



The Roosevelts: An American Saga

Peter Collier, David Horowitz

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The Roosevelts is a brilliant and controversial account of twentieth-century American political culture as seen through the lens of its preeminent political dynasty. Peter Collier shows how Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt, along with their descendants, scrambled to define the direction that American politics would take. The Oyster Bay clan, influenced by the flamboyant Teddy, was extroverted, eccentric, tradition-bound, and family-oriented. They represented an age of American innocence that would be replaced by Franklin's Hyde Park Roosevelts, who were aloof and cold yet individualistic and progressive.

Drawing on extensive interviews and brimming with trenchant anecdotes, this historical portrait casts new light on the pivotal events and personalities that shaped the Roosevelt legacy -- from Eleanor's often brutal relationship with her children and Theodore Jr.'s undoing in the 1924 New York gubernatorial race, to the heroism of Teddy's sons during both World Wars and FDR's loveless marriage.

The Roosevelts is history at its most penetrating, a crucial work that illuminates the foundations of contemporary, American politics.

The Roosevelts: An American Saga Details

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From Reader Review The Roosevelts: An American Saga for online ebook

Nonna says

Teddy vs Franklin and everyone in between is what this book is about. Each family branch thinks they are better than the other and dedicate themselves to proving it. Teddy, the Progressive in Republican clothing, is brilliant in every way but misguided...Franklin, the liberal Democrat, is tough, combative and bent on social engineering the whole American landscape...2 cousins who were President of the United States during very difficult times and we now live with their legacies, whether good or bad.

Janice says

Biography of the Roosevelt families; Theodore and Franklin. I read this book several years ago but had forgotten a lot of the details, including the fact that Franklin and his wife Eleanor were related to Theodore Roosevelt (TR and FDR were distant cousins, but Eleanor's father, Elliott was TR's brother). I had also forgotten the parallels in FDR's life to TR's, namely that he patterned his political career after TR's, intentionally trying to accomplish the same political victories as TR. Sadly, TR's love of his wife and children were not part of the life of FDR, whose childhood was very different from TR's. His relationship with Eleanor was very distant and neither he nor Eleanor seemed to know how to relate to their daughter and sons as children or adults. The book follows the lives of both families, their triumphs and defeats. None of TR's or FDR's children ever felt they were as successful as their fathers, and several lived and died tragically.

Carolyn says

Although many books have been written about Theodore Roosevelt and Franklin Roosevelt individually, this book follows the dynasty from the arrival in the early 1600's of their Dutch ancestor who once here, purchased land to farm in what is now New York City. The book is extremely well researched and written. I enjoyed it thoroughly. It is truly an objective look at this powerful family. It is an unbiased look at how the two sides (Teddy/Oyster Bay Republican and FDR/Hyde Park Democrat) of this wealthy family influenced the political direction of the American government. Teddy Roosevelt, governing in the first part of the 20th century, is from a political right conservative mind set, while FDR is really responsible for initializing the left liberal side of the political spectrum while he was serving an unprecedented 4 term presidency during the same century. I'd suggest that anyone interested in reading up on the Roosevelts read this book first as it is an enlightening and excellent book.

Nina says

I've never really had much interest in biographies, but I could hardly put this one down. Teddy Roosevelt was an incredible man and he raised an incredible brood of children. I actually got teary-eyed when he died in the book. By way of contrast, Eleanor and FDR were lousy parents and they raised the most atrocious pack of brats ever seen in the White House. Eleanor I can partially excuse. She was the true "poor little rich

girl". Raised with money but in an emotionally devastating environment. The love she bestowed on others as an adult, however, she didn't share with either her children or her husband. If anything, the gist of this book was that we are products of our upbringing.

At the beginning of WWI, TR compared history to a kaleidoscope whose glass had suddenly been shaken and rearranged into unfamiliar patterns. Good analogy.

Tim Laskowski says

Good book about TR and his family. Very good for 3/4 of the book. But he does a right wing hatchet job on FDR and Eleanor, And remarkably he gives no details about FDR's campaigns for president, almost nothing about his accomplishments as President or his war-time decisions. Instead, Collier gives us endless detail about the dysfunctional lives of FDR's children, which are far far less interesting than FDR. HUGE disappointment. I feel Collier's right wing politics got in the way of the book

Diane says

I really enjoyed the juxtaposition of the different branches of the family that Mr. Collier used to tell the story. I never realized that during the 20th century that the family became truly divided on how the nation should be run. My mother in law (who hated Franklin as president) would have read this book and loved it.

Amber says

This book was very informative about the Roosevelt family, with the details interweaving themselves starting with the great-great grandfathers of the first famous Roosevelt. Although, initially I wanted to read this book to learn about both Teddy and Franklin, I wound up being very interested in the details of both of their children. I was disappointed towards the end though, when the information continued to flow after Franklin and Teddy's death but with little insight to Eleanor's life.

Rho says

Wonderful book - This is a book about the families and their relationships. My only disappointment with this book is that it skims over many of the great accomplishments of both Roosevelt Presidents - this book is NOT a comprehensive history of their Presidencies! However, it is an extremely well-written and engrossing account of the rise and fall of two branches of one of America's greatest families.

Ali says

I liked this book well enough as an overview of the Roosevelts - but otherwise it reminded me of a history textbook, giving anecdotes with no follow-up or analysis, and making broad statements with no evidence or explanations why. If I'd read this book 25 years ago when I read Collier's book on the Kennedys, I would

have thought it was terrific; it's just really clear in reading this how much non-fiction and biography writing specifically has changed since it was published.

The story of Ted Roosevelt, Jr.'s leading the first wave of soldiers up the beach at Normandy at age 57 as a veteran of the first World War, though, is one worthy of a book. It was the one story I read in this book that I think I'll really remember.

