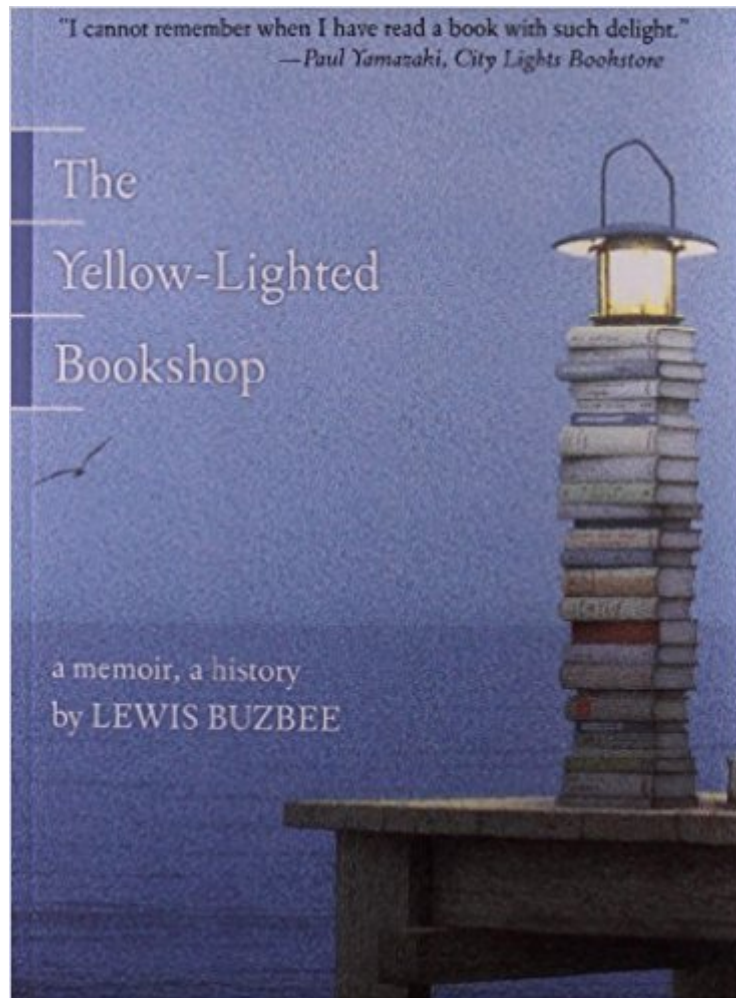




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# The Yellow-Lighted Bookshop: A Memoir, A History



## Synopsis

In *The Yellow-Lighted Bookshop*, a Book Sense selection, Lewis Buzbee celebrates the unique experience of the bookstore—the smell and touch of books, the joy of getting lost in the deep canyons of shelves, and the silent community of readers. He shares his passion for books, which began with ordering through the *Weekly Reader* in grade school. Woven throughout is a fascinating historical account of the bookseller trade—from the great Alexandria library to Sylvia Beach's famous Paris bookstore, Shakespeare & Co. Rich with anecdotes, *The Yellow-Lighted Bookshop* is the perfect choice for those who relish the enduring pleasures of spending an afternoon finding just the right book.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Buzbee (*Fliegelman's Desire*) is a book lover. When he describes walking into a bookstore, feasting his eyes on the walls lined with stock, gravitating to the tables stacked with new issues and then discovering some volume so irresistibly beautiful he just has to buy it, you realize that he just doesn't love books, he's besotted. Buzbee tells the story of his lifelong obsession, from his elementary school *Weekly Reader* orders to his first jobs clerking in bookstores and his short career as a publisher's rep. Woven into these personal essays is a tangential discourse on the history of bookmaking and bookselling, from the ancient Romans and Chinese to the modern era. He describes the scriptoriums in Roman bookshops where the wealthy could order a book copied, the stacks of unbound quires a customer would have chosen from in a 15th-century bookshop

(proto-paperbacks) and everything one would want to know about the modern business of bookselling, from ISBNs to remainders. On current hot-button issues, like predatory pricing by big-box stores and Internet vendors, he's careful where he draws his bottom line, which is "between bookstores and the absence of them." (June) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

**\*Starred Review\*** For Buzbee, a former bookseller and publishing rep, time spent in a bookstore is nothing short of sublime. "Standing in the middle of this confluence, I can't help but feel the possibility of the universe unfolding a little, once upon a time," he writes in the opening chapter of this slim, luminous volume. Buzbee manages just the right mix of history lesson and personal recollection. He reflects upon the roots of the book trade (the first great library at Alexandria, where the vast holdings were each hand copied by scribes onto papyrus scrolls); the progression of retail (from simple market stalls to book hawkers to the megastores of today); and his own hours lovingly logged at the literary chain store, Upstart Crow, where, as an eager teenager in San Jose, California, he learned the ins and outs of the business. Bookstores, Buzbee reminds us, are not just places of intellectual indulgence; they're historically significant, too. The celebrated Paris establishment, Shakespeare & Co., was the first to publish James Joyce's *Ulysses*, and Lawrence Ferlinghetti's *City Lights* gave voice to Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*. Both anecdotal and eloquent, *The Yellow-Lighted Bookshop* is a tribute to those who crave the cozy confines of a bookshop, a place to be "alone among others" and savor a bountiful literary buffet. Allison Block Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book is a fascinating account of one man's experience working in and hanging around bookstores, along with being a history of book selling. Having worked in several bookstores myself, and finding myself still drawn to them, this book made me feel at home in its pages. While some of the information on e books is dated, (originally written in 2004) the author adds an afterward that acknowledges the ever growing digital technology. I've been recommending this to every bookseller I meet.

