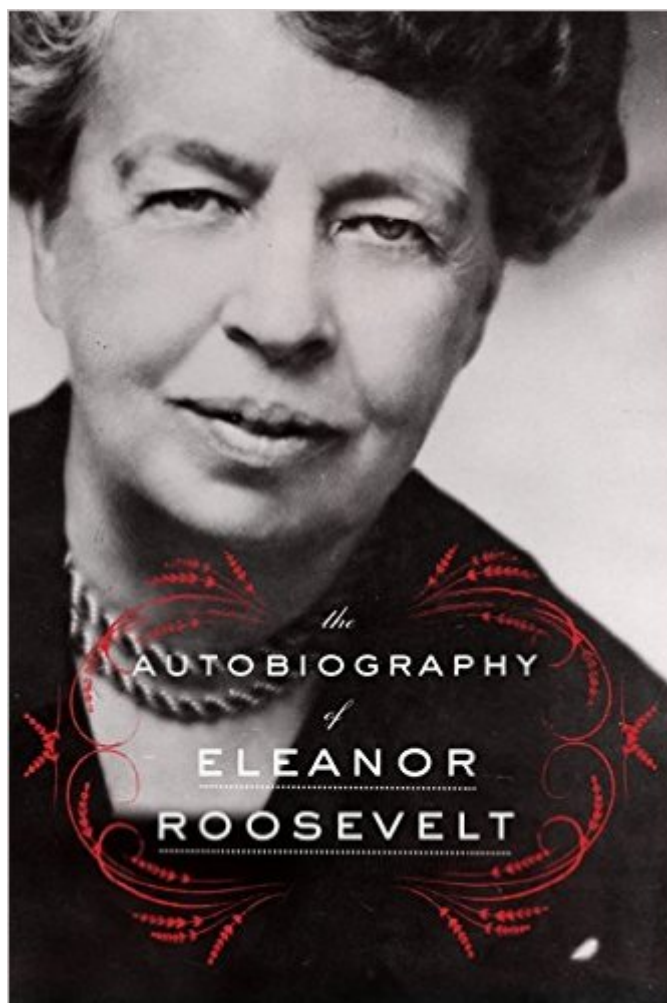


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The Autobiography Of Eleanor Roosevelt



Synopsis

A candid and insightful look at an era and a life through the eyes of one of the most remarkable Americans of the twentieth century, First Lady and humanitarian Eleanor Roosevelt. The daughter of one of New York's most influential families, niece of Theodore Roosevelt, and wife of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Eleanor Roosevelt witnessed some of the most remarkable decades in modern history, as America transitioned from the Gilded Age, the Progressive Era, and the Depression to World War II and the Cold War. A champion of the downtrodden, Eleanor drew on her experience and used her role as First Lady to help those in need. Intimately involved in her husband's political life, from the governorship of New York to the White House, Eleanor would eventually become a powerful force of her own, heading women's organizations and youth movements, and battling for consumer rights, civil rights, and improved housing. In the years after FDR's death, this inspiring, controversial, and outspoken leader would become a U.N. Delegate, chairman of the Commission on Human Rights, a newspaper columnist, Democratic party activist, world-traveler, and diplomat devoted to the ideas of liberty and human rights. This single volume biography brings her into focus through her own words, illuminating the vanished world she grew up, her life with her political husband, and the post-war years when she worked to broaden cooperation and understanding at home and abroad. The Autobiography of Eleanor Roosevelt includes 16 pages of black-and-white photos.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

If you're looking for a "first" Eleanor biography, don't start with this one. Read it eventually, but not at

first. If you have read her collected writings, "No Ordinary Time" or the biography(ies) by Blanche Wiesen Cook this autobiography is a much needed voice. It may not be as engrossing or tantalizing as the others, but it offers a layered look into her history. I struggled with the Wiesen Cook books but ended up enjoying them very much and I would have to say that without them, this autobiography would not have had such an impact. What she shares in her autobiography is enlightening at times, but what is more significant is the specifics she leaves out or vaguely refers to in the generalist of terms. The best way to describe this book is comparing it to a long chat with a woman you've respected for a long time. You knew things about her, you heard the rumors, but now you're sitting with her, listening to her tell you how she really felt things happened.

I bought this book during a visit to Eleanor Roosevelt's Val-Kill Cottage in Hyde Park. I had read Doris Kearns's "No Ordinary Time" years prior and it had stoked a deep interest in me for more on the Roosevelts of Hyde Park. This book is an interesting look at a woman whose transformation impacted the nation and the world. Surely, she is the most interesting and influential woman of the 20th Century. The book covers a great many historical events as well as personal incidents in her life. The early years give us a glimpse into the thinking of an awkward and self-conscious girl. She guides us through her growing involvement in New York politics. The presidential years are interesting. But I found that reading a book ABOUT Eleanor in those years as opposed to reading her self-deprecating and understated views was more enlightening. The most captivating portions of this book were the post-presidential years, particularly her role as a UN Delegation and as Chairman of the Human Rights Commission. I thought the book was good, although I had to keep reminding myself that an autobiography is one person's personal story of events - not the grand history of events. I am very glad I read her autobiography and read her own words. She is that much more a compelling woman to me. History buffs should not shy away from this book. Immensely readable, with an occasional slow spot.

This book sheds light on a long period of American history through the narration of an amazing woman who you will grow to admire as much as I did. Born into an elite aristocratic American family, Eleanor could have remained hemmed in by the insular values with which she was raised. Women were supposed to stay out of politics, Anglo-Saxons were supposed to run the country and only mingle amongst themselves, and the poor deserved their lot. Eleanor grew up with a lot of the prejudices someone of her class and generation might be expected to have but then she transformed into a woman who fought tirelessly against poverty, racism, sexism, and injustices of all

kinds. I think that is her true legacy and what makes her so remarkable. In a society that wanted women to be purely ornamental, Eleanor could have done as so many women of her age and class did, remain prisoners to their narrow views and beliefs. But Eleanor did more. Because she was not conventionally attractive, she was supposed to hide away from society. Because she was a woman, she wasn't supposed to get involved in political affairs. But she got involved! She told FDR what she thought about everything, urging him to pass anti-lynching legislation, include more women in his cabinet, and earning his profound respect-if not always his compliance! Sometimes she could be a bit naive, (like when, in the fifties, she told a soviet leader how much Americans had done to improve the "life of the negro", but Eleanor's empathy, compassion, humility and personal strength comes through so strongly in these profoundly human writings of hers that I really think anyone would enjoy them. What a wonderful woman!

Eleanor Roosevelt's autobiography provides very little information about her life. She vaguely refers to many seemingly important events (such as the death of her father, her husband's presidency) with little emotion and no detail whatsoever. If you know a lot about her and the politics of the time already, it may offer an interesting perspective. If you want to know details of ER's incredibly interesting life, read her biography by Blanch Weisen Cook.

While reading this book you get to share in the many personal experiences of Eleanor Roosevelt. She does not focus much on her relationships, rather she focuses on sharing her experiences. The places she has gone to and the people she has talked to are absolutely amazing. She shares her firsthand experiences of the mine workers and her talks with people in communist Russia. It is amazing that just one woman has seen and heard from so many varying perspectives. She really did try to empathize with the people and situations around her and this really comes out in her book. I think many people can learn from reading this book on how to be a better listener and observer and critical thinker of the life happening around you.

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