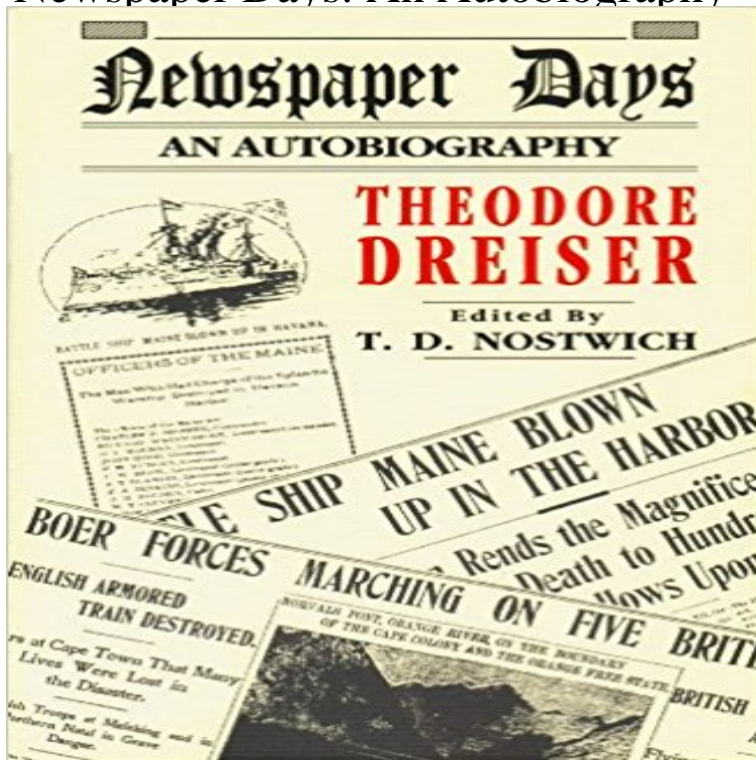


Newspaper Days: An Autobiography



During Christmas 1891, Dreiser, age twenty-one and miserable as a bill collector in Chicago, decided to find a job as a reporter: I conceived of newspapers as wonderlands in which all concerned were prosperous and happy. . . I was also determined to shake off the garments of the commonplace in which I seemed swathed and step forth into the public arena, where I could be seen and understood for what I was a writer. He at last found a slot at the Chicago Daily Globe, helping cover the 1892 Democratic National Convention. This, in turn, led to jobs with newspapers in St. Louis, Toledo, Cleveland, Buffalo, and Pittsburgh - a scraping, unremunerative, eight-year journey through bustling railroad towns, with New York and Pulitzers World the final terminal. He started as a reporter, but found greater success as a feature writer, where he was better able to bend fact toward fiction. He specialized in lowlife stories, the research for which was a working education in the brutalities of life: The police courts, the jails, the houses of ill repute, trade failures and trickery - it was all a grand magnificent spectacle: a pageant of human weakness, wickedness, and survival through cunning and courage. Everywhere I looked I found a terrifying desire for lust or pleasure or wealth, accompanied by a heartlessness which was freezing to the soul, or a dogged resignation to deprivation and misery. He covered lynchings, streetcar strikes, robberies and murders - all of it testing his abilities as an observer and awakening the novelist within. It was the school that would prepare him for *Sister Carrie* (1900), *Jennie Gerhardt* (1911), and *An American Tragedy* (1925). First published in 1922 in what the editor calls an expurgated abridgment, *Newspaper Days* is here published in an edition based on Dreiser's original typescript.

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