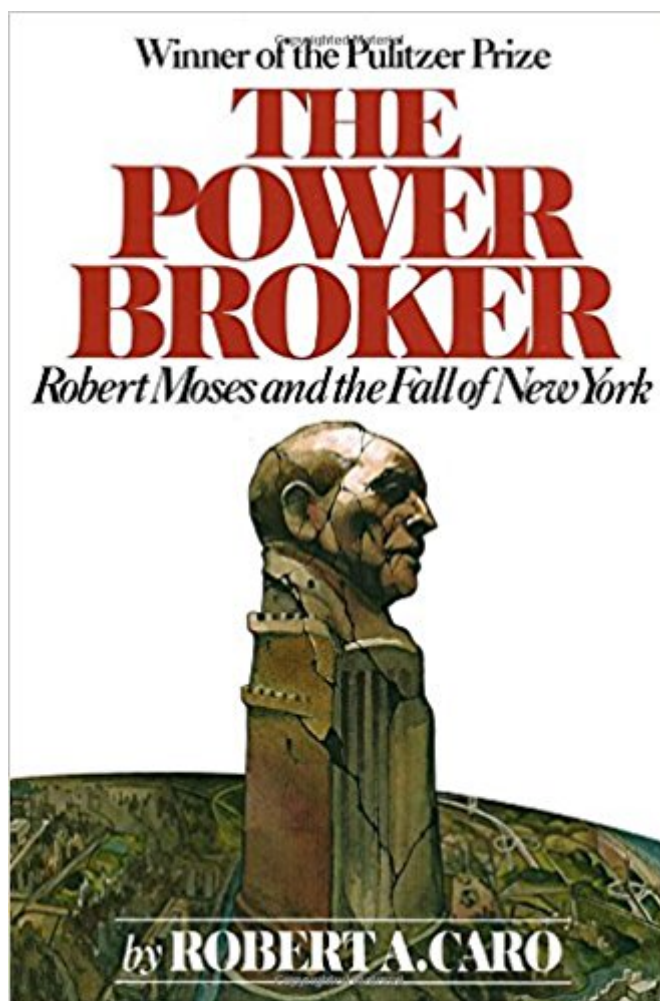


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# The Power Broker: Robert Moses And The Fall Of New York



## Synopsis

One of the most acclaimed books of our time, winner of both the Pulitzer and the Francis Parkman prizes, *The Power Broker* tells the hidden story behind the shaping (and mis-shaping) of twentieth-century New York (city and state) and makes public what few have known: that Robert Moses was, for almost half a century, the single most powerful man of our time in New York, the shaper not only of the city's politics but of its physical structure and the problems of urban decline that plague us today. In revealing how Moses did it--how he developed his public authorities into a political machine that was virtually a fourth branch of government, one that could bring to their knees Governors and Mayors (from La Guardia to Lindsay) by mobilizing banks, contractors, labor unions, insurance firms, even the press and the Church, into an irresistible economic force--Robert Caro reveals how power works in all the cities of the United States. Moses built an empire and lived like an emperor. He personally conceived and completed public works costing 27 billion dollars--the greatest builder America (and probably the world) has ever known. Without ever having been elected to office, he dominated the men who were--even his most bitter enemy, Franklin D. Roosevelt, could not control him--until he finally encountered, in Nelson Rockefeller, the only man whose power (and ruthlessness in wielding it) equalled his own.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Surely the greatest book ever written about a city." --David Halberstam "A masterpiece of American reporting. It's more than the story of a tragic figure or the exploration of the unknown politics of our

