



The Town and the City: A Novel (Harvest Book)

Jack Kerouac

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A quintessential American family is pulled apart by war and the rapidly changing tides of society in Jack Kerouac's captivating first novel

Published seven years before his iconic *On the Road*, Jack Kerouac's debut novel follows the experiences of one family as they navigate the seismic cultural shifts following World War II. Inspired by Kerouac's own New England youth, the eight Martin children enjoy an idyllic upbringing in a small Massachusetts mill-town. Middle son Peter, a budding intellectual and promising athlete, most strongly feels the lure of the future. When war breaks out, the siblings' lives are interrupted by military service; their parents must sell their house after the family business goes bankrupt; and Peter, eager to see the world, voyages overseas as a Merchant Marine.

After returning home, Peter is drawn to the kinetic energy of New York City and the progressive, bohemian ideas springing from its denizen young poets, writers, and artists. His new friends are fictionalized versions of Kerouac's contemporaries: Allen Ginsberg (as Leon Levinsky), Lucien Carr (as Kenneth Wood), and William Burroughs (as Will Dennison), and other members of the Beat Generation. Seen by Peter's parents as hoodlums and junkies, the Beats challenge conventional American ideas of everything from authority and religion to marriage and domestic life.

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