



ON THE TOWN

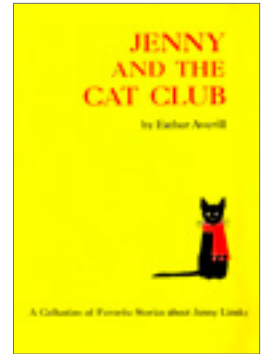
Esther Averill (1902-1992)

*Jenny and the Cat Club: A Collection
of Favorite Stories about Jenny Linsky*

New York: Harper & Row, 1973

Jenny and the Cat Club is set in Greenwich Village and has wonderful old NYC details and terrific illustrations.

LAURA WHITMAN (Member)



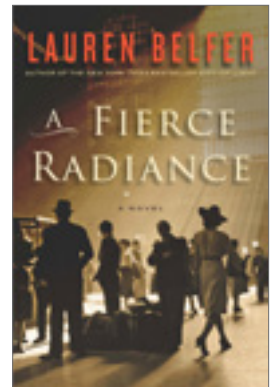
Lauren Belfer (1954-)

A Fierce Radiance

New York: Harper, 2010

A Fierce Radiance, a *Washington Post* Best Novel of the Year and NPR Best Mystery of the Year, is a beautiful valentine to 1940s New York City. Its main character, Claire Shipley, stumbles upon the greatest story of her career when she is assigned to take pictures of the scientists at the Rockefeller Institute who, as part of a secret war project, are working against time to develop life-saving antibiotics.

MICHAEL MARISSIN (Member)



The Life and Letters of Henry Cuyler Bunner

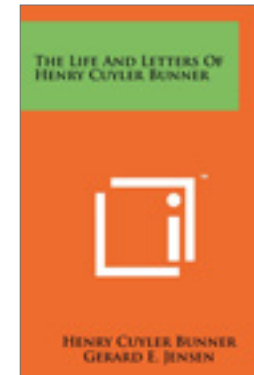
Edited by Gerald E. Jensen

Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1939

This masterful biography introduces readers to Henry Cuyler Bunner, the inspiring and quintessential New Yorker of the late nineteenth century and grand-nephew of Alexander Hamilton. Bunner was the editor-in-chief of *Puck* magazine and the brilliant forbear of the literary genre “The New York Story.” He spoke out for the immigrant, the poor, the disenfranchised, and the new middle class.

I was so inspired by H.C. Bunner that I wrote my own historic-detective biography about him: *The Inadvertent Researcher: A New York Story*. I also wrote a play adaptation of Edith Wharton’s novella *Bunner Stories*, an homage to H.C. Bunner, which was presented at the Library and subsequently performed Off-Broadway. H.C. also inspired me to co-curate an exhibition about his life at the Nutley Historical Society Museum in New Jersey. Reading Jensen’s biography at the Library opened my eyes to a forgotten New Yorker who lives on in the literature and political history of our remarkable city.

LINDA SELMAN (Member)



Robert A. Caro (1935-)

The Power Broker:

Robert Moses and the Fall of New York

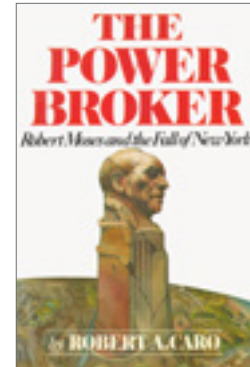
New York: Knopf, 1974

My first real insight into how this city works. Read when I first moved here in the 70s.

MARY ELLEN BIANCO (Member)

An epic tale by a master storyteller of a man and the city he changed forever; a stunning study of raw power, its uses, and abuses.

ELLEN FELDMAN (Member)



Caleb Carr (1955-)

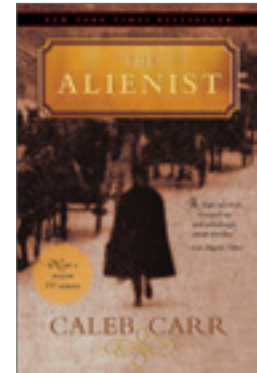
The Alienist

New York: Random House, 1994

The Alienist has provided two of the great thrills of my reading life. First, it was one of those rare books I read in one sitting, through a whole day and on into the night, pausing only for fridge raids. This is not because its whodunit element is such a gripper; the mystery itself is garden-variety. But its mix of fanatically detailed period science and setting with a colorful gallery of historical and believable characters grabbed me by the throat. Carr makes a tangible, smellable thing of the year 1896, when the outlines of modern psychology were just becoming discernable, detective work was embracing scientific and pseudo-scientific methods, and New York City was crashing toward the incorporation of the outer boroughs and the next century's upheavals.

