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APPENDIX I

Biography of Edgar Lawrence Doctorow



Edgar Lawrence Doctorow was born on January 6, 1931 in Bronx, New York, U.S. He died on July 21, 2015 in New York. He is an American novelist known for his skillful manipulation of traditional genres.

E. L. Doctorow is one of the most accomplished American novelists of the second half of the 20th Century, often considered in an elite company with Toni Morrison, Saul Bellow, John Updike, Philip Roth and only a few others. His epic historical fiction evokes the 19th and 20th centuries, often boldly introducing historical figures into imagined situations. His reimagining of the Civil War, the Rosenberg spy trial, and the era before World War I have attracted a huge following and critical respect. "Doctorow now occupies one of the narrowest subsets in American letters," declared David Segal in the *Washington Post* : "the million-selling author who is taken seriously."

Named for Edgar Allen Poe, Doctorow was born in New York City and attended the Bronx High School of Science. While there, an English teacher gave him an assignment to write about a colorful person. The young Doctorow turned in such a vivid description of a doorman at Carnegie Hall whom the famed classical musicians playing there admired, his teacher wanted to photograph the

man and run the story and photo in the high school newspaper. Doctorow had to admit he had invented the man. His teacher gave him an F. "The outlines of Doctorow's future as a novelist were scrawled like body chalk around this failure as a reporter," wrote Segal in the *Washington Post* . "The impish disregard for the wall between fact and fiction, the cross-thatching of real celebrities and invented characters, a slight sentimental streak."

Doctorow graduated from Kenyon College with honors in 1952, then did some graduate work at Columbia University, but did not earn another degree. He joined the U.S. Army and was stationed in Germany for a time. In 1954, he married Helen Setzer, with whom he has three children. For three years, Doctorow worked for Columbia Pictures as a sort of literary talent scout. His job was to read books and let Columbia know which could be turned into films. It became unfulfilling for him, since he recommended several books, but only one became a film, and he considered it awful. He moved on in 1959 to become a senior editor at New American Library.

But working for Columbia gave Doctorow the confidence to become a novelist. He became convinced that he could write at least as well as the authors whose work he scouted. Sure enough, he got his first novel published in 1960. Entitled *Welcome to Hard Times* , it was a Western, set in the Dakota Territories in the 1870s, about a stranger wreaking havoc on a frontier town. Working for a movie studio must have got Doctorow thinking cinematically; his book later became a film that starred Henry Fonda.

For a while, Doctorow's career as an editor seemed to go better than his work as a novelist. He became editor-in-chief of Dial Press in 1964. Meanwhile, his second novel, *Big as Life*, a science fiction satire set in New York and published in 1966, was a critical and commercial failure. It took his third novel, *The Book of Daniel*, published in 1971, to establish his reputation as a major novelist. It was inspired by the real-life story of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were convicted of stealing atomic secrets for the Soviet Union in a controversial case in the 1950s and executed. The book alternated between the 1950s and 1960s, following Paul and Roselle Isaacson, stand-ins for the Rosenbergs, then flashing ahead to their son, Daniel, confronting his family history in the late 1960s while a graduate student.

Ragtime, his 1975 novel, may be his most admired and popular work. Set before World War I, it features historical figures of that time such as Sigmund Freud, Harry Houdini, Henry Ford, and U.S. President William Howard Taft, plus various fictional characters. It won the National Book Critics Circle award and sold 4.5 million copies. It not only became a film in 1981, it was also adapted into a Broadway musical in 1998.

During the 1980s, Doctorow's novels continued to explore the 20th Century. *Loon Lake*, published in 1980, was set in the Great Depression, while the semi-autobiographical novel *World's Fair*, from 1985, was about a boy coming of age in the Bronx in the 1930s. The more personal novel won him the National Book Award. *Billy Bathgate*, a 1989 novel set in the era of Prohibition gangster Dutch Schultz, was a major critical success, winning him several awards.

Two years after *Billy Bathgate* was published, it became a film starring Dustin Hoffman and Nicole Kidman. Though Doctorow has had several of his books made into films, he has usually been disappointed in the results.

New York City is Doctorow's favorite setting and subject. His detective story *The Waterworks* , from 1994, is set there in the 1870s and centered on a mystery involving an evil scientist and a missing reporter. In *City of God* , published in 2000, he marked the turn of the millennium by turning his usual historical novel approach backward, showing three main characters in the present day, looking back on their lives in the 20th Century and the way history affected them. In 2002, he also paid tribute to the city by writing the text for *Lamentation: 9/11* , a book of photographs of the personal messages, posters, and signs posted in the city immediately after the World Trade Center was destroyed in the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

(Source: <https://www.notablebiographies.com/newsmakers2/2007-Co-Lh/Doctorow-E-L.html#ixzz6fEbRE89j>)

APPENDIX II

Synopsis of *Ragtime*

The novel opens in the year 1902, in the town of New Rochelle, New York, at the house of an upper class family comprised of Mother, Father, and the little boy. Mother's Younger Brother falls in love with the famous beauty Evelyn Nesbit, whose husband Harry Thaw has recently been charged with the murder of her ex-husband, architect Stanford White. Harry Houdini's car breaks in front of the family's house, and he pays them a visit. Father leaves on a trip to the Arctic with the explorer Peary.

