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## Books

from the July 17, 2003 edition

# Out of print bestsellers

By **Ron Charles**, book editor

A funny thing happened on the way to obsolescence. The Internet revolution, which was supposed to consign printed books to the shredder, instead energized the market for old ones. Thousands of used bookstores no longer need to wait for an interested buyer to spot some cherished but lost title on a dusty shelf. Databases on the World Wide Web can now connect the most obscure book with anyone who can recall a favorite title or author.

While towers of Hillary and Harry threaten to crush shoppers at Barnes & Noble, we were delighted to get the first out-of-print bestseller report from [BookFinder.com](#), the world's largest searchable book inventory. These titles enjoy the conflicted distinction of being the most wanted of the least available books in America. By analyzing data from out-of-print book searches between July and December 2002, BookFinder produced 10 topical lists of the most requested titles.

To see what some of these books are like and how to get them, we crawled out onto the Web and bought copies of the top book in six different categories. We made our purchases through several online sources, all of which provided seamless access to inventory from an enormous number of used bookstores around the country. Payment with a credit card was easy, and all shipments arrived as promised in two or three weeks.

If you want to brave the out-of-print world, remember you'll face far more choices than when you buy the latest Grisham hardback at the mall. Out-of-print books are offered in a variety of candidly described "conditions," from signed first editions to badly worn paperbacks.

Bookworms, dig in.

## Biography

**The Curse of Lono**, by **Hunter S. Thompson**, 1983  
([Half.com](#), \$32.10, paperback lightly worn)

The legendary founder of Gonzo journalism has tried just about

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#### Most-viewed stories:

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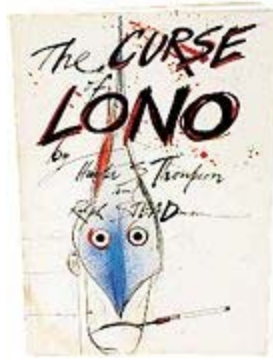
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everything, legal and otherwise, to get a good story. In the early 1980s, he set out for the "harsh little maze of volcanic zits" that is Hawaii, to cover the Honolulu marathon for "Running" magazine - choosing Lono, god of peace and agriculture, as his place-setting alter ego. Famed British sidekick Ralph Steadman adds comic relief as both a tortured character and a no-punches-held illustrator throughout the book. Just 10 pages in, the reader is already assuming the lead role in one of Steadman's daring, full-page drawings: eyes bulging, mind reeling, body pulled forward through each grisly chapter by some menacing and unpredictable force. This is a page-turner, made all the more impressive by the maladroit mix of subject matter - running and politics in the middle of the Pacific - and by Hunter's trademark tendency to veer off course into unrelated tirades. A Gonzo masterpiece. *By Elizabeth Armstrong*



### Crafts & hobbies

**How America Eats, by Clementine Paddleford, 1961 ([Abebooks.com](#), \$75, hardback without jacket, light wear, musty odor)**

It would be any food editor's dream assignment: a 12-year eating tour of America in search of the country's best recipes. Clementine Paddleford, on assignment for "This Week Magazine," relished the task. Starting in 1948, she crisscrossed the US, sampling dishes in restaurants, at family dinner tables, and even on fishing boats. What resulted is "How America Eats," an exhaustive and fascinating look at America's regional specialties. Classics such as "New England Boiled Dinner" and "Devil's Food Cake" are reminiscent of early versions of "Joy of Cooking" or the "Fannie Farmer Cookbook." More interesting, however, are the folksy descriptions of regional food that begin each chapter. In today's world, where California strawberries show up in stores all over the US, and Maine lobsters can be shipped anywhere in a day, it's refreshing to be reminded that the identities of America's regional cuisines were once more distinctive. *By Jennifer Wolcott*



### Fiction

**Anthony Adverse, by Hervey Allen, 1933 ([Half.com](#), \$6, two-volume hardcover without jacket, lightly worn)**

Widely popular when published in 1933, "Anthony Adverse" chronicles the life of a merchant in the 19th century. In a plot device wrested from Dickens, Anthony begins life in the French alps, the product of a tryst between an Italian marquise and her young lover. When the father is slain by the jealous marquis and the mother dies in childbirth, their child is left on the doorstep of a convent. By a