My second big thrill was when I re-read the book a few years later and realized, at a crucial plot twist, that I was at that moment directly below the scene of the action I was reading about—on the 7 train! I hear that the current TV adaptation of Carr's work is well worth seeing. But I guarantee you the book is better.

SARA HOLLIDAY (Head of Events)



Paul E. Cohen

[*Manhattan in Maps, 1527-2014*](#)

Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 2014

Eric Homberger

[*Historical Atlas of New York City*](#)

New York: H. Holt and Co., 1994

If you're fascinated by New York City history and maps, you'll want these books, or you already own them. The *Historical Atlas* is packed with not only maps but also illustrations and data-rich charts and graphs. *Manhattan in Maps* reproduces only maps—beautiful and amazing maps, with a scholarly yet engaging description of each.

DAVID FLORMAN (Member)

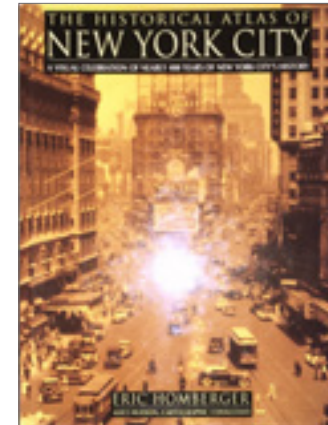
Patrick Dennis (1921-1976)

[*The Joyous Season*](#)

New York: Green Mansion Press, 1993

Early sixties Manhattan from the POV of a ten-year-old boy. A *New Yorker* cartoon cast of privileged characters and details of the city. Somewhere I heard said it was a send-up of *The Catcher in the Rye*.

ELIZABETH MATSON (Member)



E.L. Doctorow (1931-2015)

Ragtime

New York: Random House, 1975

This panoramic novel ranges over the New York City area in the pre-World War I era with appearances by real-life figures, e.g. the architect Stanford White (Madison Square building on 23rd Street), including a dramatic scene at the Morgan Library where Coalhouse Walker, a much-abused Black professional musician, is under siege. The lives of recent refugees from Eastern Europe are interwoven with the others to achieve a complex tapestry of life in New York City at the time.

GAIL AND TOM ORR (Members)



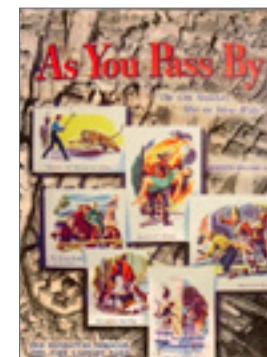
Kenneth Holcomb Dunshee (1900-1964)

As You Pass By

New York: Hastings House, 1952

It's a wonderful book about the old volunteer fire companies of New York and the neighborhoods they serviced. Very cute, heavily illustrated.

STUART BORNSTEIN (Member)



Jack Finney (1911-1995)

Time and Again

New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970

Jack Finney captures the ambiance of different neighborhoods very well, and it is even illustrated! It's a great story and has become a classic. (I'll bet you get more than a few votes for this book.)*



An interesting sidelight: the drawing of Julia inside the book is actually an early portrait of the publisher's wife (Mrs. Peter Schwed).

MARIA A. DERING (Member)

**We certainly did.* Other members and staff who suggested *Time and Again* were Rob Ackerman, Gloria Altherr, Harris Herman, Sarah G. Kagan, Stephanie Merchant, Kathy Miller, Joseph Russo, Susan L. Schlechter, Sally Svenson and Sheila Walpin. Here is a sampling.

Jack Finney (1911-1995)

Time and Again

New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970

Our family rereads *Time and Again* at least once a year. The story, taking one through a historical, architectural and social tour of the gilded age, coupled with the evocative photos from the Bettmann Archives, is delightful travel.

GLORIA ALTHERR (Member)

The protagonist goes back to the New York City of 1882 and lives there for a short time to help solve a mystery.

HARRIS HERMAN (Member)

A time-travel adventure set around New York City in the 1970s and the 1880s, *Time and Again* blends science fiction with a mystery in both the past and the present. It also features beautiful illustrations and descriptions of New York City in the Gilded Age.

