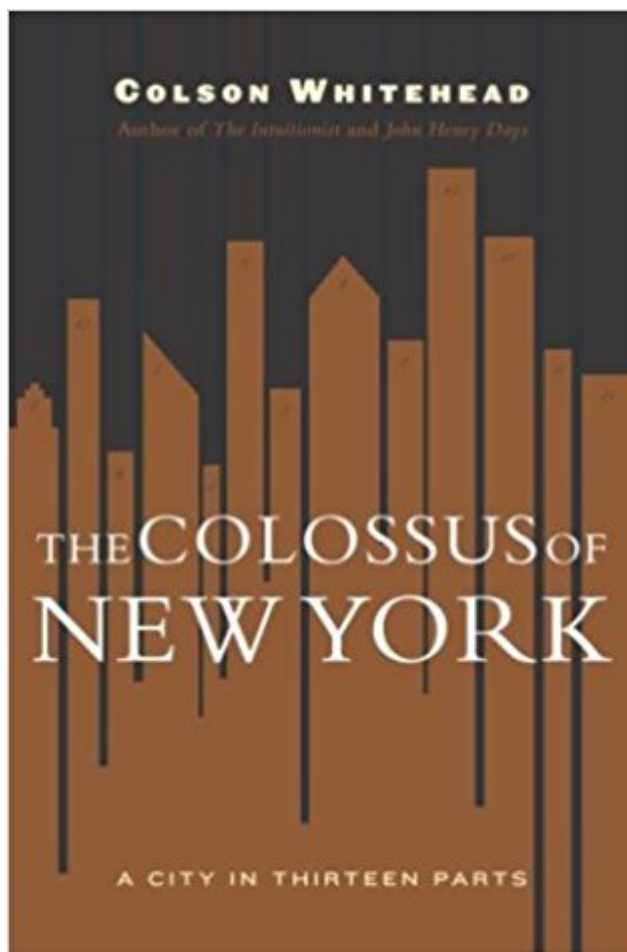


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# The Colossus Of New York: A City In 13 Parts



## Synopsis

In a dazzlingly original work of nonfiction, the award-winning novelist Colson Whitehead re-creates the exuberance, the chaos, the promise, and the heartbreak of New York. Here is a literary love song that will entrance anyone who has lived in or spent time in the greatest of American cities. A masterful evocation of the city that never sleeps, *The Colossus of New York* captures the city's inner and outer landscapes in a series of vignettes, meditations, and personal memories. Colson Whitehead conveys with almost uncanny immediacy the feelings and thoughts of longtime residents and of newcomers who dream of making it their home; of those who have conquered its challenges; and of those who struggle against its cruelties. Whitehead's style is as multilayered and multifarious as New York itself: Switching from third person, to first person, to second person, he weaves individual voices into a jazzy musical composition that perfectly reflects the way we experience the city. There is a funny, knowing riff on what it feels like to arrive in New York for the first time; a lyrical meditation on how the city is transformed by an unexpected rain shower; and a wry look at the ferocious battle that is commuting. The plaintive notes of the lonely and dispossessed resound in one passage, while another captures those magical moments when the city seems to be talking directly to you, inviting you to become one with its rhythms. *The Colossus of New York* is a remarkable portrait of life in the big city. Ambitious in scope, gemlike in its details, it is at once an unparalleled tribute to New York and the ideal introduction to one of the most exciting writers working today.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 176 pages

Publisher: Doubleday (October 21, 2003)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0385507941

ISBN-13: 978-0385507943

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.8 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds

Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars 33 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #594,584 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #11 in Books > Travel > United States > New York > New York City #2308 in Books > Travel > Travel Writing #2602 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Essays & Correspondence > Essays

