



FERLINGHETTI AND CITY LIGHTS

Ferlinghetti epitomized the soul of San Francisco counterculture for generations of artists and writers. As the founder of City Lights, a bookstore and publisher that grew from a small, avant-garde press to a literary institution, he provided a bedrock of support for scores of groundbreaking writers, staunchly defending the work that risked erasure and oppression from authorities.

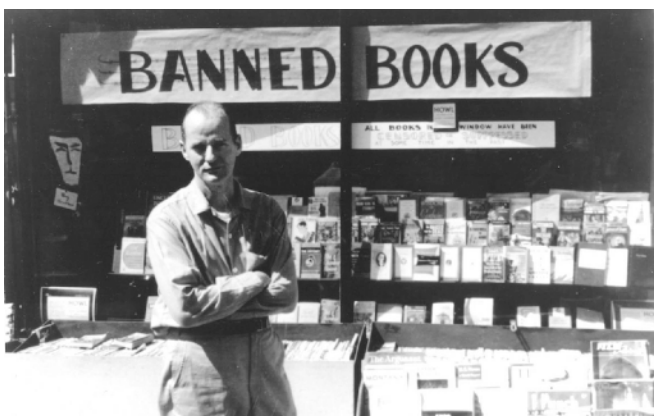
Born in Yonkers, New York, in 1919, Ferlinghetti moved several times during his childhood—his father died before he was born and his mother entered a state mental institution before he was three years old. He lived in France, Bronxville, New York, and Massachusetts, where he attended the private high school Mount Hermon. Later, he earned a degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, drawn there by the fact that Thomas Wolfe had attended, before serving in the naval forces during World War II. After completing a master's degree in English literature at Columbia University, he earned a doctorate in comparative literature from the Sorbonne.

Then, in 1951, he arrived in San Francisco, where his work would pave the way for a national literary movement while stoking a vibrant local literary scene. In a 2019 interview with *The Paris Review*, he described what he first encountered there:

When I arrived in town the only bookstores were like Paul Elder's, downtown. None of them had periodicals. I felt right from the beginning there was no locus for the literary community. These bookstores all closed at five o'clock, they weren't open on the weekend. What's a literary person supposed to do, where is he supposed to go? From the beginning, when Peter Dean Martin and I started City Lights Bookstore in 1953, our idea was to create a locus for the literary community. We used to run a one-inch ad in the San Francisco Chronicle saying, "A literary meeting place since 1953." That was our original line.

Ferlinghetti and Martin each invested \$500 to open City Lights Pocket Book Shop in 1953 at 261 Columbus Avenue. The store sold only paperbacks, a bold choice for a time when publishers were not particularly invested in the format; the decision reflected Ferlinghetti's belief in making literature accessible to a mass audience. Two years later, he founded City Lights Publishers, aiming to encourage an "international, dissident ferment."

He first encountered Allen Ginsberg's "**Howl**" at a reading that same year. The following year, City Lights published it. (Ferlinghetti had given notice to the American Civil Liberties Union in advance.) Then, in 1957, he was arrested on an obscenity charge that a judge later dropped on the grounds that the poem had "redeeming social importance"; that decision would set a legal precedent for other authors who faced obscenity charges in subsequent years, including William S. Burroughs, D.H. Lawrence, and Henry Miller.



He notably did not think of himself as a Beat poet, though others would assign him the label throughout his life; in a 2006 interview with *The Guardian*, he called himself "the last of the bohemians rather than the first of the Beats." Still, as a publisher of Ginsberg and many of his contemporaries, City Lights soon established itself as a vital publisher of progressive, experimental, and high-quality literary projects, working with other authors such as Jack Kerouac, Gregory Corso, Kenneth Patchen, Norman Mailer, Denise Levertov, Pauline Kael, Robert Duncan, and Frank O'Hara.

As a gathering space for artists and intellectuals, the City Lights Bookstore and its events, along with Ferlinghetti himself, became a hub of collaboration, artistic invention, and literary dialogue.

Ferlinghetti published more than 30 books of poetry in his lifetime. His work, including the well-known poem "Tentative Description of a Dinner to Promote the Impeachment of President Eisenhower," often explicitly dealt with the social and political upheavals of the late 20th century—his collection *A Coney Island of the*

Mind, published by New Directions in 1958, is one of the best-selling poetry collections of all time, according to City Lights. His other collections include *Endless Life: Selected Poems* (1981), *These Are My Rivers: New and Selected Poems, 1955–1993*, *A Far Rockaway of the Heart* (1997), *Poetry as Insurgent Art* (2005), and *Time of Useful Consciousness* (2012). He also published fiction, including the recent *Little Boy*, published by Doubleday in 2019.