STEPHANIE MERCHANT (Circulation Assistant)

If you're looking for a good read that is both down-to-earth and magical, nostalgic and futuristic, historical and romantic all at the same time, *Time and Again* is a fun ride you would enjoy. A reading requirement for anyone living in or at least appreciating New York City and the adventurous ways it inspires.

JOSEPH RUSSO (Systems Assistant)



Jack Finney (1911-1995)

Time and Again

New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970

Way before the glut of time-travel books became popular, this well-written book existed. About buildings and places we can all still see. Evocative, mysterious, poignant. About the vagaries of chance and history.

SUSAN L. SCHLECHTER (Member)

Whenever I hear the clip-clip of horses leading carriages through Central Park, I think of this particular New York.

SALLY SVENSON (Member)

A marvelous read that takes one back and forth in time from the present to New York in the 1880s.

SHEILA WALPIN (Member)

Also suggested by Rob Ackerman, Sarah G. Kagan and Kathy Miller, (Members).



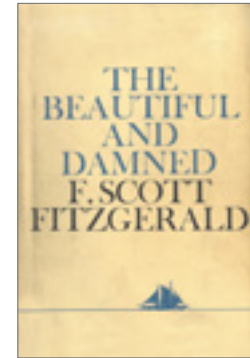
F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940)

The Beautiful and Damned

New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977

The Beautiful and Damned is a book set mainly in New York and worth reading.

ALAN MARGOLIES (Member)



Susan E. Goodman (1952-)

On This Spot: An Expedition Back Through Time

New York: Greenwillow Books, 2004

This beautifully illustrated book takes readers back through time, showing and describing what New York City was like in each era all the way back to the Paleozoic Era.

RANDI LEVY (Head of the Children's Library)



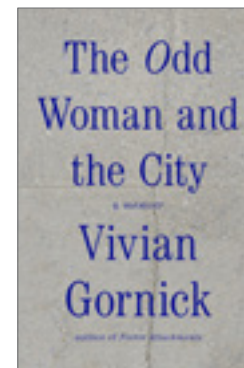
Vivian Gornick (1935-)

The Odd Woman and the City: A Memoir

New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015

This book is beautifully written and presents parts of the city that are so real but not often expressed.

DARYL SHAPIRO (Member)



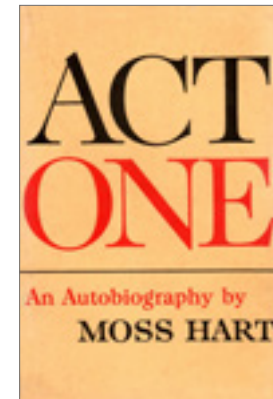
Moss Hart (1904-1961)

Act One: An Autobiography

New York: Random House, 1959

A budding playwright from outside Manhattan aspires to the glories of Broadway, works hard to deserve them, and comes close to failing many times. But he triumphs in the end with grit, wit and luck. That book changed my life. It is one of the best theatre memoirs I've read.

ROB ACKERMAN (Member)



Kevin Hawkes (1959-)

The Wicked Big Toddlah Goes to New York

New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011

Many New Yorkers go to Maine in the summer to escape the concrete heat, but here's a fun story about what happens when a "wicked big toddlah" comes on his own sight-seeing trip to the Big Apple. A great read-aloud tale sure to delight anyone from New England or New York and many points in between!

SUSAN VINCENT MOLINARO (Children's & Young Adult Librarian)



The Hone & Strong Diaries of Old Manhattan

Edited by Louis Auchincloss

New York: Abbeville Press, 1989

Philip Hone and George Templeton Strong recorded their impressions of mid-19th-century city life in thousands of pages of diary entries. Too much for me. But this edition is a highly readable 270 pages—including dozens (hundreds?) of newly added 19th-century illustrations—assembled “for the New York City ‘buff’ who likes to read about the past as well as the present of our town.” That’s me. Local and national politics, crime and disease, the Civil War, music and the arts, the gossip of the day—a wide range of interesting topics. The late Louis Auchincloss (lawyer/novelist/diarist, and trustee of this Library) must have felt a kinship with his subjects as he edited this volume.