An immigrant family, consisting of Mameh, Tateh, and the little girl, live in the Lower East Side in utter poverty. Evelyn Nesbit visits the Lower East Side, where she becomes enchanted with Tateh's daughter, and soon her visits become regular. The little girl becomes ill, and Evelyn cares for her. Mother's Younger Brother begins to follow Evelyn everywhere without her knowledge. Tateh, Evelyn Nesbit, and the little girl attend a socialist meeting whose featured speaker, Emma Goldman, criticizes Evelyn for employing her sexuality to gain prominence in capitalistic society. Mother rescues and claims responsibility for a newborn baby she discovers buried alive in her backyard; she soon learns it is the child of a black washwoman named Sarah.

Evelyn Nesbit and Mother's Younger Brother start to see a lot of one another. Mother's Younger Brother helps Evelyn search for Tateh and his little girl, but to no avail. Tateh and his daughter happily leave New York City and travel up the Eastern seaboard. Meanwhile, Houdini learns how to fly planes, and performs a

demonstration for Archduke Franz Ferdinand and Countess Sophie. Father experiences a feeling of profound isolation upon his return to New Rochelle. Mother's Younger Brother becomes proficient in the use of bombs. Tateh and his little girl travel to Lawrence, Massachusetts, where there is a strike against the textile mills, and continue to many other cities.

In Philadelphia, Tateh finds a novelty store where the owner agrees to buy the movie books Tateh has invented. Tateh decides they will return to Lawrence to settle down. Henry Ford pays a lunch visit to J.P. Morgan and they discuss technology and religion. One afternoon, a black man named Coalhouse Walker stops by their home in New Rochelle, asking to see Sarah, who refuses to see him. After Coalhouse continues to call on her every Sunday, Sarah finally accepts his proposal for marriage. One day Coalhouse Walker is driving to New York when volunteers from the Emerald Isle firehouse bar his path. While Coalhouse seeks help from the police, the volunteers wreck his car. When Coalhouse complains he is arrested. Coalhouse dedicates the funds he originally intended for his wedding toward securing a lawyer. However, he cannot find a lawyer willing to represent him.

One night, Sarah leaves the house to attend an event at which Mr. Taft's Vice-President would be present; she wishes to petition the federal government on Coalhouse's behalf. However, the secret service men hit her hard in the chest; she soon grows ill and dies. Coalhouse and his followers cause an explosion at the Emerald Isle firehouse, killing four volunteers. Father and Mother's Younger Brother fight over the situation, and Mother's Younger Brother leaves the

household to join Coalhouse and his followers. Mother and Father move to Atlantic City to escape the scrutiny of the townspeople. Willie Conklin also begins to feel a lot of pressure to leave town. Mother and Father meet Tateh in Atlantic City, and the little boy and the little girl soon begin to spend a lot of time together.

Coalhouse and his followers break into the library of J.P. Morgan, who is abroad at the time. The District Attorney Charles S. Whitman calls Coalhouse, who reiterates to him his original demands that they return his vehicle and that Conklin dies for Sarah's death. Booker T. Washington attempts to persuade Coalhouse to end his siege, but soon leaves out of frustration. Father then meets with Coalhouse, and approaches Whitman with his demands, at which point Whitman presents Coalhouse with both his Model T and Willie Conklin. After his followers leave free of punishment, Coalhouse exits Morgan's house, and Father, still inside, hears the firing squad. Police report that Coalhouse had made an attempt at escaping, but he more likely made a slight movement that he knew would cause his death. Mother's Younger Brother, having secured the use of Coalhouse's Model-T, travels all around the country and soon to Mexico, where he joins revolutionary forces and dies about a year later.

As tensions in Europe develop, World War I approaches. Morgan travels to Egypt, where he hopes a visit to the pyramids will restore his sense of spirituality. Rather, he cannot sleep and becomes disheartened by his failure to experience what he has expected. Soon his health rapidly deteriorates and he dies. The narrator describes the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and Countess

Sophie. Father dies aboard the *Lusitania*, and a year after his death, Tateh and Mother marry each other.

(Source : <https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/ragtime/summary/>)