

Runyon, Damon (1880-1946)

Encyclopedia Article

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Damon Runyon personified the spirit of Broadway in the Roaring 1920s. A renowned American journalist and sports writer for three and a half decades, he is best remembered for the people he created in his popular short stories of New York during Prohibition—touts, bookies, gamblers, gangsters, and their molls, who frequented the glittering world of speakeasies and nightclubs. "Runyonesque" is a commonly used term denoting a rough talking person with a slightly shady purpose, a wisecracking Good Time Charley or grasping Miss Billy Perry. His short story collection, *Guys and Dolls* (1931), became a successful Broadway musical and Hollywood boxoffice success, starring Frank Sinatra, while his *Little Miss Marker* launched the screen career of Shirley Temple. Together with Walter Winchell and his contemporary, Ring Lardner, Runyon presented a lively, humorous vision of Broadway during this era.

Further Reading:

Clark, Tom. *The World of Damon Runyon*. New York, Harper and Row, 1978.

Mosedale, John. *The Men Who Invented Broadway*. New York, Richard Marek Publishers, 1981.