DAVID FLORMAN (Member)



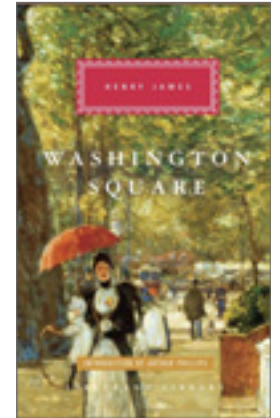
Henry James (1843-1916)

[Washington Square](#)

New York: The Heritage Press, 1971

Set in one of my favorite parts of the city, *Washington Square* is a story about an heiress with a dominating father and a suitor who seems to be up to no good. Although it's James, it's hard to put down!!

EMILY DUNLAP (Member)



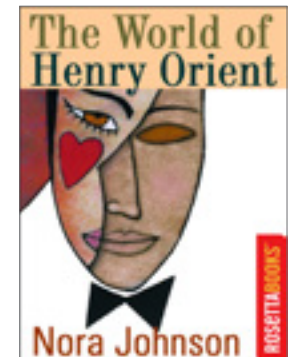
Nora Johnson (1933-2017)

[The World of Henry Orient](#)

Boston: Atlantic, Little Brown, 1958

The World of Henry Orient was so resonant of my friends and me stalking celebrities in the days when 12-year-old girls could roam the city on our own. And, of course, I saw the wonderful Peter Sellers movie.

IRENE SAX (Member)



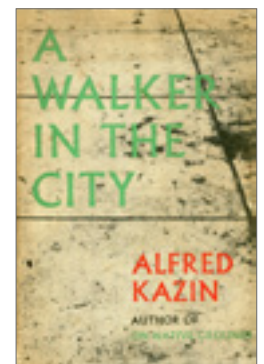
Alfred Kazin (1915-1998)

[A Walker In the City](#)

New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1951

Kazin's intense re-entering of his Brownsville childhood as the first American-born of an immigrant family evokes my mother's own early years on Thatford Avenue, and the immigrant experience of feeling outside "America."

EVELYN FRIEDMAN (Member)



E.L. Konigsburg (1930-2013)

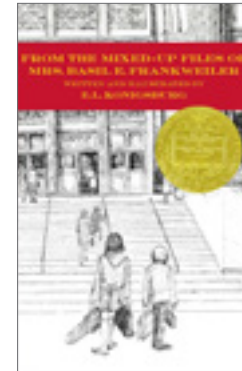
From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler

New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 1967

I wish I could write like I felt when I was 12 years old and read E.L. Konigsburg's *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*, but it is many decades later. Even so, thinking of the book immediately makes me happy, because it takes me to New York City and, even more specifically, to the MUSEUM (the Metropolitan Museum of Art) which is where 11-year-old Claudia and her 9-year-old brother Jamie head when they run away from home. Now I marvel at Konigsburg's ingenuity, but when I was 12 and growing up in rural Virginia, I was thrilled by Claudia and Jamie's totally relatable, totally doable adventure. I know I would follow where they led.

EDNA JOHNSTON (member)

From the Mixed-Up Files was also suggested by Cynthia Frisch Florman, Sheila Walpin, Terry and Andrew Wasserman-Lom and Carolyn Waters.

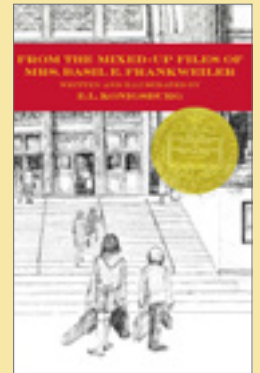


E.L. Konigsburg (1930-2013)

From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler

New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 1967

I loved the mystery, loved reading about the Met Museum. When I visited the museum, I searched for the bed the kids had slept in, the bathroom they had hidden in, and the fountain where they had found spending money. When I received it as a gift in 3rd Grade, it was one of the most exciting books I had ever read.



CYNTHIA FRISCH FLORMAN (Member)

From the Mixed-up Files is a delightful read about two children who run away to the Met before the pool was covered over...my children still remember having lunch sitting around the pool.

SHEILA WALPIN (Member)

For a small-town-suburban New Jersey girl like myself, this story was impossibly alluring. Who wouldn't want to run away to the big city and live a new life (at least until her parents could appreciate her) in the glamorous, comfortable, and enormous Metropolitan Museum of Art? I have read and re-read this Newbery Award-winning book about precocious Claudia, her little brother Jamie (along for the ride because he can fund the expedition), and the mystery of the provenance of a statue in the museum's collection, many times.

CAROLYN WATERS (Head Librarian)

Rachel Kushner (1968-)

The Flamethrowers

New York City: Scribner, 2013

Kushner brought to life an electric 1970s New York era.