time. It's an elegantly written and enthralling work of art." --Theodore H. White "The most absorbing, detailed, instructive, provocative book ever published about the making and raping of modern New York City and environs and the man who did it, about the hidden plumbing of New York City and State politics over the last half-century, about the force of personality and the nature of political power in a democracy. A monumental work, a political biography and political history of the first magnitude." --Eliot Fremont-Smith, New York "One of the most exciting, un-put-downable books I have ever read. This is definitive biography, urban history, and investigative journalism. This is a study of the corruption which power exerts on those who wield it to set beside Tacitus and his emperors, Shakespeare and his kings." --Daniel Berger, Baltimore Evening Sun "Fascinating, every oversize page of it." --Peter S. Prescott, Newsweek "A study of municipal power that will change the way any reader of the book hereafter peruses his newspaper." --Philip Herrera, Time "A triumph, brilliant and totally fascinating. A majestic, even Shakespearean, drama about the interplay of power and personality." --Justin Kaplan "In the future, the scholar who writes the history of American cities in the twentieth century will doubtless begin with this extraordinary effort." --Richard C. Wade, The New York Times Book Review "The feverish hype that dominates the merchandising of arts and letters in America has so debased the language that, when a truly exceptional achievement comes along, there are no words left to praise it. Important, awesome, compelling--these no longer summon the full flourish of trumpets this book deserves. It is extraordinary on many levels and certain to endure." --William Greider, The Washington Post Book World "Apart from the book's being so good as biography, as city history, as sheer good reading, The Power Broker is an immense public service." --Jane Jacobs "Required reading for all those who hope to make their way in urban politics; for the reformer, the planner, the politician and even the ward heeler." --Jules L. Wagman, Cleveland Press "An extraordinary study of the workings of power, individually, institutionally, politically, and economically in our republic." --Edmund Fuller, The Wall Street Journal "Caro has written one of the finest, best-researched and most analytically informative descriptions of our political and governmental processes to appear in a generation." --Nicholas Von Hoffman, The Washington Post "Caro's achievement is staggering. The most unlikely subjects--banking, ward politics, construction, traffic management, state financing, insurance companies, labor unions, bridge building--become alive and contemporary. It is cheap at the price and too short by half. A milestone in literary and publishing history." --Donald R. Morris, The Houston Post "Irresistible reading. It is like one of the great Russian novels, overflowing with characters and incidents that all fit into a vast mosaic of plot and counterplot. Only this is no novel. This is a college education in power corruption." --George McCue, St. Louis Post-Dispatch

One of the most acclaimed books of our time, winner of both the Pulitzer and the Francis Parkman prizes, *The Power Broker* tells the hidden story behind the shaping (and mis-shaping) of twentieth-century New York (city and state) and makes public what few have known: that Robert Moses was, for almost half a century, the single most powerful man of our time in New York, the shaper not only of the city's politics but of its physical structure and the problems of urban decline that plague us today. In revealing how Moses did it--how he developed his public authorities into a political machine that was virtually a fourth branch of government, one that could bring to their knees Governors and Mayors (from La Guardia to Lindsay) by mobilizing banks, contractors, labor unions, insurance firms, even the press and the Church, into an irresistible economic force--Robert Caro reveals how power works in all the cities of the United States. Moses built an empire and lived like an emperor. He personally conceived and completed public works costing 27 billion dollars--the greatest builder America (and probably the world) has ever known. Without ever having been elected to office, he dominated the men who were--even his most bitter enemy, Franklin D. Roosevelt, could not control him--until he finally encountered, in Nelson Rockefeller, the only man whose power (and ruthlessness in wielding it) equalled his own.

This is one of those books that sticks with you. I sing its praises all the time. I just want to offer a practical suggestion for reading it because there is no kindle version (WHY???) and it is a backbreaking brick to lug around. This was a tip from *New York Magazine* on "How to read 'The Power Broker'": Buy a cheap paperback version, tear it into thirds, read one third at a time. When you finish you will love this book so much that you will probably want to buy a hardcover version to have on your shelf.

