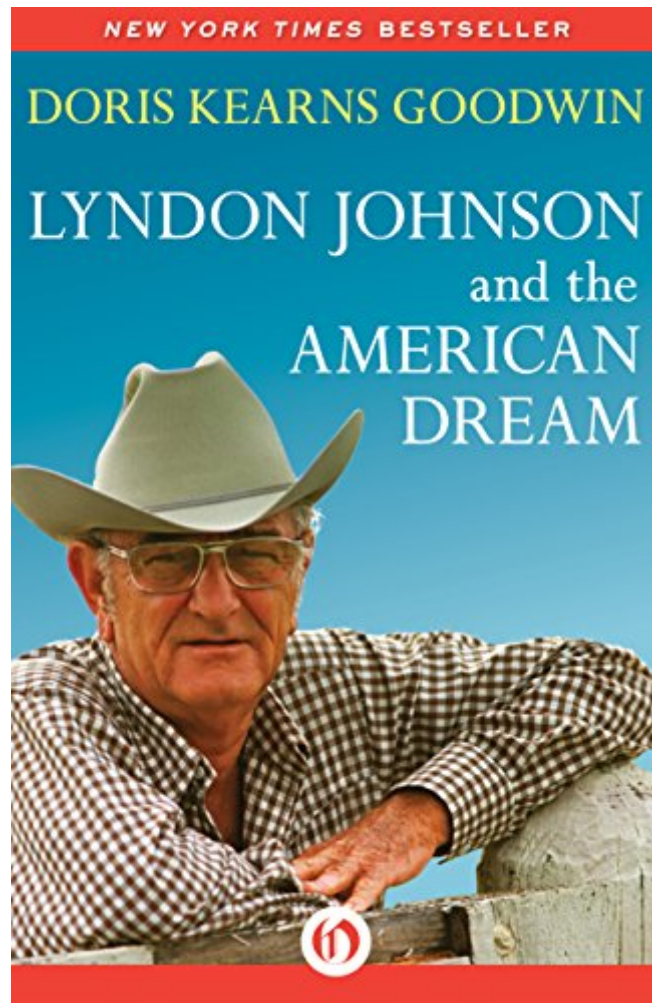


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Lyndon Johnson And The American Dream



Synopsis

An engrossing biography of President Lyndon Johnson from the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Team of Rivals* Hailed by the *New York Times* as “the most penetrating, fascinating political biography I have ever read,” Doris Kearns Goodwin’s extraordinary and insightful book draws from meticulous research in addition to the author’s time spent working at the White House from 1967 to 1969. After Lyndon Johnson’s term ended, Goodwin remained his confidante and assisted in the preparation of his memoir. In *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream* she traces the 36th president’s life from childhood to his early days in politics, and from his leadership of the Senate to his presidency, analyzing his dramatic years in the White House, including both his historic domestic triumphs and his failures in Vietnam. Drawn from personal anecdotes and candid conversation with Johnson, Goodwin paints a rich and complicated portrait of one of our nation’s most compelling politicians.

Book Information

File Size: 1575 KB

Print Length: 450 pages

Publisher: Open Road Media (August 4, 2015)

Publication Date: August 4, 2015

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B010P2111W

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #15,631 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #17 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > United States > Presidents #24 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > United States > Federal Government #25 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Leaders & Notable People > Presidents & Heads of State

Customer Reviews

Doris Kearns Goodwin has done a great service to history with this book. All too often members of

any important person's staff take a far different approach to this type of project. Those who know their subject in ways the rest of us can never know that person often hide all of the warts and paint their former boss as a near saint. Not Goodwin. In this book the reader will get a look at the whole LBJ, good and bad. Goodwin starts with Johnson's childhood and may get a little carried away with psychoanalytical insights including a reference to Freud. Her conclusions may be right on target but as she herself admits most of her conclusions were based on Johnson's tales of his childhood and he tended to remember his past as he wanted it to be instead of as it was. That same fault would haunt him as President as he convinced himself everything was fine when things were far from fine. We get the first real look at the LBJ who would dominate the Senate while he is in college. There he works long and hard to overthrow the old guard and make himself the most powerful student on campus. The same tactics he used in college would make him the most powerful man in the Senate and the most powerful Democrat in the country while Ike was President. It seems that Johnson assumed he could use those same tactics yet again to make him as V.P. the real power behind JFK. Instead he found that Bobby Kennedy held that position and wasn't about to move over for Johnson. Somehow it didn't sink in to Johnson that if what had worked so well in the Senate didn't work for the Vice President it wasn't likely to work for the President. In fact, as Goodwin points out, the very qualities that made him a great leader in the Senate often had the opposite effect in the White House.

For those wanting to see the tragedy which is Lyndon Baines Johnson, this book, as well as the new release by Robert Dallek ("Fallen Giant"), is a perfect buy. LBJ's Presidency was, indeed, a horrible tragedy. LBJ had the greatest of intentions in regard to civil rights, social welfare and fighting Communism. Yet, all ended up as a disaster. Civil rights, though surely the greatest aspect of his Presidency, has been regressed recently due to the fact that the action taken by Democrats and Liberals during the 1960's. The "white backlash" has resulted in a right of center national attitude on the subject. The Social Welfare policies taken by the Administration were quite successful on some parts, such as Medicare, Medicaid, federal aid to K-12 public schools and Head Start, and horrible in others, such as the welfare crisis explosions and Model Cities. Yet, the overall assessment of these programs has been, unfairly I think, negative. In regard to fighting Communism, history all too tragically tells the story. Goodwin, I think, draws a fair picture of LBJ's legacy here. She does not progress the view that he is a great President, but a would-be great President who deserves to be known as a 'good' one. He was a good one. He passed into law great programs, such as Medicare, Head Start, Minimum Wage increases, consumer protection,

environmental protection and labor law reform. He pushed through 3 grant and giant civil rights laws. He is THE civil rights President, in my view. He pushed through the brand of legislation which no other President could pass through. Yet, Vietnam ruined it all. This sounds rather Clintonian!

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