JENNIFER LAUREN (Member)



Sally Lloyd-Jones (1960-)

Goldfish on Vacation

New York: Schwartz & Wade Books, 2017

Based on a true New York story, this is the delightful tale of how the Hamilton Fountain in Riverside Park became a summer haven for local goldfish.

RANDI LEVY (Head of the Children's Library)



Colum McCann (1965-)

Let the Great World Spin

New York: Random House, 2009

One of the best depictions of New York City in free-fall in the 1970s.

VICKI WOJCIK (Member)



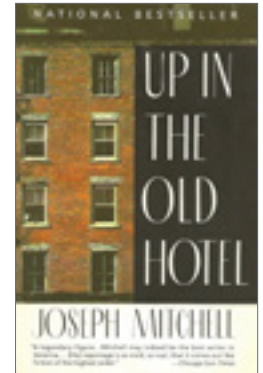
Joseph Mitchell (1908-1996)

[Up in the Old Hotel and Other Stories](#)

New York: Pantheon Books, 1992

This collection of short essays that appeared in the *New Yorker* captures the essence of the city and the diverse individuals that give it its character.

MARY MCGLYNN (Member)



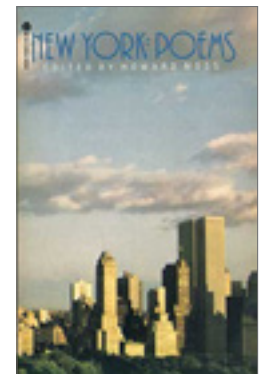
Edited by Howard Moss

[New York: Poems](#)

New York: Avon Books, 1980

This is a deeply fabulous anthology, both an emblem of its time—the waning of the New York School of poetry, and just past the nadir of the decay of Manhattan—and a timelessly wonderful collection. Along with *Harriet the Spy*, it's one of the main reasons why, as an adolescent, I knew exactly where I wanted to live.

LIZ DENLINGER (Member)



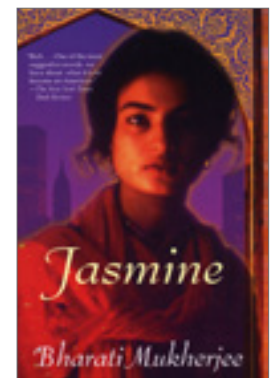
Bharati Mukherjee (1940-2017)

[Jasmine](#)

New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989

Jasmine is one of my favorite New York City reads because of its depiction of a South Asian working as a nanny and living near Riverside Park.

SARAH G. KAGAN (member)



A.M. Rosenthal (1922-2006)

Thirty-Eight Witnesses: The Kitty Genovese Case

New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964

I can never get away from, and I always am drawn back to, *Thirty-Eight Witnesses*, which on the one hand was a quintessential, defining New York book when published, but also is so timeless and transcendent and universal, and raises questions and issues that are as important and resonant now as they ever have been.

ANDREW BLAUNER (Member)

Philip Roth (1933-2018)

Portnoy's Complaint

New York: Random House, 1969

My recent read that would fit this bill [of favorite New York City books] is *Portnoy's Complaint*. I had not read it cover to cover before now. Better late than never.

ROBERT S. APRIL (Member)

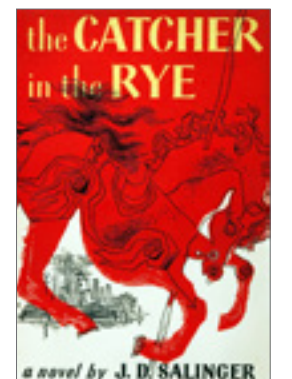
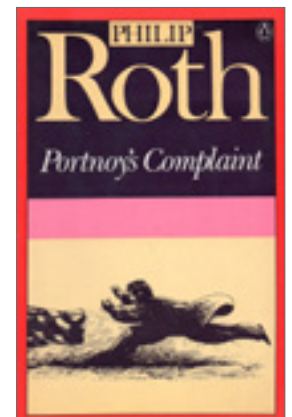
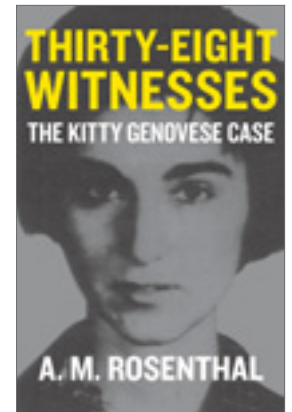
J.D. Salinger (1919-2010)

The Catcher in the Rye

Boston: Little, Brown, 1951

Playing hooky in New York City. Youth. Adventure. Manhattan.

