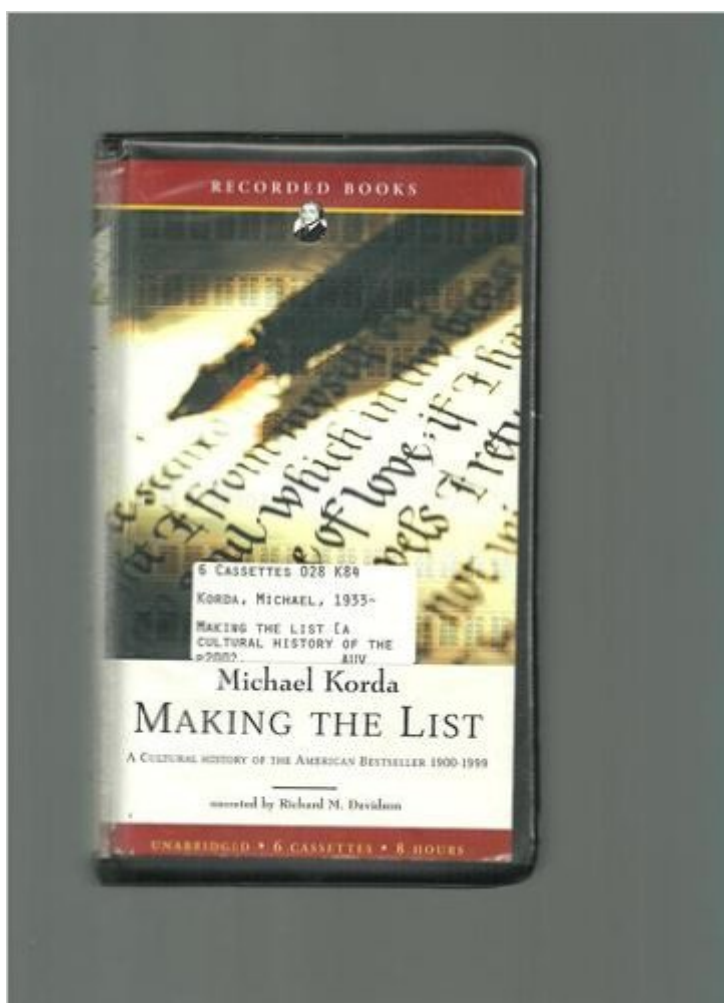


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Making The List A Cultural History Of The American Bestseller 1900-1999



Synopsis

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Customer Reviews

Michael Korda is not sanguine on the turn best-seller book publishing took in the 1990s. "At the end of the day," Korda writes "the bestseller lists of the nineties made for relatively depressing reading, except to accountants. In fiction it became enormously difficult to break through the sheer weight of numbers generated by perhaps two dozen, or fewer, top writers who virtually dominated the list, and in nonfiction, a range of celebrities, merchandise, and self-help books that made it equally hard for all but the most exceptional book to get to the list." You will learn much about the publishing and bookselling industries-- as well as America's reading habits for the past 100 years -from this delightfully candid and witty work.. I admire many of Korda's books,- the thirteen that he's written (eight nonfiction, five novels) and more than a few of the hundreds that he's edited. (And this I can prove.! I spent seven years of my own life writing a biography of one of his famous authors.) However with all that Korda-(possessor of unsinkable intellect and energy, even in the face of prostate cancer-) has previously contributed to our insider knowledge of books and publishing, MAKING THE LIST is his most indispensable work. You might not think so at first because it is short and so much fun to read, but the distilled knowledge, observations and insights of his long career (which began in 1958) may leave you with (a) an enriched understanding of the relative place in the world of some of your favorite books and authors, (b) a savvy historic view of where modern publishing came from, and where it may or may not be going., (c) comprehension of those historic

periods (by decade) which resemble one another culturally, and those which clash.

Mr. Michael Korda is the perfect person to write this book. He brings to the project an enormous sense of perspective from his many decades as an editor at Simon & Schuster, having had two books (Power! and Queenie) on the best seller list, being a book lover, and having a great story telling talent. The experience is like having a pleasant discussion over fine wine and aged cheese in a beautiful country home with a beautifully flickering fire in the background. Today's best seller list began with surveys by Harry Thurston Peck in 1895. Mr. Korda's book then captures almost the entire history of best sellers in the United States. The lists for 1900-1912 come from The Bookman and from Publishers Weekly for 1912-1999. During the earliest years, there is only a fiction list. Later on, the list divides into at least fiction and non-fiction and sometimes includes special lists (such as during war years on war topics). Most of the book is contained in ten chapters that each cover a decade. An essay captures the main themes in writing, popular taste, publishing, retailing, technology (if any) and the legal environment. Along the way, Mr. Korda sprinkles in factoids that sharpen up the appeal of the material. For example, the popular author Winston Churchill in the early part of the 20th century did not later become the prime minister of Great Britain. In certain years, he can tell you how many books had to be sold to make number one on the list. Further, he provides a sense of perspective in pointing out minor and major taste trends along the way. For instance, sex was only hinted at until after World War II. By 1999, it had almost disappeared again from best sellers after temporarily having been a centerpiece in the 1960s and 1970s.

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