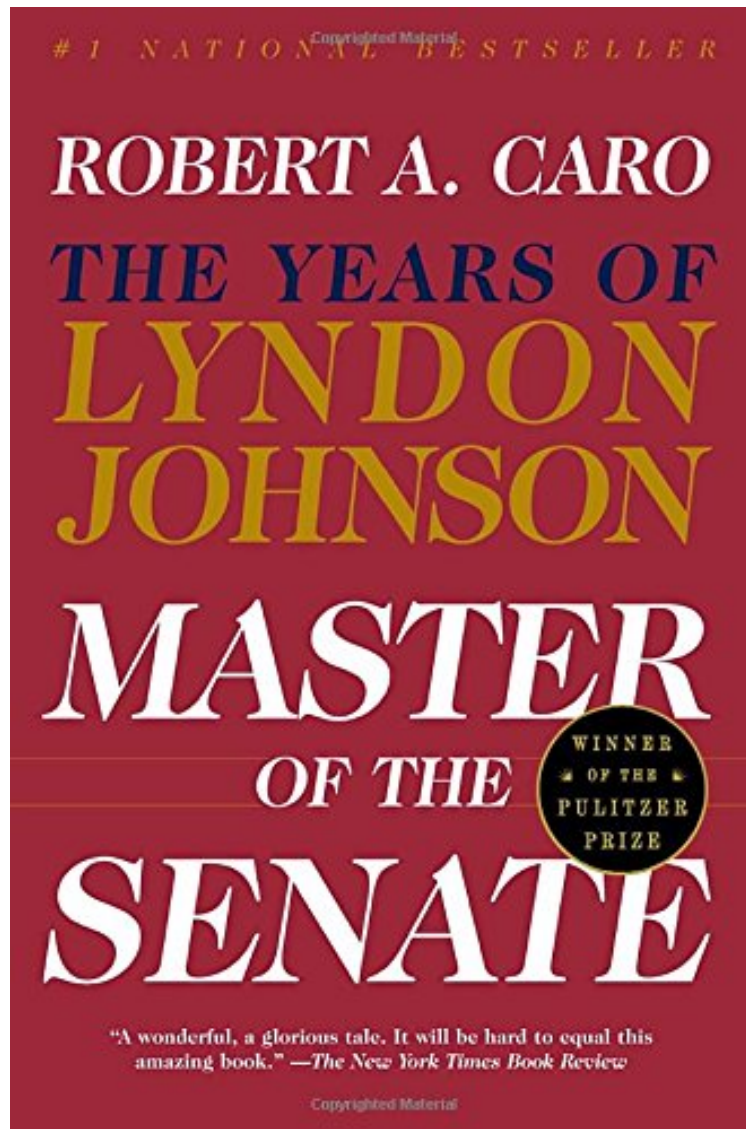


(Free read ebook) Master Of The Senate: The Years of Lyndon Johnson

Master Of The Senate: The Years of Lyndon Johnson

Robert A. Caro

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Robert A. Caro : Master Of The Senate: The Years of Lyndon Johnson before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Master Of The Senate: The Years of Lyndon Johnson:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. An Institution and The Man Who Changed ItBy Michael GriswoldIn Master of the Senate book three of Robert Caros series on Lyndon Johnson, one is first struck by something that we rarely see in historical biography in that the institution of the United States Senate that Lyndon Johnson entered in 1949 is a character in itself. Caro spends roughly 100 pages of the 1034 talking about the procedures, customs and

history that had transformed the Senate from the great hall of debate the Founding Fathers wanted into a progress inhibiting body where legislation goes to die because of its unique institutions. Master of the Senate can intimidate on sheer size alone, but it really doesn't feel like over a thousand pages as one gets lost in these intricately woven tales and personalities such as Richard Russell, the Leland Olds affair, Lyndon Johnson as institution wrangler, and the intrigue over the 1956 Presidential Nomination among others. Caro once again excels at going in depth in creating these larger than life characters and situations. One feels the rage of Estes Kefauver as he's passed over for Foreign Relations or Richard Russell's loneliness, for example. Lyndon Johnson is of course still Lyndon Johnson. Readers who revel in Johnson's backroom deal making and questionably immoral behavior will find plenty to sink their teeth into as anything that could help him gain more power is seized on and we see his political genius in the 1957-58 fight over getting a civil rights bill through the Senate. This volume presents a more complex portrait of Johnson as caught between ambition and perhaps genuine feelings for minorities that often leaves the reader unsure of the truth. I don't know that anyone's opinion of Lyndon Johnson will change through Master of the Senate, but it does present more nuance than the utter contempt the first two volumes of the series inspired.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A magnificent book. By CustomerSimply, stated, this is the best book I remember reading in the past several years. Caro ably entwines the themes of Johnson's uncontrollable interest for power, and his interest in justice for the less fortunate in society, including black citizens. This is particularly so in his discussion of the 1957 civil rights law, and the remarkable parliamentary and arm-twisting work done by Johnson to make this bill, albeit much watered down, into law, in the face of southern and northern opposition.

