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'New York: The Novel': History has never been so fun to read

By Craig Wilson, USA TODAY

New York is a big city. *New York: The Novel* is an even bigger book.

Edward Rutherfurd has tackled big subjects in his fiction before. London, Russia, Ireland, to name but three. Now he turns his keen academic eye toward the city that never sleeps.

It appears Rutherfurd didn't sleep much either while putting together this massive "history" of one of the world's greatest cities. (Some have called him an heir to [James Michener](#), who also wrote epics set in various locales around the world.)

Rutherfurd's research is exhaustive, taking the reader from the city's beginnings as an Indian village at the tip of Manhattan all the way to the Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center.

And while this book could be one *big* bore, it is not. As he has done in his other novels, Rutherfurd once again uses a variety of fictional families to weave this tale of one of the world's most fascinating cities.

You want [George Washington](#)? He's here. You want [Babe Ruth](#)? He's here, too, right along with so many Dutchmen you'd think no one stayed back home in the original [Amsterdam](#).

But Rutherfurd's habit of also making up many of his characters makes this sweeping tale a much more fun read than anyone would suspect. This is history, but with a very readable story line.

It's even, well, a little naughty.

"Margaretha de Groot took a slow draw on the clay pipe in her sensual mouth, looked at the man with the wooden leg in a considering kind of way, and wondered what it would be like to sleep with him," Rutherfurd writes.

Once again, thinking big.



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