JENNIFER LAUREN (Member)



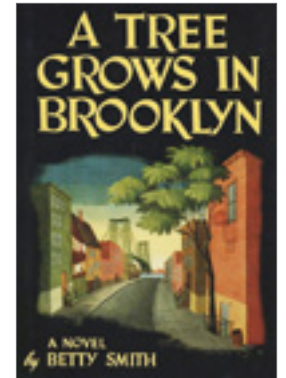
Betty Smith (1896-1972)

[A Tree Grows in Brooklyn](#)

New York: Everybody's Vacation Publishing Co., 1943

A Tree Grows in Brooklyn is a widely acclaimed and very moving novel set in the early-20th-century Williamsburg slums of Brooklyn. It is more than a story of childhood and family relationships—it is a story of triumph over adversity. Unlike *Little Women* and *Anne of Green Gables*, also books about children growing up, Betty Smith's novel is for adults because of its stark realism and its authentic characterizations. The reader senses that it is an autobiographical story.

ADA PELUSO (Trustee Emerita)



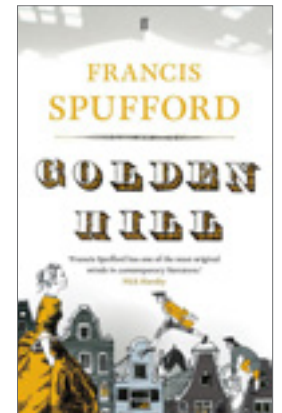
Francis Spufford (1964-)

[Golden Hill](#)

London: Faber & Faber, 2016

Golden Hill brings an unknown New York—pre-Revolutionary War—to life by brilliantly borrowing the conceits of the 18th-century novel; it is refreshing, rollicking good fun; a mystery; a love story; and has surprising, poignant resonance for today.

GAYLE FELDMAN (Member)



Rex Stout (1886-1975)

Fer-de-Lance

London: Hamish Hamilton, 1970

I'm a big fan of Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe books. There are about 70 novels or stories and most of them take place in New York City and I have read all of them at least once. While most locations in the books are fictional, the spirit of the city is captured perfectly, and the streets and avenues are accurately named at the time of writing. It is interesting to note that some of the avenues ran in the opposite direction at one time.

I particularly like *Fer-de-Lance*, which takes Archie Goodwin, Nero Wolfe's detective sidekick, to Sullivan Street and Little Italy. Virtually all of the Nero Wolfe novels have a primary setting in a brownstone on West 35th Street (a fictional address). Wolfe is known for seldom leaving his abode, so it is up to Archie to drive all over New York City, and sometimes to the suburbs, to do his work of detecting.

SUSANNE MCGINNIS (Member)



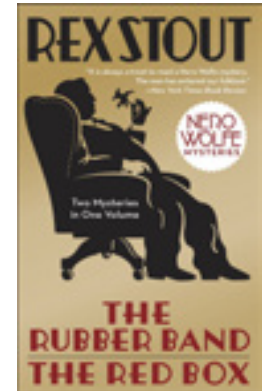
Rex Stout (1886-1975)

The Rubber Band

Farrar & Rinehart Inc., 1936

For me, the fictional heart of New York City is a townhouse on West 35th Street near the Hudson, the redoubt of Rex Stout's crafty, corpulent master detective Nero Wolfe. Here the macro and micro of the metropolis intersect. Through Wolfe's legman, Archie Goodwin, we range out across the city, with its crooks, socialites, cops, tycoons, and twenty-somethings on the make. In Wolfe's fastidiously ordered household—staffed by Goodwin, the horticulturist Theodore Horstmann, who helps Wolfe tend the thousands of orchids in his top-floor greenhouse, and the chef Fritz Brenner—we find the type of civilized, eccentric mini-community that so often thrives within the city. Stout's New York is an older, mid-20th century New York, in which men wear fedoras, women wear gloves, and calls have to be made from phone booths. But it is so sharply and wittily observed that it remains full of life today. Almost any of Stout's 33 Nero Wolfe mysteries would be exemplary. I single out *The Rubber Band*, which I pulled from my parents' bookshelf as a Midwestern schoolboy more than a half-century ago, because it's the one that introduced me to a beguiling vision of New York that has never faded.

