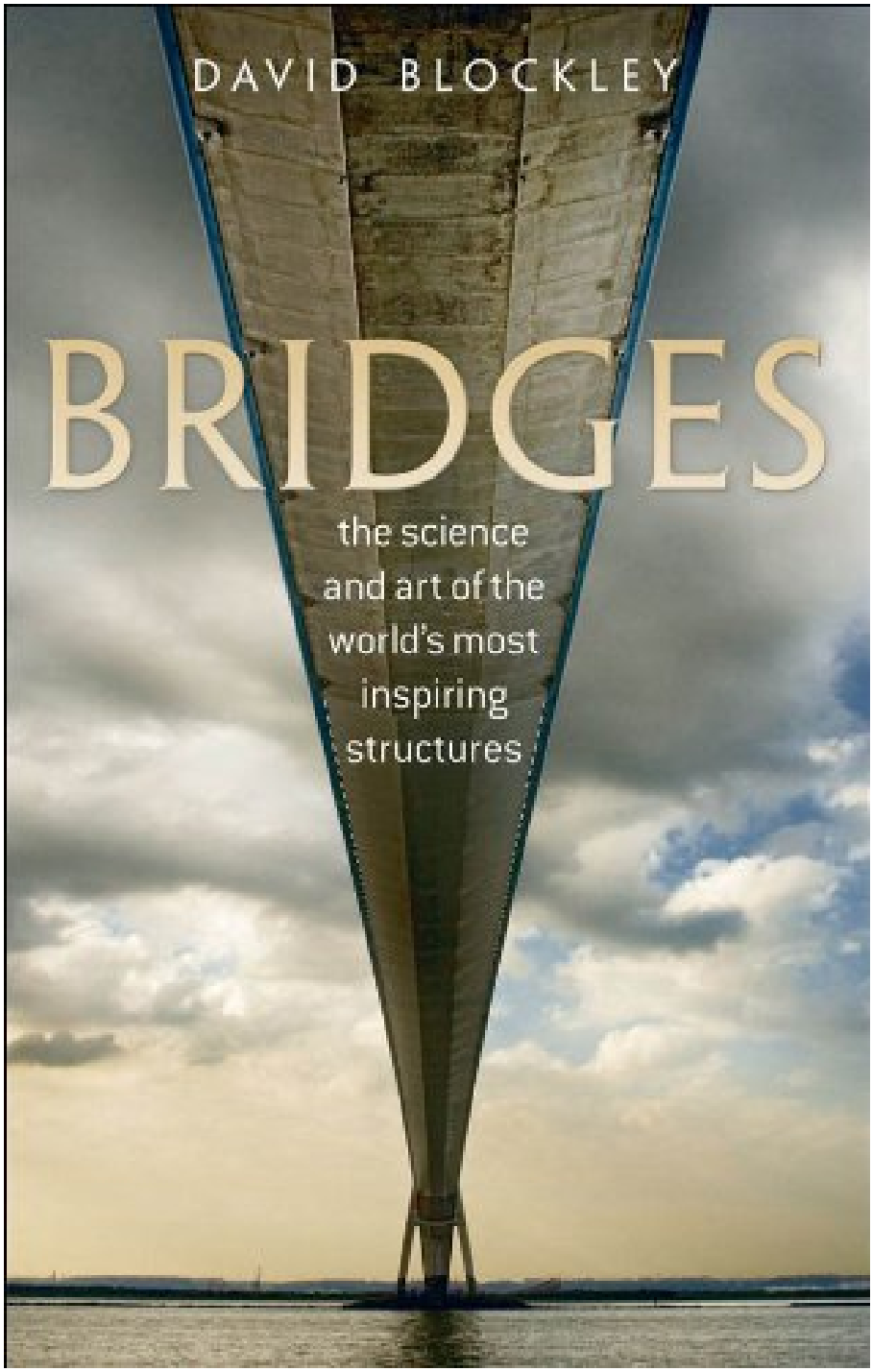

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From Publishers Weekly
Starred Review. In this fascinating exploration for lay readers, Blockley lucidly explains both the basic forces at work on every bridge—tension, compression, and shear—and the structural elements combating those forces: beams, arches, trusses, and suspension cables. He succeeds in his desire to read a bridge like a book. Following fellow civil engineers and writers David Billington and Henry Petroski, Blockley makes clear that engineers as much as architects and scientists design bridges and that technology is not merely applied science. The author provides an excellent history of bridge construction, from primitive rope bridges and Roman aqueducts to 19th- and 20th-century railroad bridges and contemporary achievements like Japan's Akashi-Kaiky Bridge, which has the largest central span of any suspension bridge. The author also discusses important bridge failures and the lessons learned from them, including the Minnesota I-35 bridge, and the less seriously damaged London Millennium Bridge, which was closed for two years after opening day's huge crowds caused wobbling. Blockley concludes that bridges do not merely transport people and goods but also help us express some of our deepest emotions. Bold, insightful statements help make this a remarkable work. 50 b&w illus. (Mar.)

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Review

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Bridges touch all our lives - every day we are likely to cross a bridge, or go under one. How many of us stop to consider how the bridge stands up and what sort of people designed and built something so strong?

Bridge building is a magnificent example of the practical and every day use of science. However, the story of bridges goes beyond science and technology, and involves issues relating to artistic and cultural development. After all, bridges are built by people, for people. Bridges can be icons for whole cities; just consider New York's Brooklyn Bridge, London's Tower Bridge, and Sydney's Harbour Bridge. Such bridges can be considered functional public art, as they have the power to delight or be
an eyesore.

David Blockley explains how to read a bridge, in all its different forms, design, and construction, and the way the forces flow through arches and beams. He combines the engineering of how bridges stand up with the cultural, aesthetic, and historical importance they hold. Drawing on examples of particular bridges from around the world, he also looks in detail at the risk engineers take when building bridges, and examines why things sometimes go wrong.

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19 of 20 people found the following review helpful.
A fascinating introduction to the world's bridges for the general reader
By Michael from Bristol
This book is written by a professor of engineering, but with the general reader in mind. Although it deals with technical matters, these are presented in a way that does not require a high level of mathematics or physics. It has 50 illustrations including many magnificent photographs.

