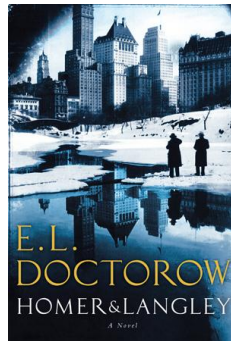


Colorado Book Club Resource  
Book of the Month – August 2010



*Homer & Langley* by E.L. Doctorow

In early 1947, police in New York City's Harlem neighborhood were contacted with complaints of a horrible odor emanating from a four-storey brownstone at the corner of 128<sup>th</sup> Street and Fifth Avenue. When authorities arrived at the scene, they found the remains of Homer and Langley Collyer inside. What would make these two brothers legendary, however, was not their tragic deaths, but the floor-to-ceiling collection of junk and oddities that amounted to more than 100 tons of trash. Author E.L. Doctorow attempts to penetrate the lives and minds of the Collyer brothers with his historical fiction novel *Homer and Langley*. What were the driving forces behind their obsessive collecting and eventual withdrawal from society? Did they have relationships with anyone outside their decaying walls? How did Langley care for his younger, disabled brother and why did these wealthy men refuse to pay their utilities?

Anyone who has seen the television show *Hoarders* will be familiar with living spaces amassed with unhealthy amounts of clutter. The Collyer brothers, while surely not the first in history to collect heaps of random items, may possibly be the most famous. The mystery of their true lives remains just that – a mystery – but it is entertaining to see how Doctorow uses bits and pieces of the clutter to form a cohesive storyline and bring the mysterious pair out of the dark recesses of their rooms. Told in first person from the perspective of Homer, who has at this point become deaf as well as blind, the story attempts to explain how massive stacks of newspaper, a Model-T skeleton and 14 pianos became part of the lives of these two men. Readers may discourse on a myriad of topics ranging from the Collyers' degree of sanity to the passing of the world beyond their doors.

**\*The Book Club has 7 copies of *Homer & Langley* available for check-out!\***