

SUMMARY

& ANALYSIS

OF

LEADERSHIP

IN TURBULENT TIMES



A GUIDE TO THE BOOK
BY DORIS KEARNS GOODWIN

== **ZIP**READS ==

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SYNOPSIS

PART I: AMBITION AND THE RECOGNITION OF LEADERSHIP

ABRAHAM LINCOLN: A MAN BORN TO LEAD

THEODORE ROOSEVELT: A MAN WHO OVERCAME

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT: A LATE BLOOMER

LYNDON JOHNSON: A TIRELESS WORKER

PART II: ADVERSITY AND GROWTH

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Key Takeaway: In 1840, Lincoln fell into a great depression.

Key Takeaway: After another stint in politics, Lincoln reentered law with a newfound vigor for life.

Key Takeaway: Hard work, humility, and leadership led to Lincoln's nomination for president.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Key Takeaway: A great tragedy altered Roosevelt's life and career.

Key Takeaway: Roosevelt retreated to the North Dakota wilderness to reinvent himself.

Key Takeaway: Roosevelt went on a rampage against corruption.

Key Takeaway: Roosevelt honed his leadership through subordination and battle.

Key Takeaway: Roosevelt's ascension to the presidency was an

accident.

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

Key Takeaway: In 1921, Franklin Roosevelt was diagnosed with Polio, beginning a seven-year convalescence.

Key Takeaway: Hot springs and an unexpected speech defined his recovery.

Key Takeaway: FDR returns to politics; the Great Depression ensues.

Key Takeaway: FDR's adversity led directly to his becoming president.

LYNDON JOHNSON

Key Takeaway: Lyndon Johnson lost his first run for a Senate seat in 1941, leading to a long, dark period in his life.

Key Takeaway: Johnson finds himself again.

Key Takeaway: A near-death experience causes an ideological shift.

PART III: HOW THEY LED

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Abraham Lincoln's Key Leadership Skills

CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Theodore Roosevelt's Key Leadership Skills

TURNAROUND LEADERSHIP

Franklin Roosevelt's Key Leadership Skills

VISIONARY LEADERSHIP

Lyndon Johnson's Key Leadership Skills

On Vietnam

EPILOGUE

EDITORIAL REVIEW

BACKGROUND ON AUTHOR

TITLES BY DORIS KEARNS GOODWIN

*****END OF BOOK SUMMARY*****

SYNOPSIS

Leadership: In Turbulent Times is the detailed recounting of the life, struggle, and leadership of three of the greatest American presidents and one whose legacy was left divided. Doris Kearns Goodwin follows the lives of Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt, and Lyndon Johnson from their youths through their deaths. She addresses the adversity they each faced that helped them transform into the great leaders they became, and she provides detailed examples of the styles of leadership they each possessed.

The book is divided into four sections, with the first covering the early years of each future president. The second section focuses on the hardships they had to overcome that led to their capacity for greatness, and then covers their actions as president as concrete examples of the leaders they became. In her epilogue, she discusses the death of each of the four men, two of whom died in office, and the men they had grown to be, or the men they still wished they could have been.

The book is an exhaustive examination of what makes a great leader, how powerful decisions are made, how tragedy can make or break a man, and how every man, no matter how great, is forced to live with the decisions he has made.

PART I: AMBITION AND THE RECOGNITION OF LEADERSHIP

ABRAHAM LINCOLN: A MAN BORN TO LEAD

Though incredibly poor and the child of an illiterate farmer, Lincoln was a gifted and determined student who excelled in every class. He was as domineering physically as he was gregarious—he loved to entertain people as a child and his personality was larger than life.

After he was taken out of school to work on the farm, Lincoln took it upon himself to continue his education. He was a voracious reader and absorbed every story, every book he could get his hands on when he wasn't busy plowing the fields for his father.

As soon as he was 21, he left his father's fields to strike out on his own, getting a job as a clerk at the general store in the town of New Salem. The people of New Salem immediately fell in love with Abraham, always kind, funny, eager to learn, willing to help a stranger, and never expecting anything in return. The townspeople liked him so much, they convinced him to run for state legislature shortly after he moved to town.

His original platform included the creation of a national bank, protective tariffs, governmental support for internal improvements, and an expanded public education system.

Abraham displayed early on in his life a willingness to acknowledge errors and to learn from his mistakes. Though he lost his first campaign, he was appointed deputy surveyor for Sangamon County, allowing him to travel between towns. His reputation as a storyteller preceded him and people came to the town centers just to hear him speak. In his second attempt at running for state legislature, he easily won.

