

## Homer & Langley: A Novel

By E.L. Doctorow

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### Homer & Langley: A Novel By E.L. Doctorow

Homer and Langley Collyer are brothers—the one blind and deeply intuitive, the other damaged into madness, or perhaps greatness, by mustard gas in the Great War. They live as recluses in their once grand Fifth Avenue mansion, scavenging the city streets for things they think they can use, hoarding the daily newspapers as research for Langley's proposed dateless newspaper whose reportage will be as prophecy. Yet the epic events of the century play out in the lives of the two brothers—wars, political movements, technological advances—and even though they want nothing more than to shut out the world, history seems to pass through their cluttered house in the persons of immigrants, prostitutes, society women, government agents, gangsters, jazz musicians . . . and their housebound lives are fraught with odyssean peril as they struggle to survive and create meaning for themselves.

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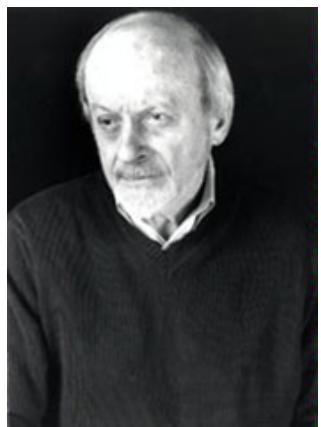
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### Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

**Amazon Exclusive: E.L. Doctorow on *Homer & Langley***

**E. L. Doctorow's novels include *The March*, *City of God*, *The Waterworks*, *Welcome to Hard Times*, *The Book of Daniel*, *Ragtime*, *Loon Lake*, *Lives of the Poets*, *World's Fair*, and *Billy Bathgate*. His work has been published in thirty-two languages. Among his honors are the National Book Award, three National Book Critics Circle awards, two PEN/Faulkner awards, the Edith Wharton Citation for Fiction, the William Dean Howells Medal of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the presidentially conferred National Humanities Medal. E. L. Doctorow lives in New York. Read his exclusive Amazon essay on *Homer & Langley*:**



I was a teenager when the Collyer brothers were found dead in their Fifth Avenue brownstone. Instantly, they were folklore. And so there is the real historical existence of them and the mythological existence--two existences, as with Abe Lincoln, though of a less exalted standing. I didn't know at the time that I would someday write about them, but even then I felt there was some secret to the Collyers--there was something about them still to be discovered under the piles of things in their house--the bales of newspapers and the accumulated detritus of their lives. Was it only that they were junk-collecting eccentrics? You see that every day in the streets of New York. They had opted out--that was the primary fact. Coming from a well-to-do family, with every advantage, they had locked the door and closed the shutters and absented themselves from the life around them. A major move, as life-transforming as emigration. In fact it was a form of emigration, of leave-taking. But where to? What country was within that house? What would have caused them to become the notorious recluses of Fifth Avenue? As myths, the brothers demanded not research but interpretation, and when a few years ago I was finally moved to do this book, I felt as if writing it was an act of breaking and entering just to see what may have been going on in that house, which really meant getting inside two very interesting minds. And with the first sentence, "I'm Homer, the blind brother," I was in.

In one sense I think of *Homer & Langley* as a road novel--as if they are two people traveling together down a road and having adventures, though in fact they are housebound. It turns out that the world will not let them alone--others intrude on their privacy as if it is the road running through them. As for their collecting, I think of them as curators of their life and times, and their house as a museum of all our lives. That is my idea of them, that is my reading of the Collyer myth. I make them to be two brothers who opted out of civilization and pulled the world in after them--E.L. Doctorow

(Photo © Philip Friedman)

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### From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Doctorow, whose literary trophy shelf has got to be overflowing by now, delivers a small but sweeping masterpiece about the infamous New York hermits, the Collyer brothers. When WWI hits and the Spanish flu pandemic kills Homer and Langley's parents, Langley, the elder, goes to war, with his Columbia education and his godlike immunity to such an ordinary fate as death in a war. Homer, alone and going blind, faces a world considerably dimmed though more deliciously felt by his other senses. When Langley returns, real darkness descends on the eccentric orphans: inside their shuttered Fifth Avenue mansion, Langley hoards newspaper clippings and starts innumerable science projects, each eventually abandoned, though he continues to imagine them in increasingly bizarre ways, which he then recites to Homer. Occasionally, outsiders wander through the house, exposing it as a living museum of artifacts, Americana, obscurity and simmering madness. Doctorow's achievement is in not undermining the dignity of two brothers who share a lush landscape built on imagination and incapacities. It's a feat of distillation, vision and sympathy. (*Sept.*)

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### From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

Like any good historical novelist pushing the limits of his craft, Doctorow takes chances. And like the vast majority who take chances, he occasionally strikes the wrong chord. In the slight *Homer & Langley*, the author's treatment of the history was a negative for some critics. Some felt that the narrator was less than engaging and that the imagined historical details were unconvincing, while others, including the *New York Times*, opined that Doctorow "never succeeds in making the brothers' transition from mild eccentricity to out-and-out madness understandable to the reader." Yet even detractors gave a nod to the author's stylistic chops. Readers who already appreciate Doctorow will welcome this novel, but the author's refiguring of a peculiarly American cautionary tale will likely go down as a lesser volume in the master's impressive body of work.

## Users Review

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#### **Andre Roop:**

This Homer & Langley: A Novel book is not really ordinary book, you have after that it the world is in your hands. The benefit you will get by reading this book is usually information inside this reserve incredible fresh, you will get facts which is getting deeper anyone read a lot of information you will get. This kind of Homer & Langley: A Novel without we recognize teach the one who reading it become critical in imagining and analyzing. Don't always be worry Homer & Langley: A Novel can bring when you are and not make your tote space or bookshelves' come to be full because you can have it with your lovely laptop even cellphone. This Homer & Langley: A Novel having excellent arrangement in word in addition to layout, so you will not sense uninterested in reading.

#### **Amelia Brown:**

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### **Dewey Rascon:**

The guide with title Homer & Langley: A Novel has lot of information that you can understand it. You can get a lot of gain after read this book. This kind of book exist new information the information that exist in this book represented the condition of the world currently. That is important to you to know how the improvement of the world. This kind of book will bring you within new era of the internationalization. You can read the e-book with your smart phone, so you can read that anywhere you want.

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