The structure of the book is as clear as the structure of the bridges that it discusses. After an introductory chapter it considers the four main types of bridge in turn; beams, arches, trusses, and suspension. It then considers the question of safety, and finally the development and maintenance of bridges as team work.

Bridges are considered as works of art as well as civil engineering, and the book is very rich in references to other arts and to culture in the widest sense, with references to Newton, Kant, Michelangelo, Giotto, Palladio, Herodotus, Tracey Emin, Antony Gormley, and many others. David Blockley also considers bridges as symbols, icons, landmarks, and as objects of inspiration.

There are fascinating sections on many celebrated bridges including the wobbly Millennium Bridge, the Clifton Suspension Bridge, the Salginatobel Bridge, and the Millau Viaduct.

This is also a book that could be of value to schools. It brings maths and physics to life, and could be a vehicle for taking students on trips to visit bridges to see how these disciplines are used in practice in ways that are important as transport links as well as being imaginative and inspirational.

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful.
Not an easy read
By Dr. B. W. Langer
Thank goodness I had an engineering course 50 yrs. ago. This was not a book for the lay reader. It was poorly organized - facts mixed with philosophy -- what a mix!!! Book needed more and better illustrations.

I would definately not recommend this book for the person seeking a basic understanding of bridges. Sorry - If you have a math/civil engineering background , you'll survive the book otherwise you won't.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.
Eye-Opening
By Tritia James
I sometimes read books on a subject in which I don't feel any particular interest and know very little about, just to deepen my understanding of the world, and to see if perhaps it is an interesting subject once you take the time to consider it. That is why I picked up this book, along with several other books about bridges. This is the book that caught my imagination. It was so fascinating! I love how this author was able to take what could be a lot of dry facts about physics, materials, and construction and weave them into such a beautiful "story" about the who/what/where/when/how of bridges. No, I didn't understand every one of the physics concepts, but it didn't take away from the enjoyment of the book. Also, there were many concepts that I did understand thanks to the wonderful analogies the author used to illustrate them. I also saw that the physics of a bridge is a huge part of what makes a bridge a thing of beauty and wonder. I would suggest reading this book while simultaneously looking at a book of well-done color photographs of the bridges that are discussed in this book. Up till now, I've never even considered the bridges I've crossed. But now that I have a basic understanding of bridges, I will certainly notice them. And knowing how to look at them, I will certainly see their brilliance and beauty. Any book that increases my sense of wonder at some aspect of our world gets five stars!

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