In 1979, there were an estimated 600 books written on the subject of John F. Kennedy's assassination, 34 years ago. What follows is a selective listing of the most important and useful texts, plus a number of commonly available duds.

The President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy, Report, a.k.a. The Report of the Warren Commission (1964): The world-famous lone assassin theory, in which a warehouse employee with a shady past makes marksmanship history with a single bullet. The theory was favored by some of the President's closest aides, and it formed the basis of the official investigation. Russell and Hale Boggs privately disavowed the single-bullet theory, without which the case for one gunman evaporates.

The President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy, Hearings (1964): These 26 volumes of appendices, containing selected hearings and exhibits before the Commission, have a strange tendency to contradict the Report's conclusions.

The House Select Committee to Study the Assassination of President Kennedy, Report and Hearings (1979): In the mid-`70s, Sen. Richard Schweiker and others began pushing for a Congressional probe into the assassination. The House Select Committee to Study the Assassination of President Kennedy, with Sen. Schweiker at its helm, was established in 1976. The Committee's investigatory efforts produced a number of reports, including one containing the acoustics evidence, which allegedly proves at least two gunmen — that Kennedy was "probably" the victim of a conspiracy. The real issue — the overwhelming pattern of forged and suppressed evidence in all aspects of the case — was ignored. The "acoustics evidence" mars practically every book written on the case since 1979. (See Livingstone, Killing the Truth, for the whole story.)


Robert Blakey and Richard Billings, The Plot to Kill the President (Times Books, 1981): The Chief Counsel to the HSCA, who helped scuttle any hope for an open and fair investigation, voices his theory about how Kennedy was killed — the Mafia killed Kennedy.

Walt Brown, The People V. Lee Harvey Oswald (Carroll & Graf, 1992): Could Oswald have been convicted of the assassination? Brown's fictional trial is definitively researched, and the writing is witty and insightful.

Don DeLillo, Libra: A Novel (Viking, 1988): A fictional scenario postulating Oswald as one gunman in a relatively small-scale conspiracy. DeLillo's done his homework, but he makes the common mistake of taking the evidence against Oswald at face value. Avoid.


Edward J. Epstein, Counterplot (Viking Press, 1969): A scathing look at the Jim Garrison investigation which later became the basis for Oliver Stone's JFK. Epstein's book is a must-read for anyone interested in the assassination.

Edward J. Epstein, Legend: The Secret World of Lee Harvey Oswald (Reader's Digest Press, 1978): Ultimately more revealing about dissonance within the CIA than about Oswald, who is depicted in typically myopic fashion.

The Assassination Chronicles (Carroll & Graf, 1992) collects the three Epstein books with new forewords and afterwords by the author.


Jim Garrison, On the Trail of the Assassins (Sheridan Square Press, 1988): The basis for much of Oliver Stone's JFK. Garrison is a witness to the truth, and his book is a must-read for anyone interested in the assassination.

Whoever said hindsight is 20/20 never read this assemblage of warped rationalizations and unproved allegations. Pass.

Robert Groden, The Killing of a President (Viking, 1993): A collection of assassination-related photos. The flaws and omissions are legion, and Groden's opinions should be taken with a grain of salt.

hands down, one of the most important books ever written on the
assassination of the 35th president. High Treason, the bestselling
investigation of the Century, not only meticulously discredits
the Warren Commission's conclusions, but also explores the
allegations of a government cover-up. The Warren Report:
The Witnesses, a revealing examination of the evidence and the
questionable testimony of those who heard or saw the
events of that fateful day, is also recommended. Other
notable works include The Last Days of the Republic, a remarkable
account of the Kennedy assassination and the subsequent
investigation, and The Last Word, a comprehensive look at the
many theories and evidence surrounding the murder. For those
seeking to understand the full extent of the assassination's
impact, Alfred Eisenstaedt's Home Movie of the Century is a
must-read.
Mr. and Mrs. Harold Weisberg  
Route 12  
Old Receiver Road  
Frederick, MD 21701  

This is a piece that ran in *The Resident*, a New York City weekly to which I normally contribute music reviews. The paper has four editions in Manhattan; the piece ran on the Upper East Side, while an abbreviated version ran on the Upper West Side, with a combined circulation around 100,000–125,000. Despite my suspicion that no one actually reads this rather innocuous publication, I asked that your address be included on the odd chance it might generate a few inquiries.

I wish to offer my thanks to you both for your tremendous efforts over the years. Though we are likely to disagree on certain points (cf. Harry Livingstone), words cannot adequately express the gratitude you are due.

Best,

David Reitzes
A decent refutation of the lone-as-Warren Commission and a wake-helped scuttle any hope for an overwhelming pattern of forged evidence against Oswald at face value. Avoid.

The House Select Committee to Investigate Assassination-related Phoenizings and Unproved Allegations 1992): An HSCA investigator expressed some doubts on the evidence, including the notion that a warehouse employee with a shady past makes an ineffective listing of the most important documents.

The HSCA investigation which later became the basis for much of Oliver Stone's JFK. The Report's conclusions were "probably" the victim of a common mistake of taking the report's conclusions at face value. Avoid.

An Armchair Guide to the Crime of the Century by David Rejeski

Books

Watching the Detectives
Hands down, one of the most important books so: Vincent Bugliosi explains once and for all how Oswald, and Oswald alone, did it. (Carroll & Graf, 1991):

High Treason 2, Post Mortem (bhmc, 1991): A shameful would-be defense of the lone-assassin theory. Manson prosecutor Vincent Bugliosi said, "I agree with all of Posner's conclusions—that Oswald killed Kennedy and acted alone—but I disagree with this is a conspiracy, the Ione assassin theory with a flimsily selective and misleading representation of the evidence—strange considering the glowing endorsements he's given to such conspiracy-oriented books as Meagher's and Summers'.

The assassination is a microanalysis of the government's case. Drawing upon extensive interviews with the relevant parties and events, but also an unfortunate amount of misinformation and speculation. Proceed with caution.


The Last JFK Investigation, Part III-IV (bhmc, 1975): One of the most insightful and scholarly examinations yet of why Kennedy was killed, why it was covered up, and why Americans are still afraid to face up to it.


While there are major problems with the film, it succeeds in its primary objective: to thoroughly and dramatically discredit the official story. This is the screenplay, well-annotated and supplemented with reviews and miscellaneous out-

Anthony Summers, Plausible Denial: The Last JFK Investigation, Part I (bhmc, 1978): The first JFK investigation that attempted to sort through theystack of evidence. It is still a valuable read, but it's been surpassed by later works.

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