



Ragged Dick and Struggling Upward (Penguin American Library)

By Carl Bode, Horatio Alger Jr.

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Ragged Dick and Struggling Upward (Penguin American Library) By Carl Bode, Horatio Alger Jr.

From the 1860's through the 1890s, Horatio Alger wrote hundreds of novels to teach young boys the merits of honesty, hard work, and cheerfulness in the face of adversity. As Carl Bode points out in his introduction, Horatio Alger filled a void in American literature and met scant competition both in the nature and the number of his works. Like his heroes, Alger rose to the top by chance, coincidence, and hard work.

The hero of **Ragged Dick** is a veritable "diamond in the rough"—as innately virtuous as he is streetwise and cocky. Immediately popular with young readers, the novel also appealed to parents, who responded to its colorful espousal of the Protestant ethic. **Struggling Upward**, published nearly thirty years later, followed the same time-tested formulas, and despite critical indifference it, too, had mass appeal.

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Ragged Dick and Struggling Upward (Penguin American Library) By Carl Bode, Horatio Alger Jr. Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #390006 in Books
- Published on: 1985-01-08
- Released on: 1985-01-08
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.80" h x .70" w x 5.10" l,
- Binding: Paperback
- 304 pages



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Editorial Review

From the Back Cover

The hero of 'Ragged Dick' is a veritable 'diamond in the rough'-as innately virtuous as he is streetwise and cocky. Immediately popular with young readers, the novel also appealed to parents, who responded to its colorful espousal of the Protestant ethic. 'Struggling Upward' published nearly thirty years later, followed the same time-tested formulas, and despite critical indifference it, too, had mass appeal.

About the Author

Horatio Alger, Jr. was born in Chelsea, Massachusetts in 1832, the son of a Unitarian minister. He received a strict upbringing and was educated for a life in the church, graduating from Harvard in 1852.

After leaving Harvard, Alger, to his father's disappointment, took a job as a historian in Middlesex County, Massachusetts and later worked as a teacher at a boys' boarding school in East Greenwich, Rhode Island. He traveled in Europe for a year, and then returned to the United States in 1857 to complete his studies at the Cambridge Divinity School.

In 1864 Alger was ordained a minister at the First Parish Unitarian Church of Brewster on Cape Cod. Sixteen months later, however, he was dismissed from the pulpit after being accused of engaging in homosexual relations with two boys. After his dismissal, Alger began to focus on his writing career, which spanned more than three decades and 110 books. He wrote mainly children's books about boys and girls who rise from rags to riches through hard work and faith in the American dream. His first major success came with the publication of his eighth novel, **Ragged Dick** in 1868. Other popular novels include **Luck and Pluck** (1869), **Tattered Tom** (1871), and **Strive and Succeed** (1872). Alger also wrote several adult novels, including **A Fancy of Her's** (first published as **The New Schoolma'am** in 1877) and **The Disagreeable Woman** (1895).

Alger, who never married, spent the last decades of his life living at his family home in South Natick, Massachusetts, where he died in 1899.

Carl Bode, professor emeritus of English/American Studies at the University of Maryland, is a freelance writer. Founder and first president of the American Studies Association, he is also past president of the Popular Culture Association and the Mencken Society. His books include **The American Lyceum**, **Antebellum Culture**, and **Mencken**. He has edited **Collected Poems of Henry Thoreau** and **The Best of Thoreau's Journals**; and has co-edited **The Correspondence of Henry David Thoreau** and, in collaboration with Malcolm Cowley, **The Portable Emerson**.

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