



Franklin Delano Roosevelt

By Alan Brinkley

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"No president since the founders has done more to shape the character of American government," notes Alan Brinkley in this magnificent biography of America's thirty-second president. "And no president since Lincoln has served through darker or more difficult times. Roosevelt thrived in crisis. It brought out his greatness, and his guile. It triggered his almost uncanny ability to communicate effectively with people of all kinds. And at times, it helped him excoriate his enemies, and to revel in doing so."

This brilliant, compact biography chronicles Franklin Delano Roosevelt's rise from a childhood of privilege to a presidency that forever changed the face of international diplomacy, the American party system, and the government's role in global and domestic policy. Brinkley, the National Book Award-winning New Deal historian, provides a clear, concise introduction to Roosevelt's sphinx-like character and remarkable achievements. In a vivid narrative packed with telling anecdotes, the book moves swiftly from Roosevelt's youth in upstate New York--characterized by an aristocratic lifestyle of trips to Europe and private tutoring--to his schooling at Harvard, his brief law career, and his initial entry into politics. From there, Brinkley chronicles Roosevelt's rise to the presidency, a position in which FDR remained until death, through an unparalleled three-plus terms in office. Throughout the book, Brinkley elegantly blends FDR's personal life with his professional one, providing a lens into the President's struggles with polio and his somewhat distant relationship with the first lady.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt led the United States through the worst economic crisis in the nation's history and through the greatest and most terrible war ever recorded. His extraordinary legacy remains alive in our own troubled new century as a reminder of what bravery and strong leadership can accomplish.

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Editorial Review

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A respected New Deal historian seems the ideal person to write what amounts to a first book on FDR. At any rate, Brinkley neither worships nor assails his subject, nor repeats his *The End of Reform* (1995) to the effect that liberalism changed from favoring free trade and personal liberties to prioritizing escalating consumption and economic growth as FDR responded to the overlapping challenges of depression and world war. He hews closely to the key events of Roosevelt's life and, especially, administration. He notes Roosevelt's early development of personal secretiveness and a charming facade to mask emotion and inspire others' confidence. His tracing of Roosevelt's presidency attests FDR's pragmatic and experimental problem-solving approach. While reporting incidents that confirm Roosevelt's preference for saying one thing and doing another, Brinkley doesn't accuse him of subterfuge and duplicity, which will incense the legions of FDR detractors almost as much as will Brinkley's silence about the viciously hardball politics they say FDR played. Let the critics fume. This is a good introduction, not a summary judgment. --Ray Olson

Review

"Alan Brinkley's incisive and eloquent biography of FDR clarifies what he achieved and what he did not. Brinkley brings deep knowledge of Roosevelt and the New Deal to help readers understand why Roosevelt's was arguably the most important presidency of the twentieth century."--Lizabeth Cohen, Bancroft Prize-winning author of *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*

"A perfect gem-like profile of FDR."--Douglas Brinkley, author of *The Wilderness Warrior: Theodore Roosevelt and the Crusade for America* and co-author of *FDR and the Creation of the U.N.*

"Alan Brinkley, the premier historian of the New Deal, has produced the best short biography of the man who led America through one of the most challenging periods in modern history. At a time when analogies between our time and the Great Depression abound, this gracefully written book both informs and delights."--Michael Kazin, author of *A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan* and Professor of History, Georgetown University

"Alan Brinkley has distilled the complex life and career of this remarkable president down to its essence in a lively and illuminating narrative."--Maury Klein, author of *The Power Makers: Steam, Electricity, and the Men Who Invented Modern America*

"Big presidents tend to inspire big biographies and FDR is no exception. Noted New Deal scholar Alan Brinkley has bucked the trend with an admirably succinct and readable account that captures the man, his era and his legacies."-- David Reynolds, author of *From Munich to Pearl Harbor: Roosevelt's America and the Origins of the Second World War*

About the Author

Alan Brinkley is Allan Nevins Professor of History at Columbia University, where he served as Provost from 2003-2009. He has published numerous books, including the National Book Award-winning *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and the Great Depression; The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War*; and *Liberalism and Its Discontents*.

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