When he arrived, however, he remained quiet. He was busy absorbing and learning, aware that he didn't know enough about how things worked to take action.

“A finely developed sense of timing—knowing when to wait and when to act—would remain in Lincoln’s repertoire of leadership skills the rest of his life” (Goodwin, p. 14).

When Lincoln saw how much studying law would benefit his career as a legislator, he taught himself that as well by reading borrowed law books alone at night.

In the legislature’s second session, he no longer sat on the sidelines. His broad understanding of legal terminology and parliamentary procedure and his fine penmanship were invaluable in drafting legislation. Beyond those hard skills, however, was his talent for oration and an intuition for the feelings and inclinations of politicians on both sides of the aisle. He was elected by the Whig caucus as their minority leader.

At the age of twenty-six, Lincoln was one of only six out of seventy-seven legislators to vote against codifying slavery in the state constitution saying, “if slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong” (p. 17). But his main goal at the time was to bring infrastructure spending and education to small rural areas in the state, not to fight slavery. In just a few years as a legislator, Lincoln had become a respected leader, and a champion of equality, liberty, and opportunity.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT: A MAN WHO OVERCAME

Where Lincoln wrote a two-thousand-word manifesto proclaiming his desire to run for office and detailing his platform, Theodore “Teedie” Roosevelt wrote just thirty-three words confirming his desire to run. Politics had changed significantly in the half-century since Lincoln ran; campaigning no longer happened through casual conversation in the general store. Roosevelt was nominated by one of the

party bosses and ran mostly on the name of his father, a well-known and well-loved philanthropist in New York. Local politics at the time was more of a boys' club that met in smoke-filled rooms and required a recommendation by other members to join than a grassroots operation. Where Lincoln was poor, Roosevelt was privileged. Where Lincoln was gregarious with a strong constitution, Roosevelt was timid as a child and plagued by asthma. Where Lincoln educated himself against his father's wishes, Roosevelt was endlessly encouraged.

Roosevelt believed both in innate genius and hard work, but thought himself more blessed with the latter than the former. He read voraciously throughout his life, and his wealth meant, unlike Lincoln, he had easy access to any book he might want. He believed that in order to lead, one must understand human nature, and the best way to do that was "by the great imaginative writers, whether of prose or poetry."

At Harvard, Theodore was beyond studious. He was socially awkward and often elitist, though had overcome his asthma to participate in sports from rowing to wrestling to tennis. He started myriad clubs and continued his collecting of birds and insects. He was always a naturalist at heart, and he seemed not to care what anyone thought of him.

The hardest event of Teedie's young life was the death of his father at age forty-six. Theodore Roosevelt, Sr. was heavily involved in politics and once told Teedie, "I fear for your future. We cannot stand so corrupt a government for any length of time" after losing out on a prestigious nomination to the corrupt "machine politicians."

While his father's death was painful, it also motivated him to do better, to be better. Teedie transformed himself from an elitist who turned his nose up at lower classes to a universally sociable person who acted without condescension. He moved away from a career in sciences, not wanting to spend his life looking at a microscope, but still clung to his passions as a

naturalist. He thought about taking on philanthropy or law, though he didn't care for either. Through his outreach across class lines he realized that "no man is superior, unless it was by merit, and no man is inferior, unless by his demerit" (p. 32). He began getting involved with working-class Irish and German immigrants who were able to see past his quite dandy appearance for the good-natured and forthright person he was. In these circles is where he met the local boss Joe Murray who nominated him for office.

He readily won by refusing to pander to anyone's demands and proclaiming himself untouched by the political machine. Unlike Lincoln's quiet first term, Teedie was involved, making a name for himself as a highly vocal opponent of corruption. He believed himself the champion of good against evil, though his rise to political stardom quickly went to his head. His consistent outbursts against Democrats became too much, too aggressive, and he lost support from even Republicans in his policy initiatives. Understanding this loss, luckily, led him to realize the importance of cooperation and the truly nuanced nature of morality and politics.

In his early years, his laissez-faire economic policy to oppose minimum wage and limit working hours was softened by a sense of empathy for the conditions of the working class. The more he exposed himself to these people with whom he had had no interaction, the more he understood the harm in the harsh divisions between social classes. By his third term in the assembly, he was committed to overcoming divisive politics to pass real reform in New York City.

