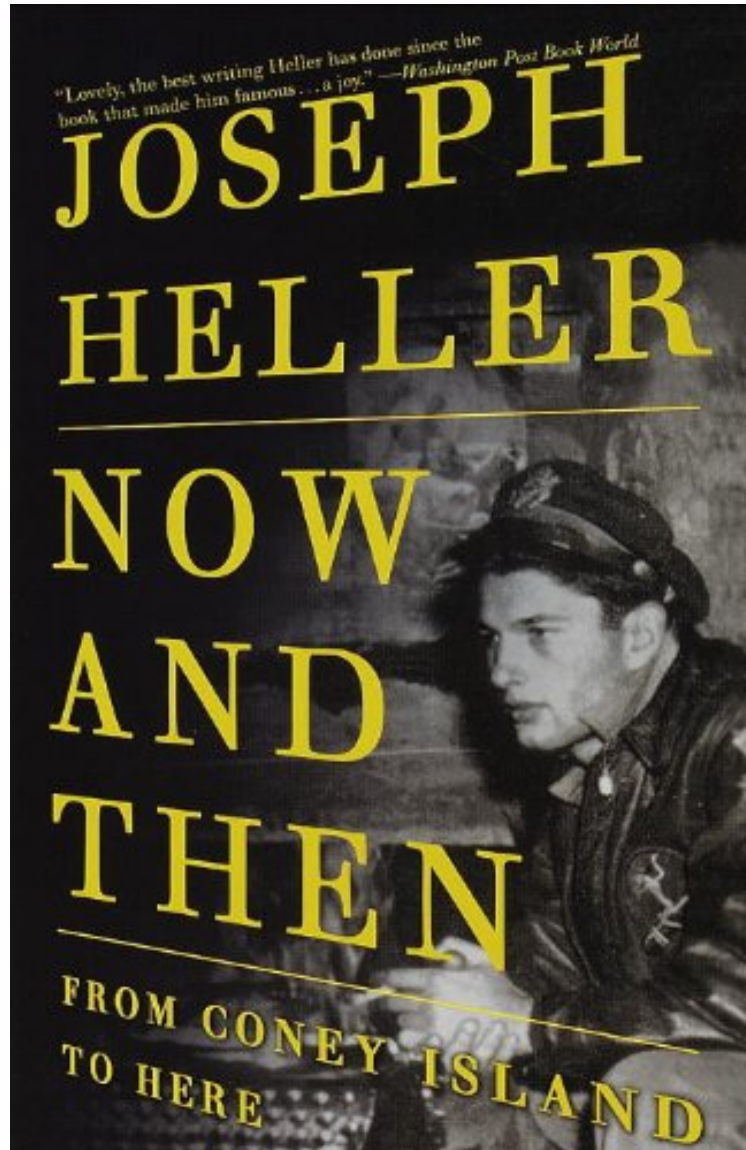


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## Now and Then: From Coney Island to Here

Von Joseph Heller

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**Von Joseph Heller : Now and Then: From Coney Island to Here** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Now and Then: From Coney Island to Here:

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. A Fine Representation of Heller's Psychology and StyleVon Donald MitchellIf you are like me, you are tempted by autobiographies of writers whose work you love. You hope to get that extra bit of insight that will expand your appreciation of their writing. Usually, these hints come from long passages about writing and inspiration concerning

those works. In *Now and Then*, Mr. Heller is more laconic about that sort of information than many writers are. On the other hand, he is very generous in explaining his personal psychology, demons, work habits, and writing blocks. You will come to appreciate that Mr. Heller is a man beset by some important demons who overcomes them with wry wit that delights almost everyone. The book's weakness is that you will perhaps get more knowledge about Coney Island in the 1930s than you had counted on. If you are from Coney Island, on the other hand, you will revel in all of the myriad details and will want to give this book more than five stars. Mr. Heller takes great pleasure in his success, his career, his recognition, and his accomplishments. He takes equal delight in his ability to use language with precision and erudition. The autobiography allows him plenty of opportunities to focus on all of these pleasing elements. To make this self-indulgence more palatable to the reader, he pokes a bit of fun at himself with gentle irony. But all of this seeming self-indulgence is really procrastination to delay dealing with the painful parts of his life story. His father's death while he was young, and later exposure to the horrors of war in World War II left a deep stamp on his emotional make-up. The book describes an important catharsis as Mr. Heller identifies what he learned from psychoanalysis and the psychological testing that his employers applied. His self-descriptions perfectly mirror his characterization of what happened in a typical psychoanalysis session. He would tell witty stories, jokes, and did everything possible to please the analyst . . . so he would not have to focus on the problems that faced him that day. And so the book does the same. I came away with a new appreciation for Mr. Heller after coming to see how much of his great writing and humor serve as his defense against deep emotional wounds. I hope that we can all learn how to cope as well. After you finish this book, think about where you procrastinate. What is it that you are trying to avoid facing about yourself? Tell the truth . . . and make it interesting if you want to help others! You may also help yourself.

