

*The Dharma Bums*

Jack Kerouac was born in Lowell, Massachusetts, where, he said, he 'roamed fields and riverbanks by day and night, wrote little novels in my room, first novel written at age eleven, also kept extensive diaries and "newspapers" covering my own-invented horse-racing and baseball and football worlds (as recorded in the novel *Doctor Sax*).' He was educated by Jesuit brothers in Lowell. He said that he 'decided to become a writer at age seventeen under influence of Sebastian Sampas, local young poet, who later died on Anzio beach head; read the life of Jack London at eighteen and decided to also be a lonesome traveler; early literary influences Saroyan and Hemingway; later Wolfe (after I had broken leg in Freshman football at Columbia read Tom Wolfe and roamed his New York on crutches).'

Kerouac wished, however, to develop his own new prose style, which he called 'spontaneous prose'. He used this technique to record the life of the American 'traveler' and the experiences of the Beat generation of the 1950s. This may clearly be seen in his most famous novel, *On the Road*, and also in *The Subterraneans* and *The Dharma Bums*. Other works include *Big Sur*, *Desolation Angels*, *Lonesome Traveler*, *Visions of Gerard*, *Tristessa* and a book of poetry called *Mexico City Blues*. His first more orthodox published novel was *The Town and the City*. Kerouac, who described himself as a 'strange solitary crazy Catholic mystic', was working on his longest novel, a surrealistic study of the last ten years of his life, when he died in 1969, aged forty-seven.

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With an Introduction by  
Ann Douglas

'A descriptive  
excitement  
unmatched  
since the days  
of Thomas Wolfe'

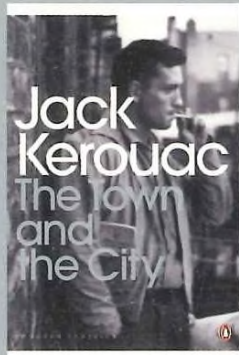
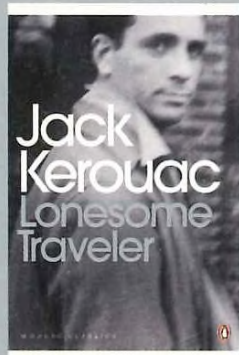
*The New York Times Book Review*

Following the explosive energy of *On the Road* comes *The Dharma Bums*, in which Kerouac charts the spiritual quest of a group of friends in search of Dharma, or Truth. Ray Smith and his friend Japhy, along with Morley the yodeller, head off into the High Sierras to seek the lesson of solitude and experience the Zen way of life. But in wildly Bohemian San Francisco, with its poetry jam sessions, marathon drinking bouts and experiments in 'yabyum', they find the ascetic route distinctly hard to follow.

'A vivid evocation of a part of our time'  
*New York Post*



Front cover: Jack Kerouac in a Chinese restaurant, New York, 1959 © John Cohen/Getty Images.  
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ISBN 978-0-141-18488-3

Fiction  
U.K. £9.99



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