City Lights said in a **statement**:

For over sixty years, those of us who have worked with him at City Lights have been inspired by his knowledge and love of literature, his courage in defense of the right to freedom of expression, and his vital role as an American cultural ambassador. His curiosity was unbounded and his enthusiasm was infectious, and we will miss him greatly.

The world is a beautiful place
to be born into
if you don't mind happiness
not always being
so very much fun
if you don't mind a touch of hell
now and then
just when everything is fine
because even in heaven
they don't sing
all the time

The world is a beautiful place
to be born into
if you don't mind some people dying
all the time
or maybe only starving
some of the time
which isn't half so bad
if it isn't you

Oh the world is a beautiful place
to be born into
if you don't much mind
a few dead minds
in the higher places
or a bomb or two
now and then
in your upturned faces
or such other improprieties
as our Name Brand society
is prey to
with its men of distinction
and its men of extinction
and its priests
and other patrolmen
and its various segregations
and congressional investigations
and other constipations
that our fool flesh

is heir to

Yes the world is the best place of all
 for a lot of such things as
 making the fun scene
 and making the love scene
 and making the sad scene
 and singing low songs of having
 inspirations
 and walking around
 looking at everything
 and smelling flowers
 and goosing statues
 and even thinking
 and kissing people and
 making babies and wearing pants
 and waving hats and
 dancing
 and going swimming in rivers
 on picnics
 in the middle of the summer
 and just generally
 'living it up'

Yes
 but then right in the middle of it
 comes the smiling
 mortician

ABOUT SAN FRANCISCO:

1. Brainstorming

1. San Francisco Bay stands on the St. Andrea Fault. Do you know what may happen in the area?
2. Do you know what the Gold Rush was?

2. Match the names of San Francisco's landmarks to their descriptions:

Alcatraz, the Golden Gate, Chinatown Gateway, Pier 39, TransAmerica Pyramid

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------|
| 1. a suspension bridge | |
| 2. a skyscraper | |
| 3. an island | |
| 4. a big door | |
| 5. a structure near the port | |

While you watch

3. Circle the correct answer.

1. San Francisco is in *south* / *north* California.
2. A terrible earthquake destroyed much of *San Francisco* / *California*.
3. You can enjoy a beautiful view of the city from the top of the *hills* / *cable cars*.
4. The hills in San Francisco *are* / *aren't* very steep.
5. San Francisco's Financial District is one of the most important on the *west* / *east* coast.
6. Many Chinese people moved to California in the *18th* / *19th* century.
6. Many Italian immigrants worked in the *restaurants* / *port*.
8. It was *possible* / *impossible* to escape from Alcatraz.
9. Foggy weather is very common in *summer* / *winter*.
10. Renzo Piano designed the *Botanical Garden* / *California Academy of Sciences*.

After you watch

4. What do you remember?

1. Why is the Golden Gate orange?
2. What can you see in Chinatown?
3. Which wild animals live in the area of Pier 39?
4. What can people do at Golden Gate Park?
5. What contributes to San Francisco's cultural life?
6. What is one of the most famous means of transport?

5. Which of these would you like to visit most? Number them from 1(most) to 7 (least) and explain your choices.

Lombard St.
Golden Gate Bridge
Golden Gate Park
Chinatown
Alcatraz
TransAmerica Pyramid
Pier 39

VIDEO: http://media.pearsonitalia.it/0.717675_1480660710.mp4

Bikes to Books Map

San Francisco is famous for many things, one of which is its vast literary legacy, a legacy that stretches back to its earliest days. On January 25, 1988, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors approved a proposal by Lawrence Ferlinghetti and

City Lights Books to rename 12 small San Francisco streets after famous authors and artists who had lived and worked in the City.

On Sunday, October 2, 1988, a ceremony and unveiling of new street signs was held at City Lights Bookstore (which was also celebrating its 35th anniversary). Mayor Art Agnos declared October 2nd to be "City Lights Bookstore Day in San Francisco," and an enormous crowd showed up at City Lights. After a number of speeches by literary notables, the first sign was unveiled at Kerouac Street (between City Lights and Vesuvio's Bar).

Bikes to Books

A literary cycling tour of San Francisco

Bike Route

START at South Park &

- 1 Jack London Street
- 2 Columbus to South Park
- 3 Right on Third
- 4 Right on Jesse
- 5 Left on Annie
- 6 Anbrose Bierce Street is to the left

South on Annie
Right on Mission
Right on Third
Cross Market, continue North on Kearney
Right on Clay

- 7 Mark Twain Plaza is to the left
- 8 North on Sansome
- 9 Left on Washington
- 10 South through Stockton Tunnel
- 11 Dismount at stairway to Bush
- 12 Walk up stairs and half a block west
- 13 Dashiell Hammett Street is on the left