Daniel Brown says

Wow. I read this because I was always interested in FDR, but I learned so much about Teddy Roosevelt. He as a BADASS STUD!

This covered both families equally from the beginning up to the early 1990's and it showed so much of everyone's ambitions and the paths they took. However, the descendants of these families really turned out to be messed up kids. I wonder if the Kennedy family will vanish away like they did.

The beginning was exciting, but the end was sad and depressing. I will likely read this again in the future, if only for the TR portions of the book. He was the man and the patriotism on his side of the family was very impressive and inspiring.

I was disappointed in FDR and Eleanor. They pretty much sucked as parents, and their children were messed up due to that fact.

Kama says

I really liked this book -- it gave me an appreciation for Teddy Roosevelt and the Oyster Bay branch of the Roosevelt family. TR was very involved with his children and mostly, the children turned out well -- especially TR Jr. who served (voluntarily) in two world wars, and won the Congressional Medal of Honor. Having always been a staunch FDR and Eleanor Roosevelt supporter, I was disheartened at their lack of care for their children, who -- as a result of their inattention -- grew up insecure, feckless, and rather disappointing. It's hard for children when BOTH parents are involved in politics to the exclusion of child-rearing duties. Overall, a compelling read. I recommend it.

Steve says

<https://bestpresidentialbios.com/2016...>

“The Roosevelts: An American Saga” by Peter Collier and David Horowitz was published in 1994. Collier is an author and publisher and was co-founder (with Horowitz) of the Center for the Study of Popular Culture. Collier and Horowitz are also the authors of “The Rockefellers: An American Dynasty,” “The Kennedys: An American Drama” and “The Fords: An American Epic.”

This 482 page biographical survey of the two major branches of the Roosevelt family – TR’s “Oyster Bay” clan and FDR’s “Hyde Park” family – is broad and multi-generational. It is also quite readable. But the focus is nearly always on the private lives of its subjects and there is no effort to cover the presidencies of TR or FDR in more than a perfunctory way.

In order to elevate the narrative beyond a series of entertaining but gossipy anecdotes the author promises an explosive portrait of battles waged between the two branches as they struggled to control the family's legacy. Unfortunately, this is a much bolder promise than can be delivered. Evidence of the alleged inter-family combat proves quite thin and almost entirely unconvincing.

Much of Collier's book is entertaining but feels slightly tabloidesque. And many of the stories of the various family members are irrelevant or entirely inconsequential. A significant drawback to focusing so intently on TR's and FDR's families seems to be the hazard of wading into detail that is extraneous and superfluous. Still, many TR- and FDR-focused biographies lack insight into their spouses and children, so it almost seems ungracious to complain about too much insight.

Unfortunately, the author's portrayals of various Roosevelt family members are often unbalanced and seemingly partisan. Collier's most disparaging portrait is reserved for Eleanor Roosevelt who is described as neurotic and withdrawn – hardly resembling the flawed but noble champion of great causes most readers would recognize. And while TR receives ample praise for his brand of politics, FDR's progressive tendencies receive noticeably fewer plaudits.

At the very least, readers new to TR will learn enough from this book to desire a deeper understanding of his presidency; many will also understand at a high level the spectacular drama embedded within his post-presidential African safari as well as his audacious adventure down the River of Doubt four years later. Readers new to FDR will find themselves eager to dive far deeper into his presidency (the New Deal, in particular).

Overall, Peter Collier's "The Roosevelts: An American Saga" is a readable but disappointing multi-generational biography. For anyone already familiar with the lives of TR and FDR, this book adds valuable (if often gratuitous) color. But it fails to deliver on its central premise – dramatic conflict between the two branches of the Roosevelt family – and from the standpoint of serious biography it is entirely lacking.

Overall rating: 3 stars

William Howle says

A very intimate and interesting look at the families of Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt. Having read several books about the families, I found this gave more information on the offspring. Theodore's family definitely contributed more to the country than Franklin's. This is not the first book I have read where Eleanor is portrayed as a poor mother, which leads into the fact that her children did not accomplish what they should have. Theodore's son Ted III won the Congressional Medal of Honor, whereas Franklin's son Elliott, poorly educated was awarded the rank of Captain upon entering the service. He seems to have been one who traded on the family name. The five children of Franklin and Eleanor were married 19 times. This book is very readable, but not a fast read.

Wallace Kaufman says

Compare TR and FDR and you have two very different personalities and approaches to America and its politics that helps bring into perspective the strengths, weaknesses and essential debate in how we are

governed. A fair and clear eyed treatment.

Equally interesting are the insights into the nature of families and the relations between parents and children and among siblings. This component alone makes the book worthwhile regardless of a reader's interest in either history or politics.

Robert says

An intimate look at the families of Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Franklin Roosevelt. rather than just look at what they did in history this takes an intimate look at the individuals and how they related as a family. In other words this is a family focused story account and outside events are treated as secondary priority. Everyone's strengths and flaws are looked at. If anything could be taken from this is that even though they may have had money and prestige they were imperfect and dysfunctional.

Theodore, Eleanor and Franklin each had to over come adversity in their lives. Theodore fought to over come his childhood illness's and losing his mother and first wife(soon after giving childbirth) on the same day. Eleanor who over came losing first her mother then her Father(Elliot who was Theodore's brother)who committed suicide for untold reasons. Franklin grew up struggling to gain independence from an overbearing mother and then to be struck with polio just as his political career was about to take off.

We learn how a rivalry developed between the two sides of the family. The children of each side struggled to live up to their parents image and strengths but many times coming up short. They are human just like the rest of us.

I did enjoy listening to this and certainly learned a lot from it. I recommend this if your looking for a more intimate look and these remarkable families that were a big influence on our country.