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Perhaps 'character study' is the best description, and it may be that it's in ... By P. I. Marder. Master of the Senate is a quite valuable and often entertaining account of LBJ's tenure as US Senate majority leader. But at over 1000 pages of length, I believe it could have been trimmed considerably and gain much more in readability and coherence than it would have lost in completeness; in other words, Alfred Knopf publishers should have wielded the editor's pencil with a bit more temerity. Is Mr. Caro attempting to write literature or history? I'm not certain he really knows, and often the narrative is an uneasy amalgam of both--too stylized in some parts, not rigorous enough in others. Perhaps 'character study' is the best description, and it may be that it's in describing with pitiless detail the supremely selfish and ruthless Lyndon Johnson, that Caro makes the greatest contribution: seldom have I encountered a more naked, repellent portrait of single-minded thirst for power as the one the author brilliantly compiles. Caro also does a very good job of taking the reader inside the tactical and strategic workings of passing or obstructing legislation in the senate, the cynical back-room deal-making, even threatening at which LBJ excelled. Morality, friendship, legality, the lives or reputations of others, family, wife, children, even his own health--even, or especially, this little thing called 'truth', nothing stood in the way of LBJ's pursuit of power. And not even America, because LBJ pursued his own agenda of advancement, even to the detriment of the nation he supposedly served. Now, having done great service in immortalizing a monster of egotism, this is where Caro, in my opinion, fails to consummate the conclusion he had inexorably brought his readers to: that LBJ was an SOB, and that if an SOB can thrive in the US political system then, ipso facto, this has to mean that something is fundamentally very, very wrong in Washington DC, not just in the personalities and the parties, but in the architecture of political power as practiced under the Capitol Dome (and in the lobbyist's hotel suites) itself. Did Caro, as Bob Woodward, as he wrote exposes of the government, get too close to the subject, the establishment, and, to some extent, become co-opted by it, skewing his conclusions, if only unconsciously? Caro suggests that, yes, well LBJ, was an SOB, but hell, only an SOB could have engineered such legislative triumphs as the Civil Rights Act of 1957 (according to Caro, the first successful civil rights legislation passed for 85 years), and, later of course, the Civil Rights Act of 1965. Caro seems to be on solid ground in this contention; after all, isn't this the consensus, that surprisingly, the conservative Texan ends up being the 'savior' of Black folk in America. Caro basically says that if not for LBJ's ingenious maneuvering, civil rights would not have progressed, and that, sure, he gutted the 1957 bill of much substance, but still, he got things moving. I'm not so sure of this, of the 'Great Men' of History theory, that if LBJ had succumbed to his big heart attack in 1955, there would have been no progress, that he was instrumental. The injustice done to Black people was real, it was bad, and with TV, and the rise of Black voting constituencies in the North (which Caro does allude to), something HAD to happen, and it would have happened with LBJ, or without him, and, potentially, it would have been even more meaningful. Is social and political change something conceded and directed from above, or does it issue from the people themselves? If the Southern Caucus under Russell had continued filibustering and obstructing, the pressure would probably have only gotten greater and greater, the clashes more frequent, more intense, the publicity more damaging. LBJ, by dampening the process (as Caro documents, not for the good of America, let alone for the good of Black people, but for the good of his consuming lust for the Presidency, to which patching together a North-South Democratic compromise was key) did hasten passage of a nominal civil rights bill, but this arguably hindered rather than helped civil rights, and ultimately, the United States as well, because the blight of institutionalized racism weakens the whole country by consigning millions of our people to a 'less than human status' and diminishes the contributions they can make to our society. Is this a stylistic device also, the seeming paradox that this villain, in the end, did something virtuous? I wonder; in the previous volume, Means of Ascent, it seemed that Caro had similarly created and accentuated a