CHRISTOPHER PORTERFIELD (Member)



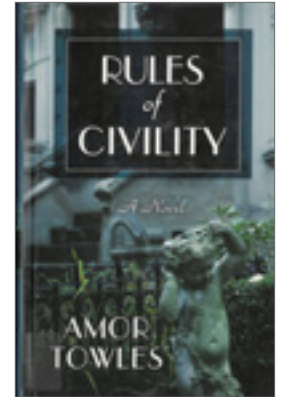
Amor Towles (1964-)

[Rules of Civility](#)

New York: Viking, 2011

Rules of Civility by Amor Towles gets my vote by a wide mile.
It captures all of the reinventive magic of moving to New York.

LIZ LONGLEY (Member)

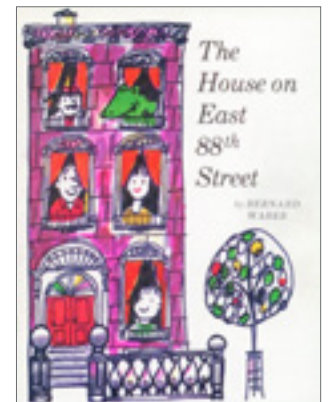


Bernard Waber (1921-2013)

[The House on East 88th Street](#)

New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962

TERRY AND ANDREW WASSERMAN-LOM (Members)



Edith Wharton (1862-1937)

[The House of Mirth](#)

New York: Norton, 1990

The House of Mirth contains my favorite descriptions
of Grand Central Terminal.

SARAH G. KAGAN (member)

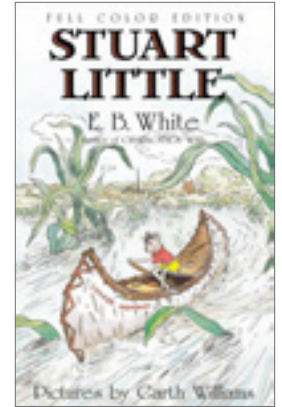


E.B. White (1899-1985)

Stuart Little

New York: Harper & Row, 1973

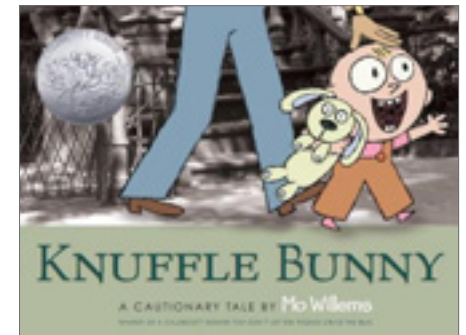
SALLY FISHER



Mo Willems (1968-)

Knuffle Bunny

New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 2004



I like *Knuffle* because all of the books are very funny. The part that is especially funny is when Trixie goes boneless. Mo Willems knows a lot about children and what they like. I like that the Knuffle Bunny has expressions even though it's a stuffed animal and that the dad's face always looks very exhausted from having a toddler. Mo Willems also hides his character the Pigeon in every book. His most recent book *Nanette's Baguette* is hilarious too but it takes place in France, not New York.

Felicity Strauss (Member, age 8)

James Wolcott (1952-)

Lucking Out:

My Life Getting Down and Semi-Dirty in Seventies New York

New York: Doubleday, 2011

CLAUDIA KEENAN (Member)



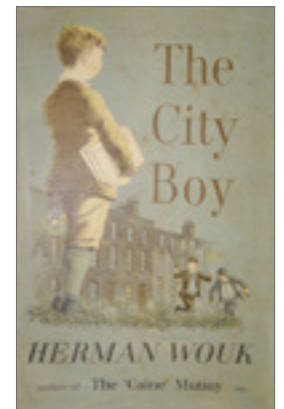
Herman Wouk (1915 -)

City Boy: The Adventures of Herbie Bookbinder

Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969

I loved this book when I was eleven, the same age as Herbie Bookbinder. As an adult, I find it just as funny and charming. The travails of everyday life and the romantic stirrings of an eleven-year old boy growing up in the Bronx make it New York City's response to *Tom Sawyer*.

CAROL MALONE (Chair of the Board of Trustees)



Hanya Yanagihara (1974-)

A Little Life

New York: Doubleday, 2015

In this atypical tale of friendship and modern love, the city itself becomes the fifth character amongst a gaggle of misfits and dreamers high on life, ambition, adrenalin.

NICOLE DWECK (Member)