Back down steps to Stockton Tunnel OR
Walk up to Mission

- 14 Right on Mason
- 15 Left on Quincy
- 16 Right on Taylor
- 17 Isadora Duncan Lane is to the left

North on Taylor
Right on Sutter

- 18 Frank Norris Street is on right
- 19 North on Peik
- 20 Right on Beach
- 21 Left on Leavenworth
- 22 Richard Henry Dana Place is the waterfront end of Leavenworth

South on Leavenworth
Left on Columbus at Filbert
Cross Columbus to the left

- 23 Via Baratta is to the left
- 24 North on Bidano
- 25 Right on Greenwich
- 26 Right on Powell
- 27 Left on Filbert
- 28 Bob Kaufman Street is to the right

West on Filbert
Right on Jasper
Right on Union

- 29 Via Ferragutti is to the left
- 30 West on Union
- 31 Right on Columbus
- 32 Columbus to Vallejo
- 33 Kenneth Rexroth Place is to the right

Southeast on Columbus to Broadway
Cross Broadway

- 34 William Saroyan Place is to the left
- 35 Jack Kerouac Street is to the right

FINISH

1 **Richard Henry Dana** (1786-1862) was a prominent lawyer and politician in San Francisco. He served as the city's first mayor and was instrumental in the city's early development.

2 **Benny Buriano** (1914-1988) was a San Francisco poet and author. He was a member of the Beat Generation and wrote several books of poetry.

3 **William Saroyan** (1908-1981) was an Armenian American writer, actor, and screenwriter. He is best known for his novel "The Time of My Life" and his play "The Great Santini".

4 **Bob Kaufman** (1919-1979) was a San Francisco poet and actor. He was a member of the Beat Generation and was known for his wild and often obscene performances.

5 **Lawrence Ferlingetti** (1919-2009) was a San Francisco poet and author. He was a member of the Beat Generation and was known for his satirical and often obscene poetry.

6 **Jack Kerouac** (1919-1956) was an American novelist, poet, and screenwriter. He is best known for his novel "On the Road" and his poetry.

7 **Mark Twain** (1834-1910) was an American writer, humorist, and lecturer. He is best known for his novels "Tom Sawyer" and "Huckleberry Finn".

8 **Isadora Duncan** (1897-1927) was an American dancer and choreographer. She is considered one of the most influential figures in the history of modern dance.

9 **Dashiell Hammett** (1896-1962) was an American writer and journalist. He is best known for his detective novels featuring the character Sam Spide.

10 **Frank Norris** (1874-1902) was an American novelist and journalist. He is best known for his novel "McTeague" and his play "The Octopus".

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A BOX OF RAIN (THE GRATEFUL DEAD, 1970)



Look out of any _____
Any morning, any evening, any _____
Maybe the sun is _____
Birds are winging or rain is falling from a heavy _____

What do you want me to do
To do for you to see you through?
For this is all a dream we dreamed
One _____ long ago

Walk out of any _____
Feel your way, feel your way like the day _____
Maybe you'll find _____
Around some corner where it's been waiting to _____ you

What do you want me to do
To watch for you while you're _____?
Then please don't be _____
When you find me dreaming too

Look into any eyes you find by you
You can see clear through to another day
Maybe it's been seen before through other eyes

On other days while _____

What do you want me to do
To do for you to see you through?
It's all a dream we dreamed
One afternoon long ago

Walk into splintered _____
Inch your way through dead dreams to another _____
Maybe you're tired and _____
Your tongue is twisted with _____ half spoken
And thoughts unclear

What do you want me to do
To do for you to see you through?
A box of rain will ease the _____
And _____ will see you through

Just a box of rain, wind and water
Believe it if you need it
If you don't, just pass it on

Sun and _____, wind and rain
In and out the window
Like a moth before a _____

And it's just a box of rain
I don't know who put it there
Believe it if you need it
Or leave it if you _____

And it's just a box of rain
Or a _____ for your hair
Such a long, long time to be gone
And a short time to be there

SOMEBODY TO LOVE (JEFFERSON AIRPLANE, 1967)



When the _____ is found to be lies
And all the _____ within you dies
Don't you want somebody to love
Don't you need somebody to love
Wouldn't you love somebody to love
You better find somebody to love
Love, love

When the _____ flowers, baby are dead, yes and
Your mind, your mind is so full of _____
Don't you want somebody to love
Don't you need somebody to love
Wouldn't you love somebody to love
You better find somebody to love

Your eyes, I say your eyes may look like his
Yeah, but in your _____, baby
I'm afraid you don't know where it is
Don't you want somebody to love
Don't you need somebody to love
Wouldn't you love somebody to love
You better find somebody to love

_____ are running down
They're all running down your _____
And your friends, baby
They treat you like a _____
Don't you want somebody to love
Don't you need somebody to love
Wouldn't you love somebody to love
You better find somebody to love