dramatic contrast between Coke Stevenson and LBJ in the 1948 Texas US Senate election; is something similar going on here; the darkness of LBJ's compulsive drive for power, relieved by the light of an ultimate redemption via his championing of civil rights, a happy ending of sorts? A quick note on some small matters of detail: on page 1027, Caro, writing about the launch of the first satellite, Sputnik, by the USSR, writes: "The launchings showed that the Russians had indeed developed rockets with more thrust than America's, but it was not thrust but rather the rocket's accuracy and the destructive power of the nuclear warheads they carried that would count in war." Well, the last bit, to me doesn't make sense: the destructive power of a nuclear warhead (especially in those early days) depended on the amount of fissile material it carried, and whether it was a fission (A) or fission-fusion (H) device, meaning the total energy of the explosion does ultimately hinge on how much uranium and plutonium is in the device, and YES, this means thrust does matter, because the more your rocket can lift, the bigger, or the more numerous, your warheads can be. On the same page, Caro also writes: "Quite sure of these facts (the USA's nuclear weapon superiority vis a vis the USSR) in part because of amazingly detailed photographic evidence from U-2s, supersonic reconnaissance aircraft that overflew the USSR at heights of up to 15,000 feet (sic)." This couldn't be a simple typo, inverting 15,000, rather than 51,000, it seems to be just plain bad proofreading or 'proof thinking', because military aircraft were already reaching heights in excess of 20,000 during the later stages of the 1914-1918 war. And finally: based on the copious, copious anecdotes--many of them not from enemies of LBJ, but his friends and associates-- in this book, and in *Means of Ascent*, there can be little doubt that Lyndon Baines Johnson would have been perfectly capable of crimes, and even of being associated in a murder, if such crime(s) would have brought him the power he desired above ALL else, so yes, LBJ, judging from Caro's very thorough character study, could have been a party to a plot to assassinate JFK. I am not saying that LBJ was complicit in such a conspiracy, just that it appears that he would have been morally capable of it.

The most riveting political biography of our time, Robert A. Caro's life of Lyndon B. Johnson, continues. *Master of the Senate* takes Johnson's story through one of its most remarkable periods: his twelve years, from 1949 through 1960, in the United States Senate. Once the most august and revered body in politics, by the time Johnson arrived the Senate had become a parody of itself and an obstacle that for decades had blocked desperately needed liberal legislation. Caro shows how Johnson's brilliance, charm, and ruthlessness enabled him to become the youngest and most powerful Majority Leader in history and how he used his incomparable legislative genius--seducing both Northern liberals and Southern conservatives--to pass the first Civil Rights legislation since Reconstruction. Brilliantly weaving rich detail into a gripping narrative, Caro gives us both a galvanizing portrait of Johnson himself and a definitive and revelatory study of the workings of legislative power.

Robert Caro's *Master of the Senate* examines in meticulous detail Lyndon Johnson's career in that body, from his arrival in 1950 (after 12 years in the House of Representatives) until his election as JFK's vice president in 1960. This, the third in a projected four-volume series, studies not only the pragmatic, ruthless, ambitious Johnson, who wielded influence with both consummate skill and "raw, elemental brutality," but also the Senate itself, which Caro describes (pre-1957) as a "cruel joke" and an "impregnable stronghold" against social change. The milestone of Johnson's Senate years was the 1957 Civil Rights Act, whose passage he single-handedly engineered. As important as the bill was--both in and of itself and as a precursor to wider-reaching civil rights legislation--it was only close to Johnson's Southern "anti-civil rights" heart as a means to his dream: the presidency. Caro writes that not only does power corrupt, it "reveals," and that's exactly what this massive, scrupulously researched book does. A model of social, psychological, and political insight, it is not just masterful; it is a masterpiece. --H. O'Billovich
From Publishers Weekly
As a genre, Senate biography tends not to excite. The Senate is a genteel establishment engaged in a legislative process that often appears arcane to outsiders. Nevertheless, there is something uniquely mesmerizing about the wily, combative Lyndon Johnson as portrayed by Caro. In this, the third installment of his projected four-volume life of Johnson (following *The Path to Power* and *Means of Ascent*), Caro traces the Texan's career from his days as a newly elected junior senator in 1949 up to his fight for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1960. In 1953, Johnson became the youngest minority leader in Senate history, and the following year, when the Democrats won control, the youngest majority leader. Throughout the book, Caro portrays an uncompromisingly ambitious man at the height of his political and rhetorical powers: a furtive, relentless operator who routinely played both sides of the street to his advantage in a range of disputes. "He would tell us [segregationists]," recalled Herman Talmadge, "I'm one of you, but I can help you more if I don't meet with you." At the same time, Johnson worked behind the scenes to cultivate NAACP leaders. Though it emerges here that he was perhaps not instinctively on the side of the angels in this or other controversies, the pragmatic Senator Johnson nevertheless understood the drift of history well, and invariably chose to swim with the tide, rather than against. The same would not be said later of the Johnson who dwelled so glumly in the White House, expanding a war that even he, eventually, came to loathe. But that is another volume: one that we shall await eagerly.
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More of Caro's monumental

