



# Game Change: Obama and the Clintons, McCain and Palin, and the Race of a Lifetime

By John Heilemann, Mark Halperin

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*Game Change* is the *New York Times* bestselling story of the 2008 presidential election, by John Heilemann and Mark Halperin, two of the best political reporters in the country. In the spirit of Richard Ben Cramer’s *What It Takes* and Theodore H. White’s *The Making of the President 1960*, this classic campaign trail book tells the defining story of a new era in American politics, going deeper behind the scenes of the Obama/Biden and McCain/Palin campaigns than any other account of the historic 2008 election.

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### Editorial Review

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Even before the book was out, its juiciest bits were everywhere: Sarah Palin was serene when chosen for V.P. because it was “God’s plan.” Hillary didn’t know if she could control Bill (duh). Elizabeth Edwards was a shrew, not a saint. Overall, the men from the campaign garner less attention in these anecdote wars than the women and tend to come off better—but only just: Obama, the authors note, can be conceited and windy; McCain was disengaged to the point of recklessness; and John Edwards is a cheating, egotistical blowhard. But, hey, that’s politics, and it’s obvious that authors Heilemann (New York Magazine) and Halperin (Time) worked their sources well—all 200 of them. Some (including the sources themselves) will have trouble with the book’s use of quotes (or lack thereof). The interviews, according to the authors, were conducted “on deep background,” and dialogue was “reconstructed extensively” and with “extreme care.” Sometimes the source of a quote is clear, as when the book gets inside someone’s head, but not always. Many of the book’s events were covered heavily at the time (Hillary’s presumed juggernaut; Michelle Obama’s initial hostility to her husband’s candidacy), but some of what this volume delivers is totally behind-the-scenes and genuinely jaw-dropping, including the revelation that senators ostensibly for Clinton (New York’s Chuck Schumer) pushed hard for Obama. Another? The McCain camp found Sarah Palin by doing computer searches of female Republican officeholders. A sometimes superficial but intensely readable account of a landmark campaign (librarians take note: the exceedingly flimsy binding may reflect the publisher’s haste to rush the book to press). --Ilene Cooper

#### Review

“A smoking new book. . . . The real revelation in *Game Change*: Campaigns turn our politicians into lunatics.” (Tina Brown, *The Daily Beast*)

“Heilemann and Halperin have conducted hundreds of interviews to provide the inside story of the 2008 campaign. . . . It vividly shows how character flaws large and small caused Obama’s opponents to self-destruct.” (Jacob Heilbrunn, *The New York Times Book Review*)

“A thoroughly researched, well-paced and occasionally very amusing read. . . . The result is something that conveys the feel, or perhaps more accurately the smell, of one of recent history’s most thrilling elections, and it does so better than any of the other books already on the market.” (*The Economist*)

“I can’t put down this book!” (Stephen Colbert)

“Compulsively readable. Once begun, you can’t put it down. . . . Deeply and knowledgeably reported and presented with all the cool sophistication one would expect from two accomplished political reporters.” (Tim Rutten, *The Los Angeles Times*)

“Riveting, definitive. . . . A great campaign book. . . . Halperin and Heilemann got insiders to cough up astonishing artifacts, including emails and recordings. . . . *Game Change* is really interesting, and puts you deep in the middle of it.” (Kurt Andersen, *Very Short List*)

“The hottest book in the country.” (*The Associated Press*)

“Everybody talked. Anybody that tells you they didn’t is lying to you.” (A former top Clinton aide, to

*Politico*'s Ben Smith)

"The best presidential political book since *What it Takes* by Richard Ben Cramer and *Teddy White's books*. These are the types of books that got me into politics." (Joe Scarborough)

"An explosive new book. . . . An absolute page turner." (Soledad O'Brien on *Larry King Live*)

"You've got to read *Game Change*. . . . I read each and every word. . . . *Game Change* is a great book." (Don Imus)

"A fascinating account. . . . Heilemann and Halperin serve up a spicy smorgasbord of observations, revelations, and allegations. . . . *Game Change* leaves the reader with a vivid, visceral sense of the campaign and a keen understanding of the paradoxes and contingencies of history." (Michiko Kakutani, *The New York Times*)

"Riveting. . . . Its pages brim with scandalous tidbits. . . . This is a must-read for anyone interested in the cutthroat backroom hows and whys of a presidential campaign. . . . And it doesn't hurt that *Game Change* reads more bodice-ripper than *Beltway*." (Tina Jordan, *Entertainment Weekly*)

"The authors of *Game Change* succeed in creating a plausible account of the emotional tumult of the 2008 campaign as it might have been—perhaps even was—experienced by the candidates, their spouses, and their staffs." (Hendrik Hertzberg, *The New Yorker*)

"An amazing piece of work. . . . One of the best books on politics of any kind I've read. For entertainment value, I put it up there with *Catch 22*. . . . An absolutely gripping read . . . they can write." (Clive Crook, *The Financial Times*)

#### From the Back Cover

In 2008, the presidential election became blockbuster entertainment. Everyone was watching as the race for the White House unfolded like something from the realm of fiction. The meteoric rise and historic triumph of Barack Obama. The shocking fall of the House of Clinton—and the improbable resurrection of Hillary as Obama's partner and America's face to the world. The mercurial performance of John McCain and the mesmerizing emergence of Sarah Palin. But despite the wall-to-wall media coverage of this spellbinding drama, remarkably little of the real story behind the headlines had been told—until now.

In *Game Change*, John Heilemann and Mark Halperin pull back the curtain on the Obama, Clinton, McCain, and Palin campaigns. Based on hundreds of interviews with the people who lived the story, *Game Change* is a reportorial tour de force that reads like a fast-paced novel.

## Users Review

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#### Maria Bruns:

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