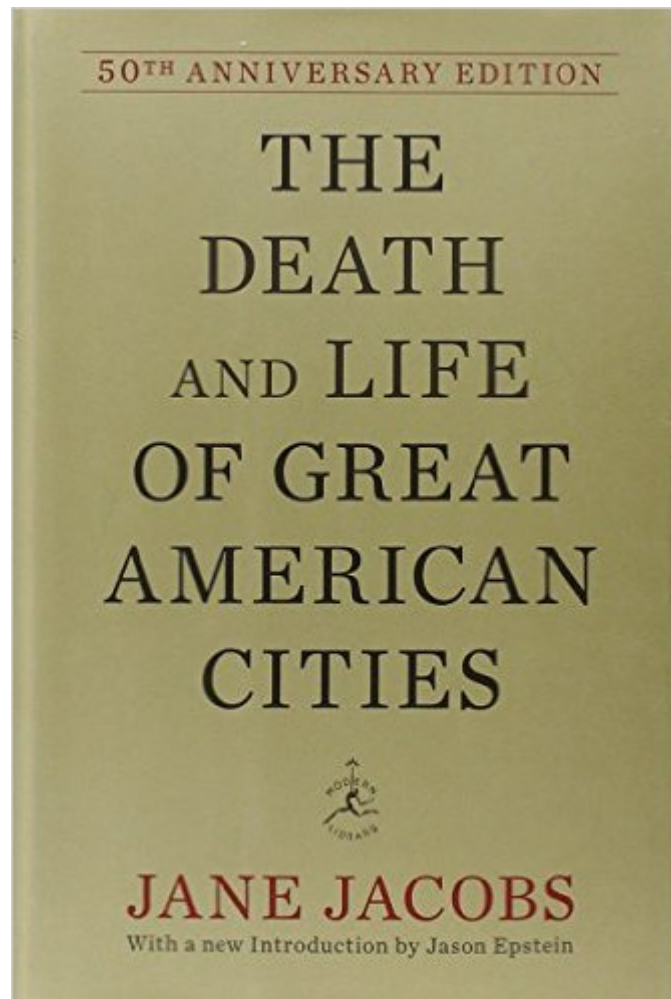


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The Death And Life Of Great American Cities (50th Anniversary Edition) (Modern Library)



Synopsis

Published to coincide with the 50th anniversary of its initial publication, this special edition of Jane Jacobs's masterpiece, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, features a new Introduction by Jason Epstein, the book's original editor, who provides an intimate perspective on Jacobs herself and unique insights into the creation and lasting influence of this classic. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* was described by *The New York Times* as "perhaps the most influential single work in the history of town planning. . . . [It] can also be seen in a much larger context. It is first of all a work of literature; the descriptions of street life as a kind of ballet and the bitingly satiric account of traditional planning theory can still be read for pleasure even by those who long ago absorbed and appropriated the book's arguments." • Jane Jacobs, an editor and writer on architecture in New York City in the early sixties, argued that urban diversity and vitality were being destroyed by powerful architects and city planners. Rigorous, sane, and delightfully epigrammatic, Jane Jacobs's tour de force is a blueprint for the humanistic management of cities. It remains sensible, knowledgeable, readable, and indispensable.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Not that urban planning is as important as the foundations of physics, but Jacobs strikes me as the urban planning equivalent of Isaac Newton. Neither invented their subject matter in a void. Instead, they built upon the knowledge accumulated by their predecessors. But neither accepted the

prevalent interpretations of that knowledge. Both sought to find new and more accurate explanations, Newton by well-constructed experiments and Jacobs by careful observation of the vast examples offered by New York City. Both were criticized for taking credit for work that had been done by others, but history has vindicated both and recognized their achievements. Jane Jacobs came to urban planning through a side door, which may explain why she blazed new trails. An indifferent high school student, she began her working life doing clerical work for journalists. Gradually finding her passions in life, she continued her education at a college level, taking a wide range of courses. She was also given opportunities to write, mostly about the neighborhoods of New York City. Her enthusiasm for city life led to attendance at several national conferences on urban planning issues. But Jacobs was dissatisfied with what the others at the conferences expounded. She felt a persistent skepticism about the theories of that were behind the urban planning decisions of the 1950s. She retreated to her home in Greenwich Village, observed the street life below, formulated alternative theories, and looked further in the city to see if her theories held up. They did. A scan of her table of contents can get the urban planning adrenaline flowing. "The uses of sidewalks: assimilating children", "The need for primary mixed uses", "The need for small blocks", "The curse of border vacuums".

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