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT: A LATE BLOOMER

In contrast to Abraham and Theodore, Franklin did not project leadership qualities early in life. He was neither particularly strong, ambitious, driven, nor intelligent. He followed a traditional career path into a Wall Street law firm where he also failed to impress with his work ethic or

accomplishment. At twenty-eight, where Abraham and Theodore had already made their mark on politics and solidified themselves as leaders, Franklin had done nothing of note. Despite this, he received an offer from the party bosses to run for a safe Democratic seat in the State Assembly of New York, more for the Roosevelt name than for him personally. He jumped at the chance.

Franklin turned out to be a natural to politics. He was a skilled listener, full of warmth and charisma to whom people naturally gravitated. His “self-assured, congenial, optimistic temperament” would be talked about by generations of historians as the “keystone to his leadership success” (Goodwin, p. 43).

By all accounts, Franklin had a near perfect childhood. His parents were in a loving marriage; he was an only child who was sheltered from any ugliness or conflict while living on a wealthy country estate. He was universally described as a bright and happy child. When his father suffered a debilitating heart attack when Franklin was just eight, he became a sort of placator and protector, aiming always to please. With fewer outdoor activities, he retreated into stamp collecting, which would remain his mental respite throughout his life, even during his presidency.

Unlike both Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin wasn't an exemplary student in the traditional sense. He didn't pore over prose or poetry, but he possessed a curiosity and intelligence that spanned subjects, ever-inspired by the history behind a particular stamp or the people of that country.

When he was sent to Groton boy's school at the age of twelve, Franklin had yet to interact with other boys his age and found himself struggling to make friends with his prim, buttoned-up demeanor that adults so adored. By the time he entered Harvard after his father's death, he was struggling to assert his independence from his now lonely mother. His fifth cousin, Theodore Roosevelt, had just become president of the United

States. At school, Franklin rose in the ranks of the *Harvard Crimson* until finally becoming editor his senior year. He was only just beginning to come into himself.

The ability to make decisions without hesitating or looking back—one of his greatest leadership qualities—was first exhibited in his marriage to his cousin Eleanor. Knowing his mother would be heartbroken, he did not leave the issue up for discussion instead presenting it in a final, decisive manner. Marrying Eleanor—a socially-conscious woman who shunned the debutante lifestyle—awakened something in Franklin who realized he wanted to do good as well, to give back.

The assembly seat promised to Franklin by Murray, however, was taken away when the incumbent decided to stay. Franklin decided instead to run for a much more prestigious Senate seat against a firmly entrenched Republican. His first campaign in 1910 marked the largest margin of victory by any Democratic candidate in New York.

Once in the Senate, Franklin faced the same trajectory as his older cousin: rising quickly to greatness fighting against the corruption of the Tammany machine, but being defeated by his own ego and inability to compromise. Luckily, as with his cousin, the ordeals in the Senate taught him the power of bridging factions and striking bargains. When Woodrow Wilson came into office, having seen Franklin's work against Tammany, he quickly appointed the young Roosevelt to assistant secretary of the navy—a post that Franklin had personally coveted and one in which Theodore had also served. Franklin already had his eyes on the presidency, and this was the very path he predicted it would take.

Because Franklin's intelligence was not in rote memorization or book smarts, but rather in outside-the-box thinking and abstract connection, it wasn't until his post in the navy that Franklin's true intelligence—his ability to quickly grasp the completeness of a situation—came to be seen. In the years before the first world war, Franklin had the foresight to bolster

the strength and readiness of the naval forces. He had a reputation for finding a way to get things done when everyone said it was impossible. He was willing to put himself on the line to do it, and he was ready to accept responsibility for failure and move on to the next idea if his plans didn't work. Goodwin goes into great detail describing specific conversations he had during his time as assistant secretary of the navy demonstrating his prowess, foresight, and unique ability to move a slow bureaucracy forward.

Once the Allied Forces won the war, Franklin's stint in the navy was done, but he was quickly made the vice-presidential nominee in 1920, solidifying his place as a future potential president. Though the Democratic ticket was sure to lose after eight years in power and a country weary of progressive reform—and it did—the campaign displayed yet another great leadership quality in Franklin: his ability to put together a loyal and committed team. That team would remain by him for years to come and one member, Louis Howe, would remain his most trusted advisor until his death.