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0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Not enough insight into *Catch 22* Von Ein Kunde Many years ago I picked up a copy of *'Catch 22'* and found myself totally engrossed for a whole weekend. The book was funny, original and unlike anything I have read before or since. I have read this novel no less than 5 times and have been recommending it to people for years. I picked up Heller's memoir expecting the same witty bizarre writing as that in *C22* but alas it was not to be. Quite a lot of Heller's memoir is based around growing up in Coney Island. I would suggest that this section of the memoir would be of interest to people either live or have lived in or around that locale. What I was hoping for was more detail into the events which shaped Heller's views and eventually gave rise to *C22*. There is some detail of his wartime exploits but it is very quickly skirted over and doesn't leave one any wiser as to how/why Heller developed his bizarre comical view of the world and war as depicted so clearly in *C22*. Perhaps I do him an injustice with the inevitable comparison but there is little evidence of the witty, clever writing so abundant in *C22*. In fairness though Heller seems to have been more interested in writing a frank succinct account of his life and times, particularly growing up in Coney Island. Notwithstanding these criticisms Heller does bare his soul here and discusses openly very personal details of his life. There is some sadness. The Father he never knew is an aspect of his life he discusses in great detail. The memoir however ends on a positive note as he reflects on his health, his achievements and his general outlook on life. One is left with the impression of a fundamentally decent guy. Someone

whom it would be nice to know and maybe share a beer with.

KurzbeschreibungThe demented Army Air Force of Catch-22, the lethal business world of Something Happened, the dysfunctional family of Good as Gold—all these, we have assumed, had their roots in Joseph Heller's own past. Now, more than thirty-five years after the explosion of Catch-22 into the world's consciousness, Heller gives us his life. Here is his Coney Island childhood, down the block from the world's most famous amusement park. It was the height of the Depression, it was a fatherless family, yet little Joey Heller had a terrific time—on the boardwalk, in the ocean (dangerously out of his depth), playing follow-the-leader in and out of local bars, even in school. Then a series of jobs, from delivering telegrams (on his first bike) to working in a navy yard—until Pearl Harbor, the air force, Italy. And after the war, college (undreamed-of before the G.I. Bill), teaching, Madison Avenue, marriage, and—always—writing. And finally the spectacular success of Catch-22, launching one of the great literary careers. The strengths of Now and Then lie in the energy, humor, and mischief that have characterized all of Heller's work, along with the dark undertones that lie beneath them. He brings back a Coney Island that is not only a symbol of fun and fantasy around the world but a vision of what seems today to have been a golden age of carefree innocence. For the first time, he writes about the people and the events, both tragic and hilarious, he was eventually to translate, in Catch-22, into such memorable characters as Hungry Joe, Orr, Major—de Coverley, Natel's whore, and (of course) Yossarian, and such moving and frightening scenes as the death of Snowden. Now and Then is both an account of a remarkable life and a glimpse into the creative process of a major American writer. From the Hardcover edition. deCatch-18 was the intended title of Joseph Heller's most famous novel, Catch-22, which the author renamed to avoid confusion with Leon Uris's bestseller Mila 18. It's hard now to imagine anyone ever mistaking a single line written by Heller for the work of someone else; his atmospheric new memoir grabs readers' attention with the same plain, powerful prose; blunt, but oddly tender, humor; and striking ability to recreate a particular time and place that distinguishes all his fiction. The brief, haunting section on his air force service confirms that Heller drew on his own experiences for Catch-22. But it's his boyhood home, Brooklyn's Coney Island in the 1920s and '30s, that prompts Now and Then's best pages. You can practically taste the cheap ice cream and hot knishes, hear the shrieks of kids on the amusement park's hurtling rides, see the facades of long-demolished apartment buildings, and smell the sand-and-salt odor wafting from the beach. The dignity and emotional reticence of Heller's widowed mother, the security he felt in an impoverished but safe immigrant neighborhood, come to life just as vividly. Scattered anecdotes about famous friends (including Irwin Shaw and James Jones) are also evocative, and occasional comments about his novels' themes reveal Heller to be a better self-critic than most writers. But it's his affectionate tribute to a vanished New York that most clearly displays this popular author's narrative skills and engaging personality. --Wendy Smith.co.ukCatch-18 was the intended title of Joseph Heller's most famous novel, Catch-22, which the author renamed to avoid confusion with Leon Uris's bestseller Mila 18. It's hard now to imagine anyone ever mistaking a single line written by Heller for the work of someone else; his atmospheric new memoir grabs readers' attention with the same plain, powerful prose; blunt, but oddly tender, humour; and striking ability to recreate a particular time and place that distinguishes all his fiction. The brief, haunting section on his air force service confirms that Heller drew on his own experiences for Catch-22. But it's his boyhood home, Brooklyn's Coney Island in the 1920s and 1930s, that prompts Now and Then's best pages. You can practically taste the cheap ice cream and hot knishes, hear the shrieks of kids on the amusement park's hurtling rides, see the facades of long-demolished apartment buildings and smell the sand- and-salt odour wafting from the beach. The dignity and emotional reticence of Heller's widowed mother, the security he felt in an impoverished but safe immigrant neighbourhood, come to life just as vividly. Scattered anecdotes about famous friends (including Irwin Shaw and James Jones) are also evocative, and occasional comments about his novels' themes reveal Heller to be a better self-critic than most writers. But it's his affectionate tribute to a vanished New York that most clearly displays this popular author's narrative skills and engaging personality.--Wendy Smith