After seeing a quote of this book on the Internet I thought that I needed to buy this book. This book is part memoir, reading guide. I relate to the authors love for books and reading. The best part of the

book is the stories and his journey through working at book stores selling books, to informational bits about the first books that were made. His witty but candid reminisces about books he's read, how the times have changed just keeps you intrigued and wanting nothing but to keep reading. The only set back is the last few chapters go into detail about places you can visit if you want to get a real readers experiences (which I appreciate) but really loses the heart of the book. I would recommend this book to anyone who loves to read, collect books and want to share in the love and feeling of appreciating of the world's greatest past time.

Lewis Buzbee's "The Yellow-Lighted Bookshop" is a terrific read -- entertaining, instructive, witty and poetic. Best of all, it's easily relatable for bibliophiles, like Buzbee himself, who've never met a bookstore they didn't like. His book is part memoir, part history (it says so on the cover), and his descriptions of the bookselling business -- from the ancient past to the present -- are the most concise and effective I've seen. Here's a passage that true book addicts will appreciate: "For the last several days I've had the sudden and general urge to buy a new book. I've stopped off at a few bookstores around the city, and while I've looked at hundreds and hundreds of books in that time, I have not found the one book that will satisfy my urge. It's not as if I don't have anything to read; there's a tower of perfectly good unread books next to my bed, not to mention the shelves of books in the living room I've been meaning to reread. I find myself, maddeningly, hungry for the next one as yet unknown. I no longer try to analyze this hunger; I capitulated long ago to the book lust that's afflicted me most of my life. I know enough about the course of the disease to know I'll discover something soon." Who among us doesn't know that feeling? Buzbee's book also introduced me to a Vincent Van Gogh quote I'm ashamed to admit I'd never seen, but which is now one of my favorites: "I think that I still have it in my heart someday to paint a bookshop with the front yellow and pink in the evening . . . like a light in the midst of darkness." "The Yellow-Lighted Bookshop" belongs on every booklover's shelf. (Although if it ends up in the unread pile next to the bed, it won't stay there for long, I promise.)

"The Yellow-Lighted Bookshop" by Lewis Buzbee is a perfect read for bibliophiles or anyone with interest in the bookselling business. This relatively tiny book is chock-full of interesting insights into books and bookstores, based on the author's own experiences as a bookstore clerk, bookseller, and a publisher's sales rep. Readers are taken on an interesting journey into the world of books, book-making, ancient historical repositories of books such as the Library of Alexandria and of course, about bookstores - from the evolution of bookstores in ancient Rome to contemporary

bookstores like Borders and Barnes and Noble. As I read this, I felt rather sad at the decline in bookstores, especially the demise of many independent bookstores. As much as I love shopping online, there is no substitute for browsing in a physical bookstore where I can browse through clean, crisp pages, appreciate the scent of a book, and physically touch books of various genres and titles, admiring the covers up close. I can empathize with Buzbee's book lust for I am similarly 'afflicted', and I recommend this book to anyone who has a life-long love affair with books!

Interesting book. A bit dated but lots of good historical info about the beginning of books and interesting things about his life with books.

First of all, I love the size of the book -- it's a perfect small paperback. I also enjoyed the book history peppered throughout the story -- there was a lot I didn't know, so that was cool. So many times I found myself thinking "This is how I feel when I walk into a used bookstore I've never been to." It was a delight to read this for what it is: a love letter to books and bookshops.

After reading the enthusiastic reviews about this book, I wonder what did I miss about it. As a book lover, I have read many books about books. And I have read them all with a positive prejudice, with a will to be enchanted, forgiving of any flaw as we do when listening a just average joke told by a loved one. In this case, positive prejudice et al, I can only give three stars to Buzbee's stuff. What he tells about books in general, history and anecdotes, has been already told many times and mostly better. And what he tells of his own experiences, though with some interest here and there, is not interesting enough. I can feel Buzbee is a nice guy, a book geek as me, a man with which to sustain a talk anyday, a book lover, a colleague, but he lacks originality and his prose, adequate at most, is far away of what we can describe as charming and witty. Nevertheless, as so many reviews see this book in a very different way, I still wonder: what did I miss?

I worked for the same bookstore organization as Louis, though I was arriving more as he was leaving, as well as a more personal era of book-selling perhaps. I enjoyed this book and was glad to have some, if a skirting contact, with the people mentioned.

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