I grew up in N.Y.C. and was very aware of his works and their contributions to the livability of the City and surrounding areas. I was also in the same class as Robert Moses' grandson so had more of an awareness of Moses than most New Yorkers. The book details his life, his intellectual brilliance, and his careful crafting of his path to virtually unlimited power. His accomplishments are legendary but less well known is how his stubborn conceitedness ruined many of the aspects of City life and destroyed any and all who opposed him. His negative influence on the City is at least as important as his positive influence and, having lived through his major negative affect, the spreading of slums through the City, I found it harder and harder to read and never did finish the book. Caro is a fantastic Biographer and this book is every bit as good as his later multi-volume biography of

Lindon Johnson.

This book is a truly fascinating study for those interested in the urban history of New York, political power, or urban development. It clearly looks at the rise of Robert Moses who would go on to hold 12 different state, local and private positions including president of the World Fair. Through these interlocking positions Moses would command the resources to build almost all of the major roads, bridges and parkways in the five boroughs today. The story of how these roads came into being is fascinating and articulately and artfully told in this wonderful narrative. In a story so mind boggling it is almost hard to believe you see how "the civil servant that got things done" accomplishes bureaucratic wrangling to harness federal, state, local and private dollars into mammoth building projects. From Jones Beach to the Triborough Authority the master of legislative and monetary manipulation brought together the necessary engineering and political talent to achieve these projects in record time. Despite having enemies as powerful as the President of the United States Franklin Roosevelt or mayor of New York City La Guardia try to oust him he always held on. His ability to blend power from a variety of different sources and form "authorities" that were semi private with shareholders protected by legal rights he could keep his positions. The book covers so many different aspects that a review could go on for 30 pages but the bottom line is that this is a classic in political and urban history that should not be missed.CI

This book was better than any novel I've ever read. Mr. Caro certainly earned the Pulitzer with his thorough research and balanced coverage of the complex character of Robert Moses. I wish there had been more written about Mr. Moses's participation in the design, engineering, and building of the Verrazano Narrows Bridge though, at 1344 pages, Mr. Caro very likely thought we already had a pretty good idea about the level of his "participation" at that point. I'm sorry that Mr. Caro has been too busy to draft a final chapter for a reprint of this book, describing Mr. Moses's last days. As a West Coast "transplant", I found this a fascinating education in New York City and State landmarks . . . and a perfect explanation for the reason for all the traffic that we encounter every time we visit this magnificent city. As for the author, I guess now I'm going to have to learn a lot more about Lyndon Johnson. This is one truly great writer.

Awesome book, I really learned a lot about perseverance, believing in yourself, and plowing through with hard work and while ignoring the naysayers. Also, this is a great historical record of early 1900s NYC among many other things.

Phenomenal book, easy read, the size is daunting but it reads quickly. Gives incredible insight on history, economics, politics, architecture, urban planning and culture of the life surrounding Robert Moses. Recommended for anyone in the studies listed above or anyone who just has interests in history or that of New York City. Can't recommend it enough

A meticulously researched study of the quintessential workaholic and empire builder of modern times. In the first part of the book we are introduced to a man with a purpose: a reformer. The reformer abruptly changes into a self-seeking, power hungry madman - I use the term lightly - and imposes his boundless will on a willing city and a state. Caro's depiction of Moses leaves us both admiring and hating the man. Loving him for his remarkable and iconic edifices, parks and highways he built and hating him for the ruthless and brutal ways he achieved his aims. Caro presents us with a seemingly impartial view of the man until the chapter titled "Rumors And Report Of Rumors" towards the end of the book. Here he ingenuously exposes his true feelings about Moses: he despises him. He uses blacks and Puerto Ricans as his banner to portray Moses as a racist. Moses did the very same things to whites elsewhere but here he hopes to find a ready fount of animosity against Moses. But a careful reading of the text shows nothing more than purely subjective charges against the man. As the title so eloquently puts it, Rumor. He brings up bribery and corruption not against Moses but against the typical and ubiquitous bloodsuckers in all governments. All that said, I did find Caro's honest portrayal of Moses to be about a man I don't like. Self-centered, power-hungry, ruthless beyond the pale and arrogant to the fullest. Moses is not my friend.

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