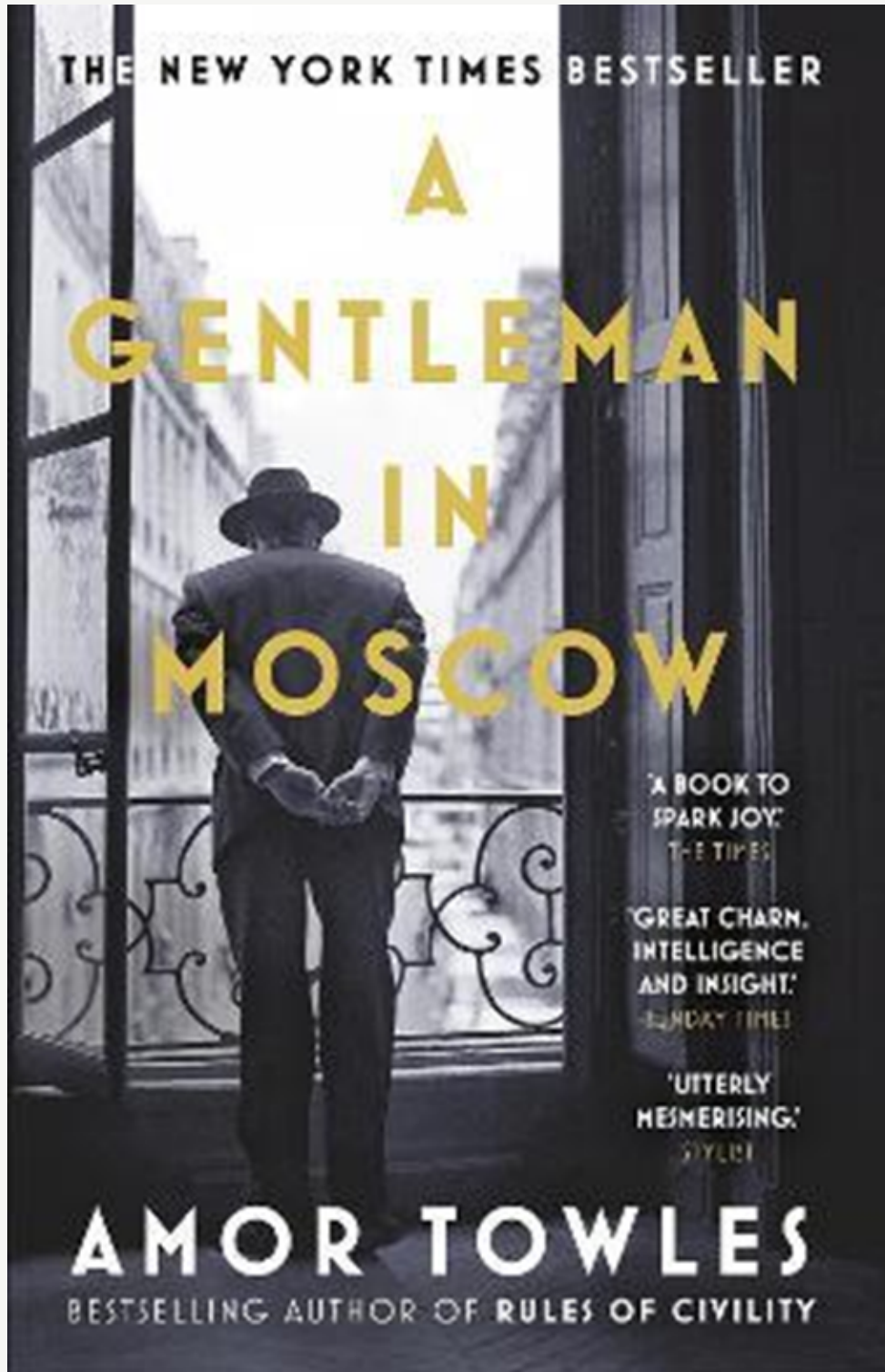




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Meath County Council Library Service Book Club Kit



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Notes To Readers



This kit was created for book clubs to use in their discussions of *A Gentleman in Moscow* and contains spoilers

Content Warnings

Please be aware that *A Gentleman in Moscow* contains content that may be triggering including depictions of violence and suicide

<https://triggerwarningdatabase.com/2022/06/02/a-gentleman-in-moscow-by-amor-towles/>



Reading Group Discussion Questions

What is your perception of the Count in the beginning of the novel? How does your perception of him change throughout the book, and as the years pass? Do you think that the Count's sentence was a lucky break, or a worse kind of punishment? Why do you think he stayed in Moscow rather than leave like some of his family members? How does living in the Metropol shape his view of his country as the years progress?

How does the Count deal with his sentence emotionally and intellectually? What events or people help him learn to accept it? How does his perspective (and his character) change? In what ways does he hold on to his title as a gentleman?

