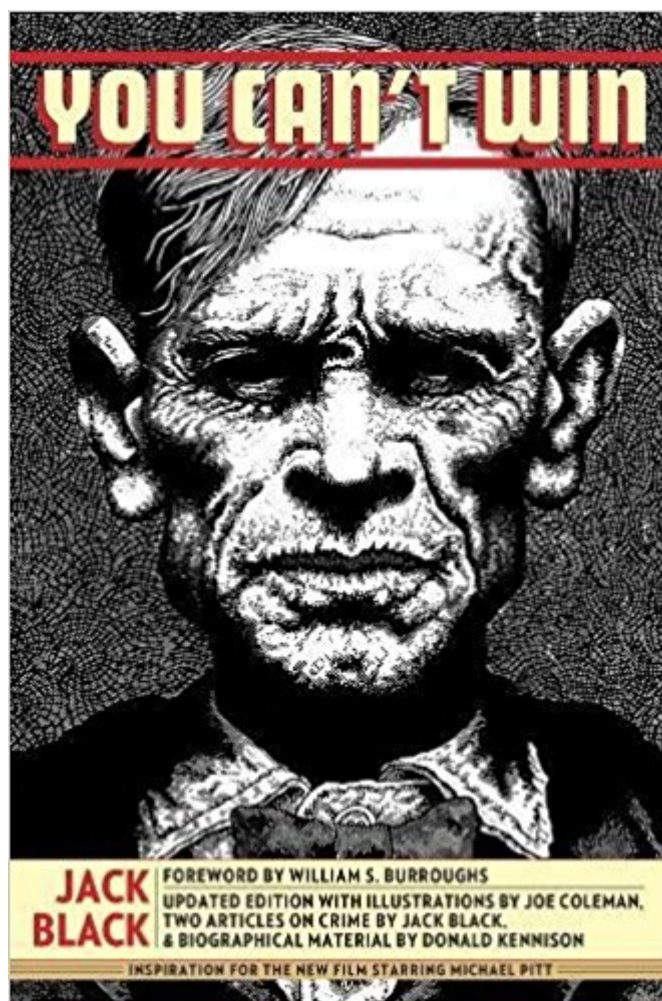


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# You Can't Win



## Synopsis

You Can't Win, the beloved memoir of real lowdown Americana by criminal hobo Jack Black, was first published in 1926, then reprinted in 1988 by Adam Parfrey's Amok Press, featuring an introduction by William S. Burroughs. After its Amok Press edition went out of print, You Can't Win found popularity once again with the AK Press edition. Feral House's new version will take this classic American narrative a lot further, including two remarkable nonfiction articles by Jack Black written for Harper's Magazine in the 1920s. Remarkable illustrations by Joe Coleman and new biographical revelations by Donald Kennison will round out the new edition. A full-length feature film of You Can't Win starring Boardwalk Empire's Michael Pitt is expected to be released in spring 2013.

## Book Information

Paperback: 400 pages

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Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 49 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #381,910 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #52 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Regional Canada #576 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > True Crime > Organized Crime #1039 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Specific Groups > Crime & Criminals

## Customer Reviews

I knew nothing about this book or the author before I started reading it and it was a really pleasant surprise. It's the warts-n-all memoir of a career criminal (specifically: a prowler) at the end of the 19th century/start of the 20th century. The author doesn't attempt to justify his life of crime or blame it on a troubled upbringing/society. He just tells it straight. Fascinating book, and this edition has some further essays by the author at the back on crime and justice which are also worth reading.

The author isn't who you may think he is. Rather than being the modern comedic genius, this Jack Black is a turn-of-the-century hobo, thief, and all-around ne-er do well. He gives the reader a clear,

unblemished picture of life in the old-timey US from the perspective of a hobo and chronic jail bird. A fascinating read!

For such an old book, this one is excellent. The style is amazingly simple but effective. It reminded me almost of Charles Bukowski's work at some points. I can see why William Burroughs would have admired this memoir and even cherished it.

I'm half way through this book and I find it riveting. An absolutely mesmerizing account by a turn of the century grifter, hobo, and thief. It is well written, and paints an unforgettable portrait of this strata of society at a pivotal point in our country's history. I can't recommend it highly enough.

Awesome book - a classic! I originally read this when a friend passed it on to me several years ago. I was glad to stumble on to it again and reread it. Every bit as good the second time around!

Straightforward narration of a youth's criminal education and practice, starting in the western US early in the last century. Jack Black in his own words comes off as a smart if somewhat amoral young man, without much pretense (though I'm not qualified to say whether he made this stuff up or not). No wonder William Burroughs was entranced when he read this as a kid -- If you like Jim Thompson's bellhop tales, dig in here. Great anecdotes, deadpan.

I tore through this book, I was quickly roped in. A really good adventure to read through, gives a nice insight into the life of a criminal 100 years ago.

Many interesting stories of a wayward life, unsavory types and their rude behavior in the early 20th century. This should be required reading in every home for delinquents. It's interesting how Mr. Black keeps pointing out how little all his sincere efforts at being a professional criminal paid him over time. In the midst of all his sickening stories of crime and criminal acts, he mentions several times how if he'd just gotten a regular trade job at the start of his self-providing life, he'd have been immeasurably further ahead at the end, in riches, both real and social, than his life of crime ever gained him.

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