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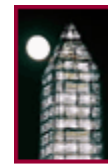
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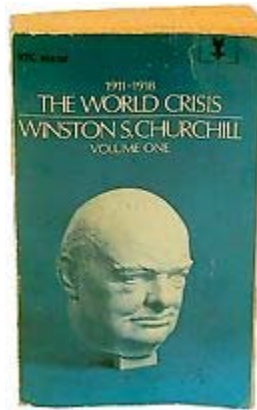
miraculous coincidence, Anthony grows up and apprentices to his maternal grandfather's mercantile business, which he eventually inherits - only to squander his good fortune in an aimless sea voyage and languish brokenhearted in the West Indies for a good chunk of the text. Finally returning home, he reunites with his first love and struggles to regain his lost business. The novel is slow-paced, the language is archaic, and the descriptions are steeped in religious symbolism. Weighing in at 1,200 pages, "Anthony Adverse" is not for the faint of heart. *By J. Johnson*



## History

### **The World Crisis, by Winston Churchill, 1923** ([Alibris.com](#), \$15, paperback lightly worn and yellowed)

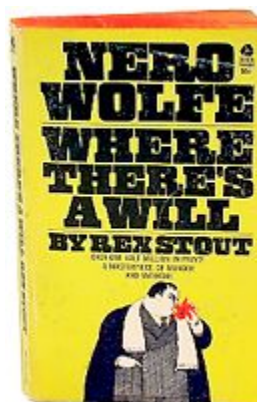
Among Winston Churchill's prodigious talents (the renowned statesman was also a skilled landscape painter) were those of historian. "A History of the English-Speaking Peoples" and "The Gathering Storm" are among his best-known works, but "The World Crisis" holds up well, too. Written after World War I, in which Churchill served for a time as First Lord of the Admiralty, the book shows how, in his words, "Germany clanked obstinately, recklessly, awkwardly towards the crater" of a hideous and devastating European conflagration "and dragged us all in with her." Churchill knows he's no omniscient eye, watching from above: We get the war from inside the beast, from a man who helped make key decisions and suffered personal consequences. The final section of Volume One defends his ultimately disastrous plan to attack the Turks at Gallipoli in 1915. Readers are left with British and Allied forces trapped on the beach, literally a cliffhanger of an ending. *By Gregory M. Lamb*



## Mysteries

### **Where There's a Will, by Rex Stout, 1940** ([Half.com](#), \$11.99, paperback lightly worn)

Where there's a will - and disgruntled heirs contesting its provisions - there's Nero Wolfe, an eccentric and highly sought-after private detective. And where there's Nero Wolfe, there's his right-hand man, Archie Goodwin. Both are in top form in this 1940 adventure, which features a trio of sisters named April, May, and June, who receive a peach, a pear, and an apple, respectively, in the will of their brother, Noel Hawthorne. The real sticking point for the family, though, is the \$7 million bequeathed to

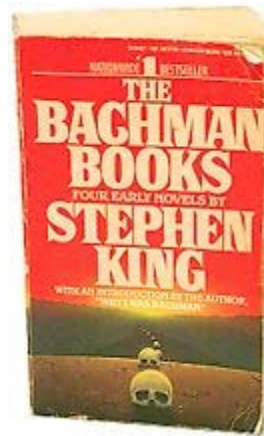


Hawthorne's mistress. After Wolfe takes the case, things get complicated: The police discover that Hawthorne was murdered, two heavily veiled women claim to be his wife, and - gasp! - the reclusive detective actually leaves his house to do some in-person investigating. The result is another satisfying success for Wolfe and Goodwin and a surprise ending for the reader. *By Judy Lowe*

## Horror

### **Rage, by Richard Bachman (Stephen King), 1977** **([Abebooks.com](#), \$10, paperback worn and soiled)**

If it seems odd that a Stephen King book is on the out-of-print list, bear in mind that "Rage" is one of several stories originally published under his pseudonym Richard Bachman. Like other novellas "Bachman" wrote, "Rage" isn't really a horror story. More psychological thriller, it revolves around Charlie Decker, the mentally unhinged narrator who one day brings a gun to school, kills two teachers, and holds his math class hostage (a prescient plot, given that King wrote the story in 1966 and published it in '77). The bulk of the story is a conversation



between Decker and his fellow students - uninhibited, confessional, and increasingly disturbing as they recount intimate details about themselves and each other. By the surprising conclusion, it's unclear just whose rage the title refers to. The story is a quick, entertaining read - though it occasionally loses momentum - and King does a good job capturing adolescent angst. It's not, however, one of his most memorable works. *By Amanda Paulson*



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