How does the Count find purpose in his new life? Who helps him find that purpose?

This novel covers a wide expanse of time within a single character's lifetime. How does the author convey the passage of time, and do you think it is successful? What periods in the Count's life did you enjoy reading about the most?

How does the Count view the revolutions that occur in his country throughout the course of the novel? How does his perspective differ from those held by other characters in the book?

Discuss the women in this novel, and the Count's relationship with each of them. How do they influence his perspective on the outside world, and his own search for meaning?

About Amor Towles



Born and raised in the Boston area, Amor Towles graduated from Yale College and received an MA in English from Stanford University. Having worked as an investment professional for over twenty years, he now devotes himself full time to writing in Manhattan, where he lives with his wife and two children. His novels

Rules of Civility, *A Gentleman in Moscow*, and *The Lincoln Highway* have collectively sold more than six million copies and been translated into more than thirty languages. Both Bill Gates and President Barack Obama included *A Gentleman in Moscow* and *The Lincoln Highway* on their annual book recommendation lists.

Interview with Amor Towles

A GENTLEMAN IN MOSCOW tells the story of a Russian aristocrat living under house arrest in a luxury hotel for more than thirty years. What was the origin of the idea?

Over the two decades that I was in the investment business, I travelled a good deal for my firm. Every year, I would spend weeks at a time in the hotels of distant cities meeting with clients and prospects. In 2009, while arriving at my hotel in Geneva (for the eighth year in a row), I recognized some of the people lingering in the lobby from the year before. It was as if they had never left. Upstairs in my room, I began playing with the idea of a novel in which a man is stuck in a grand hotel. Thinking that he should be there by force, rather than by choice, my mind immediately leapt to Russia—where house arrest has existed since the time of the Tsars. In the next few days, I sketched out most of the key events of *A Gentleman in Moscow*; over the next few years, I built a detailed outline; then in 2013, I retired from my day job and began writing the book.

This is your second novel set in the first half of the 20th Century. Can you talk about your interest in the period?

My interest in writing about the early twentieth century is neither a reflection of a love of history, nor a nostalgia for a bygone era. What has attracted me to the period is that it has a proximate distance to the present.

It is near enough in time that it seems familiar to most readers, but far enough away that they have no firsthand knowledge of what actually happened. This provides me with the liberty to explore the narrow border between the unbelievably actual and the convincingly imagined.

I generally like to mix glimpses of history with flights of fancy until the reader isn't exactly sure of what's real and what isn't. In terms of *A Gentleman in Moscow*, for instance, the launch of the world's first nuclear power plant in Russia in 1954 is a historical fact, but the assembly of Party leaders to observe the blacking-out of Moscow is an invention. Similarly, the little copper plates on the bottom of antiques designating them as property of the People are a fact, while the wine bottles stripped of their labels are a fiction.

Does the book have a central theme?

I certainly hope not. In crafting a novel, I do not have an essential message I am trying to communicate. Rather, I hope to create a work of art that, while being satisfyingly cohesive, contains such a richness of images, ideas, and personalities that it can prompt varied responses from reader to reader, and from reading to reading.

In essence, I want to gather together a pile of brightly colored shards of glass. But rather than assemble these shards into a mosaic with a fixed image, I want to drop them into the bottom of a kaleidoscope where, thanks to a glint of sunlight and the interplay of mirrors, they render an intricate beauty which the reader can reconfigure by the slightest turn of the wrist.

Can you describe your process?

My process for writing *A Gentleman in Moscow* was very similar to my process for writing *Rules of Civility*. In both cases, I designed the book over a period of years—ultimately generating an outline which detailed the settings, events, and interactions of characters, as well as the evolution of personalities and themes chapter by chapter. Once I'm ready to start writing, my goal is to complete the first draft in a relatively short period of time. Thus I wrote the first draft of *Rules of Civility* in a year and the first draft of *Gentleman in Moscow* in eighteen months.

While I'm working on my first draft I don't share my work. But once I've completed that draft, I give it to my wife, my editor in New York, my editor in London, my agent, and four friends on the same day, asking that they give me feedback within three weeks. I then use their varied feedback to begin the revision process. For both books, I revised the initial draft three times from beginning to end over three years.

While I work with a very detailed outline, when the writing is going well it provides me with plenty of surprises. I was in the middle of writing the bouillabaisse scene in *A Gentleman in Moscow*, for instance, when I discovered that Andrey was a juggler. I was in the middle of drafting Sofia's fitting, when I discovered (alongside the Count) that Marina had designed a dressless dress. And I was in the midst of the second or third draft when I noticed for the first time that moment in Casablanca when Rick sets upright the toppled cocktail glass.