## Customer Reviews

Whitehead (*The Intuitionist*; *John Henry Days*) lays out a wildly creative view of New York City. To out-of-towners, Gotham is about famous places, but Whitehead's New York is not. It's more about a way of seeing. For example, "No matter how long you have been here, you are a New Yorker the first time you say, That used to be Munsey's, or That used to be the Tic Toc Lounge... when what was there before is more real and solid than what is here now." Whitehead begins with the bus ride into Port Authority, complete with impossibly heavy baggage, bathrooms braved by only the desperate and the seating strategies of experienced bus riders. He cuts to city feelings: the morning's garbage truck noises; the problem of rain; coping with rush hour. When he does write of celebrated places-Central Park, Coney Island, the Brooklyn Bridge-it's for the role they play in our ritual life: when we go, how we are when we're there and how it feels to leave. Whitehead is a master of the minutiae of the mundane. He takes you to the moment of a subway train leaving without you: could you have made it if you'd left a few seconds earlier? Should you take a taxi? You check the tunnel for the next train, fusing with thoughts of time as new passengers accumulate on the platform. This 13-part lyric symphony is like E.B. White's *Here Is New York* set to the beat of Ellington or Cage. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Lovers of adventurous literary fiction relished Whitehead's novels, *The Intuitionist* (1998) and *John Henry Days* (2001), recognizing him as an original, sardonic, yet compassionate writer. Anointed with a MacArthur "genius" grant, Whitehead now presents a ravishing cycle of imaginative and evocative prose poems in tribute to his home, New York City, the quintessential metropolis of dreams. Writing in short, emphatic sentences, Whitehead riffs poignantly and playfully on myriad strategies for urban survival as he incisively distills the kaleidoscopic frenzy of the city into startlingly vital metaphors and cartoon-crisp analogies. Intensely sensory in his details, wistful and funny in his psychological disclosures, he makes everything come to mythic life, from the fury of rush hour to the strained etiquette of subway riders to Central Park, Times Square, Coney Island, and the Brooklyn Bridge. The mad choreography a rainstorm puts into motion, the rituals of downtown nightclubs, the horrors of the 9-to-5 routine, the waxing and waning of the self against the backdrop of so many other souls are all given a sharp, metaphysical twist in Whitehead's gorgeous rendering of New York as a colossal, ever-metamorphosing phantasm. Donna Seaman Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

Such style, such energy, such love, such fun. Thank you Mr. Whitehead. Definitely on my gift lists.

Some great writing here, but not all. Some truly great passages/chapters and some duds. For a better example of Whitehead's power, read Underground Railroad.

This little sort of tone poem captures some of the beauty and some of the meanness of New York life. I didn't come away from THE COLOSSUS OF NEW YORK as being negative toward the city, but even if Mr. Whitehead were, we New Yorkers need our cranks and curmudgeons. It makes us part of who we are, after all. The free style works MOST of the time. When it doesn't, it really doesn't. (It is no coincidence that the most straight-forward section, the introduction, is the most superb!) THE COLOSSUS OF NEW YORK doesn't have the lyricism of E.B. White's THIS IS NEW YORK, but it doesn't pretend to want to be like it, anyway. Colson Whitehead's piece is more like Whitman's poetry, as he rambled along the old downtown streets and piers, and recorded his scenes and his feelings about them. Yes, this book could have been greater, but it doesn't take away from the power much of it has. So if you're looking for a history of or guidebook to New York City, this is not the book. But if you're looking for the evocative power of New York, written in a personal, lyrical style, you won't find many better than THE COLOSSUS OF NEW YORK.

I felt as though I was reading a series of poems. His writing is so descriptive and beautiful.

had to read this for college, very interesting! very relatable if you've lived in NYC for a while.

Wow a critical read to grasping not truly understanding NYC. This book speaks to you no wonder it's summer reading for NYU ....welcome to the Big Apple.

This book is a must read for any lover of NYC and also those who are its detractors. It expresses the essence of NY in a way feels almost like listening to bebop music. The rhythms, the cadence and verbage of the book capture the essence of NYC.

Hard to read at certain times of the day but I really connected to certain threads of thought. Simple but thought provoking read.

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