LYNDON JOHNSON: A TIRELESS WORKER

Lyndon Johnson's father, Sam Johnson, was a popular politician in the Texas state legislature who often took Lyndon along as he campaigned across the Texas countryside. Both men were likable and were known to strike up conversations with anyone they met. Lyndon's love of visiting the statehouse and hitting the campaign trail with his father, however, could have been attributed to how difficult things often were at home. In contrast to Franklin Roosevelt's perfection of a childhood, Lyndon's mother was deeply unhappy after marrying his father, relegated to fetching water and scrubbing floors despite being a well-bred woman who had attended Baylor University and had dreams of becoming a writer.

Lyndon himself was his mother's sole joy, even after bearing

four more children, but her affections were as overflowing when she was pleased as they were icy when she was crossed. This same demeanor would make its mark on Lyndon himself who would “blanket someone with generosity, care, and affection, but in recompense, expect total loyalty and sterling achievement” (Goodwin, p. 72). If that person failed to live up to his standards, they would be on the receiving end of what became known as the Johnson “freeze-out.”

At the Southwest Texas State Teachers College, Lyndon weaseled his way into a position in the university president’s office through first becoming a janitor before eventually being promoted to the president’s errand boy and messenger. Due to his intimate knowledge of politics given him by his father, Lyndon was brought to committee hearings and even began to work up reports. Over time, Lyndon took over many more tasks for President Evans, though most of his fellow students saw him as an ingratiating brown-noser.

His first true position of leadership was as principal of a small Mexican-American elementary school in Texas. It was here he had the chance to exude the leadership qualities he had so long been cultivating. His experience at the impoverished school in Cotulla, Texas would forever change his views on leadership, empathy, and generosity.

“His unflagging energy, his ferocious ambition, and his compulsive drive to organize were now linked to something larger than himself” (Goodwin, p. 76).

Like Abraham, Theodore, and Franklin, Lyndon also shared a fondness and a gift for storytelling. Lyndon was enamored with the heroic cowboy tales of his granddad, Theodore with the rugged life of wilderness men. Only Lincoln—who toiled poor on the farms and worked to escape that life—refrained from glorifying the past in the stories he told.

Despite his love of politics and penchant for storytelling from a very young age, Lyndon’s political start was accidental at best. After jumping up for an impromptu speech in favor of a

candidate at a town picnic in 1930, he caught the notice of Welly Hopkins, a man about to run for the State Senate. After helping Welly campaign (and securing his victory), Welly recommended Lyndon as legislative secretary to a congressman. Immediately upon arriving in Washington, Lyndon vowed to become a congressman himself.

As Congressman Richard Kleberg's chief of staff, Johnson was an endless fount of energy and dedication. He hired a staff and worked ceaselessly, expecting them to do exactly the same, and always to perfection. He was a man without pastimes who spent every waking moment working politics, reading politics, or talking about politics if he could.

This single-minded determination was applied equally in his courtship of Lady Bird Taylor, to whom he proposed on the second date and married that same day. Lady Bird—ever the balancing wheel to Lyndon's harried impatience—was likely an integral part of his rise in politics as her hospitality led to the close friendship of Lyndon and Congressman Sam Rayburn.

When Franklin Roosevelt created the National Youth Administration in 1935, Lyndon asked Sam to recommend him for the state director of the program in Texas. Despite Lyndon being only twenty-six and having no relevant experience, Roosevelt gave him the job. Johnson's unmatched ability to organize and relentless work ethic were up to the task.

But, as the author points out, he was no easy man to work with. Like his mother, he would oscillate between showering you with praise and berating you for failure. He pitted workers against one another, usually a terrible leadership style. But the Texas NYA succeeded because his staff believed they were working towards something valuable for a person they believed would take them to great things.

In 1937, less than two years after being appointed to the NYA, the death of a congressman meant an opening in

Lyndon's district. He knew instantly he had to run, and he did so as a complete unknown against eight more experienced opponents. He worked harder, longer, and smarter than all of them and won by more than 3,000 votes.

When Lyndon entered congress, President Roosevelt met him and was immediately taken with his vigor and drive. Roosevelt would be one of many paternal mentors who guided Lyndon's life, his father and Sam Rayburn included. In his first years in Washington, Lyndon was a dynamo, working to electrify rural Texas and get housing projects built in Austin, among other significant accomplishments. But mostly, his first term in congress was dominated by his reputation as a non-stop go-getter who "was so on his toes, and so active, and so overwhelming."