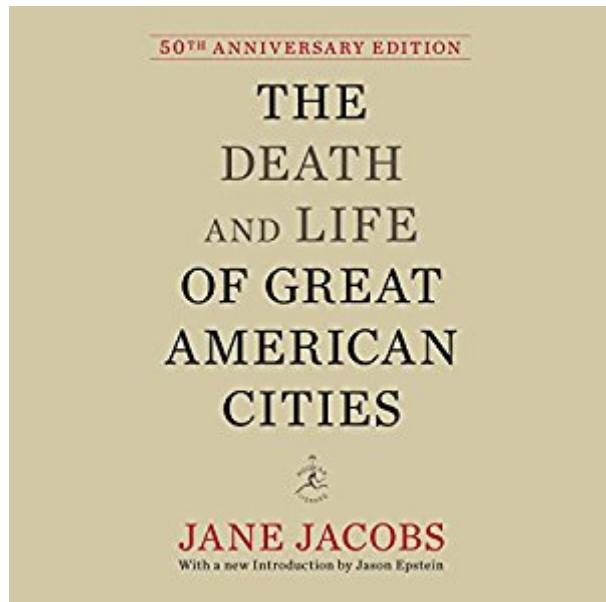


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The Death And Life Of Great American Cities: 50th Anniversary Edition



Synopsis

Thirty years after its publication, *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 60s, argued that urban diversity and vitality were being destroyed by powerful architects and city planners. Rigorous, sane, and delightfully epigrammatic, Jacobs's small masterpiece is a blueprint for the humanistic management of cities. It is sensible, knowledgeable, readable, indispensable. The author has written a new foreword for this Modern Library edition.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

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Customer Reviews

Even 35 years after it was written, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* remains the classic book on how cities work and how urban planners and others have naively destroyed functioning cities. It is widely known for its incisive treatment of those who would tear down functioning neighborhoods and destroy the lives and livelihoods of people for the sake of a groundless but intellectually appealing daydream. But although many see it as a polemic against urban planning, the best parts of it, the parts that have endeared it to many who love cities, are quite different. *Death and Life* is, first of all, a work of observation. The illustrations are all around us, she says, and we

must go and look. She shows us parts of the city that are alive -- the streets, she says, are the city that we see, and it is the streets and sidewalks that carry the most weight -- and find the patterns that help us not merely see but understand. She shows us the city as an ecology -- a system of interactions that is more than merely the laying out of buildings as if they were a child's wooden blocks. But observation can mean simply the noting of objects. Ms. Jacobs writes beautifully, lovingly, of New York City and other urban places. Her piece "The Ballet of Hudson Street" is both an observation of events on the Greenwich Village street where she lived and a prose poem describing the comings and goings of the people, the rhythms of the shopkeepers and the commuters and others who use the street.

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