



Effortless English

novelist: n. writer, author
critical success: success with critics, good opinion from reviews
considered: v. thought to be
spontaneous: adj. unplanned
confessional: adj. open & honest about one's feelings and life
works: n. books, art projects
roaming: v. moving around, wandering, traveling around
vast: adj. huge, very large and wide
landscape: n. land
sought: v. looked for
find his place: find his purpose
rejecting: v. saying "no" to
desire: n. wish, something you want
structures: rules
experiment with: v. try
to embark: v. go, leave
credited: v. said to be
catalyst: n. start; something that starts (or encourages) an action
counterculture: n. sub-culture, group that rejects the normal culture
profoundly: adj. deeply, seriously
marked by: v. affected by
elder: adj. older
prompted him: v. encouraged him; made him
athletic: adj. re: sports
pro prowess: n. skill, ability
a star: n. a top performer, top player
achievement: n. success
scholarship: n. money for university
pan out: v. happen, be successful

Jack Kerouac, King of The Beats

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Jack Kerouac was an American **novelist**, writer, poet, and artist.

While enjoying popularity but little **critical success** during his own lifetime, Kerouac is now **considered** one of America's most important authors. His **spontaneous, confessional prose** style inspired many other writers, including Tom Robbins, Lester Bangs, Hunter S. Thompson, and Bob Dylan.

Kerouac's best known **works** are On the Road, The Dharma Bums, Big Sur and Visions of Cody.

He divided most of his adult life between **roaming** the **vast** American **landscape** and living with his mother. Faced with a changing country, Kerouac **sought to find his place**, eventually **rejecting** the conservative values of the 1950s. His writing often reflects a **desire** to break free from society's **structures** and to find meaning in life.

This search led him to **experiment with** drugs and **to embark** on trips around the world. His books are often **credited** as the **catalyst** for the 1960s **counterculture**.

Kerouac was born in Lowell, Massachusetts, to a family of French-Canadians.

Jack didn't start to learn English until the age of six, and at home he and his family spoke French. At an early age, he was **profoundly marked** by the death of his **elder** brother Gérard, an event that later **prompted him** to write the book "Visions of Gerard".

Kerouac's **athletic prowess** led him to become a **star** on his local football team, and this **achievement** earned him **scholarships** to Boston College and Columbia University. At Columbia, he wrote several sports articles for the student newspaper, the Columbia Daily Spectator.

His football scholarship did not **pan out** and he went to live with an old girlfriend, Edie Parker, in New York. It was in New York that

to journey: v. to travel
novels: n. books (long story books)
seminal: adj. creative; original
published: v. printed
established: v. to introduce; to prove
Beat: adj. a free style of writing
influenced by: v. affected by
constantly: adv. all the time; very often
building upon: v. adding to
drafts: n. unfinished books (or papers or articles or reports)
tentatively: adv. temporarily; in an unsure way
experimental: adj. very different; very original, very new
sympathetic tone: kind attitude
minorities: n. small groups in society (ie. Africa-Americans in the USA)
marginalized social groups: groups with no power in society
purchased: v. bought (to buy)
demanding: v. insisting on, saying something must be done
revisions: n. changes
to coincide with: v. to be at the same time as
uncensored: adj. not changed by the government/authority
released: v. published, printed
containing: v. having
deemed: v. thought to be
explicit: adj. strong and direct (possibly obscene)
drawn: v. taken from
solely: adv. only
manuscript: n. typed paper/story
autobiographical: adj. about one's own life
road-trip: n. a trip (using a car)
the defining work: n. the most important book
discovered: v. found
immersion into: n. deep study of; powerful experience with
chronicled: v. told; wrote about
scholar: n. professor; someone who studies
Siddhartha Gautama: n. The Buddha
entitled: n. named
serialized: v. published in small parts

Kerouac met the people with whom he was **to journey** around the world, the subjects of many of his **novels:** the "Beat Generation", including Allen Ginsberg, Neal Cassady, and William S. Burroughs. He wrote his first novel, *The Town and the City*, as well as his most famous work, the **seminal** *On The Road*, while living in New York.

The Town and the City was **published** in 1950 under the name "John Kerouac" and earned him some respect as a writer. Unlike Kerouac's later work, which **established** his **Beat** style, it is heavily **influenced by** Kerouac's reading of Thomas Wolfe.

Kerouac wrote **constantly** but could not find a publisher for his next novel for six years. **Building upon** previous **drafts tentatively** titled "The Beat Generation" and "Gone On The Road", Kerouac wrote what is now known as "On the Road" in April, 1951 (ISBN 0-312-20677-1).

Publishers rejected the book due to its **experimental** writing style and its **sympathetic tone** towards **minorities** and **marginalized social groups** of the United States in the 1950s. In 1957, Viking Press **purchased** the novel, **demanding** major **revisions**.

In 2007, **to coincide with** the 50th anniversary of *On The Road*, an **uncensored** version of *On The Road* will be **released** by Viking Press, **containing** text that was removed from the 1957 version because it was **deemed** too **explicit** for 1957 readers. It will be **drawn solely** from the original **manuscript**.

The book was largely **autobiographical**, describing Kerouac's **road-trip** adventures across the United States and Mexico with Neal Cassady. Kerouac's novel is often described as **the defining work** of the post-World War II.

In 1954, Kerouac **discovered** Dwight Goddard's "A Buddhist Bible" at the San Jose Library, which marked the beginning of Kerouac's **immersion into** Buddhism.

He **chronicled** parts of this, as well as some of his adventures with San Francisco-area poets, in the book *The Dharma Bums*, published in 1958.

Kerouac developed a friendship with the Buddhist-Taoist **scholar** Alan Watts. He also met and had discussions with the famous Japanese Zen Buddhist D.T. Suzuki.

In 1955 Kerouac wrote a biography of **Siddhartha Gautama**, **entitled** *Wake Up*, which was unpublished during his lifetime but eventually **serialized** in *Tricycle* magazine, 1993-95.

resulted from: v. caused by

hemorrhage: n. sudden loss of blood; sudden bleeding

cirrhosis of the liver: n. dying of the liver; disease of the liver

buried: v. (dead body) put under the ground

He died on October 21, 1969 at St. Anthony's Hospital in St. Petersburg, Florida. His death, at the age of 47, **resulted from** an internal **hemorrhage** caused by **cirrhosis of the liver**, the result of a life of heavy drinking. He was living at the time with his third wife Stella, and his mother Gabrielle. He is **buried** in his home town of Lowell.

Learn More:

[More About Jack Kerouac](http://www.rooknet.com/beatpage/writers/kerouac.html)

<http://www.rooknet.com/beatpage/writers/kerouac.html>

[The Dharma Bums, Audiobook](http://www.learnoutloud.com/Catalog/Literature/Contemporary-Literature/The-Dharma-Bums/1920)

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