<https://www.amortowles.com/gentleman-moscow-qa-amor-towles/>

A Latvian Stew recipe with pork, apricots and prunes from author Amor Towles

Ingredients

3 pounds boneless pork shoulder, trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

6 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided

6 carrots, peeled, trimmed, and sliced crosswise

4 tablespoons tomato paste

5 cups water

1 cup dried apricots

1 pound white boiling onions, peeled, each cut into 6 wedges

1 cup pitted prunes

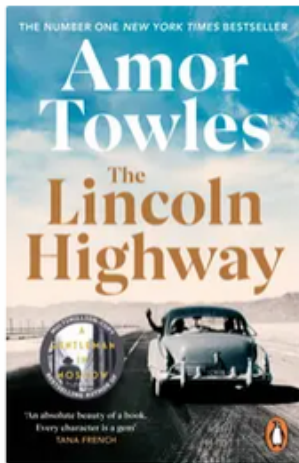
Instructions

Season pork with salt and pepper. Heat 3 tablespoons of the oil in a large heavy-bottomed pot over medium-high heat. Add pork and cook, stirring occasionally, until meat releases its juices and is no longer pink all over, about 5 minutes. Add carrots and cook until slightly tender, about 5 minutes. Stir in tomato paste and water, then add apricots. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to medium-low, and gently simmer, uncovered, for 45 minutes.

Meanwhile, heat remaining oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add onions and cook, stirring often, until deep golden brown, about 15 minutes. Add onions and prunes to stew and continue to simmer over medium-low heat until pork is tender and sauce has thickened, about 30 minutes more. Adjust seasonings.

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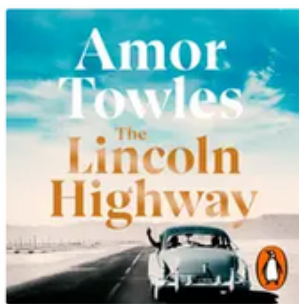
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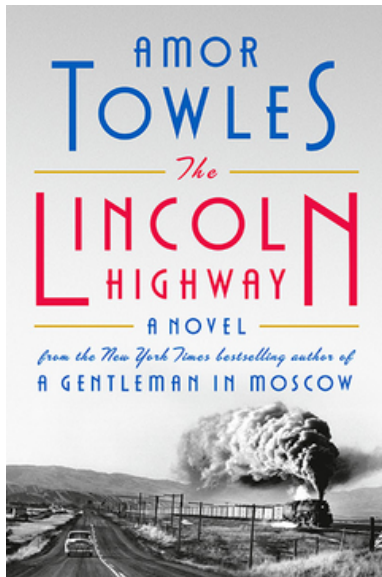


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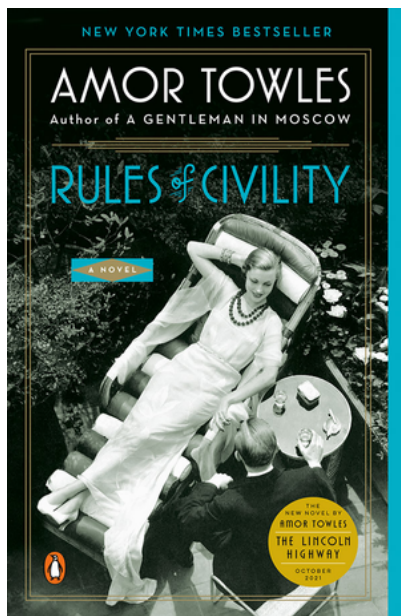
The Lincoln Highway
Amor Towles
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More from Amor Towles



In June, 1954, eighteen-year-old Emmett Watson is driven home to Nebraska by the warden of the juvenile work farm where he has just served fifteen months for involuntary manslaughter. His mother long gone, his father recently deceased, and the family farm foreclosed upon by the bank, Emmett's intention is to pick up his eight-year-old brother, Billy, and head to California where they can start their lives anew.



The story opens on New Year's Eve in a Greenwich Village jazz bar, where Katey and her boardinghouse roommate Eve happen to meet Tinker Grey, a handsome banker with royal blue eyes and a ready smile. This chance encounter and its startling consequences cast Katey off her current course, but end up providing her unexpected access to the rarified offices of Conde Nast and a glittering new social circle. Befriended in turn by a shy, principled multimillionaire, an Upper East Side ne'er-do-well, and a single-minded widow who is ahead of her times, Katey has the chance to experience first hand the poise secured by wealth and station, but also the aspirations, envy, disloyalty, and desires that reside just below the surface. Even as she waits for circumstances to bring Tinker back into her orbit, she will learn how individual choices become the means by which life crystallizes loss.

Who Else Writes Like...?

A readers' guide to fiction authors



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Some titles included in the site may be suitable for young adult readers, who are in the process of 'crossing-over' to adult novels.

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