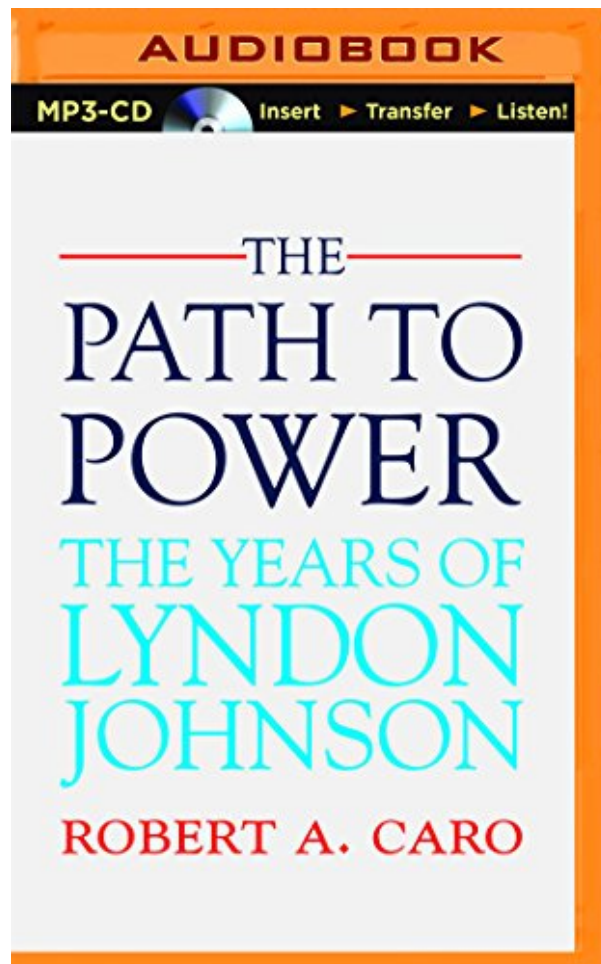
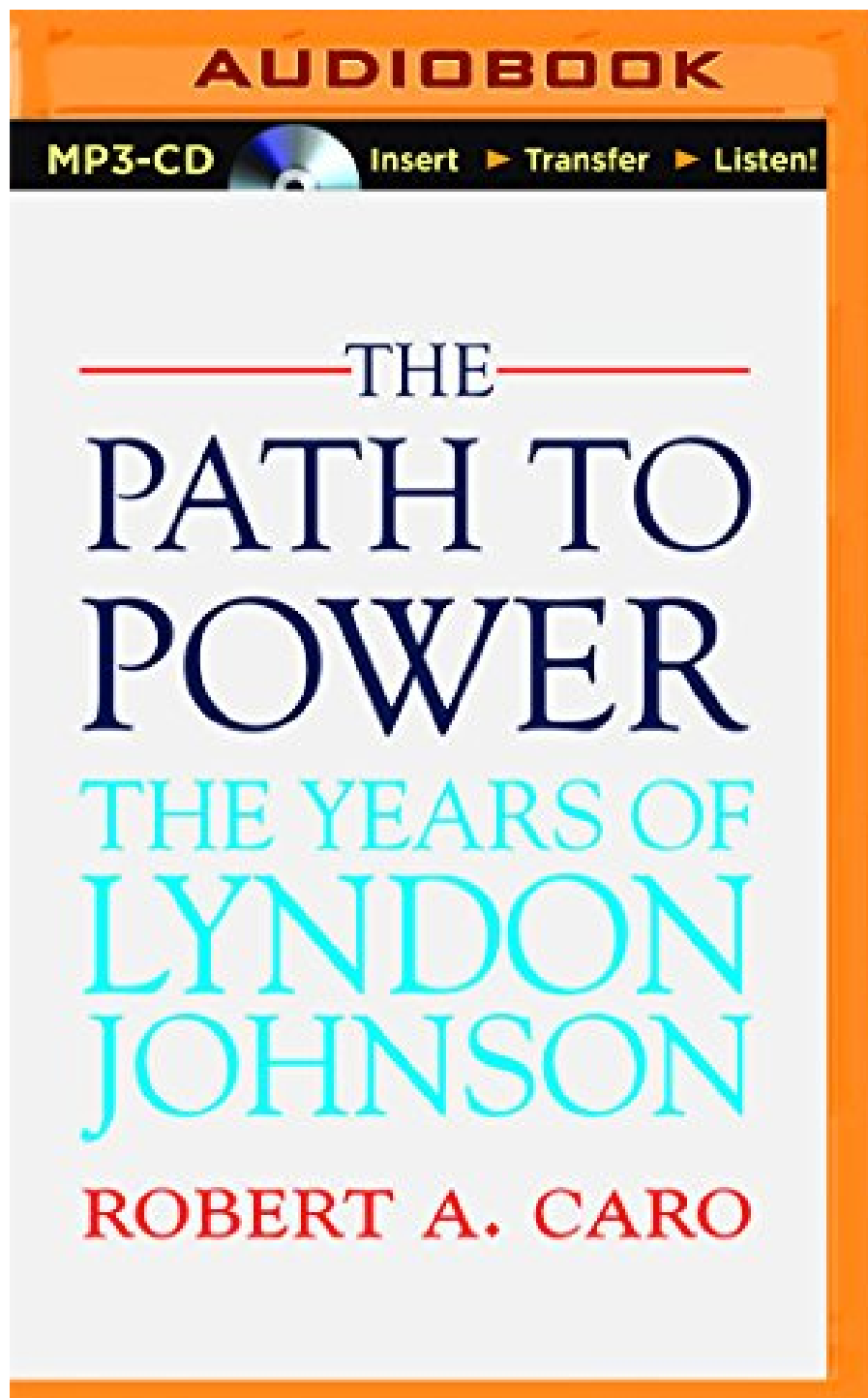


THE PATH TO POWER (THE YEARS OF LYNDON JOHNSON) BY ROBERT A. CARO



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BY ROBERT A. CARO PDF

The Years of Lyndon Johnson is the political biography of our time. Here is the perfect joining of subject and writer: Johnson, the man of awesome complexity, energy, ambition, and power?obsessed with secrecy, obscuring (often "rewriting") the facts of his personal and political life; Caro, his biographer, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for his life of Robert Moses, *The Power Broker*?and everywhere acclaimed for the brilliance, tenacity, and integrity of his research, for his grasp of character and of the workings of power. The conjunction has produced a monumental and galvanizing book that is a landmark in American biography. No president?no era of American politics?has been so intensively and sharply examined at a time when so many prime witnesses to hitherto untold or misinterpreted facts of a life, a career, and a period of history could still be persuaded to speak.

The Path to Power?the first book of The Years of Lyndon Johnson?reveals in extraordinary detail the genesis of the almost superhuman drive, energy, and urge to power that set LBJ apart. Chronicling the startling early emergence of Johnson's political genius, it follows him from his Texas boyhood through the years of the Depression in the Texas Hill Country to the triumph of his congressional debut in New Deal Washington, to his heartbreaking defeat in his first race for the Senate, and his attainment, nonetheless, of the national power for which he hungered.

We see in him, from earliest childhood, a fierce, unquenchable necessity to be first, to win, to dominate?coupled with a limitless capacity for hard, unceasing labor in the service of his own ambition. Caro shows us the big, gangling, awkward young Lyndon?raised in one of the country's most desperately poor and isolated areas, his education mediocre at best, his pride stung by his father's slide into failure and financial ruin?lunging for success, moving inexorably toward that ultimate "impossible" goal that he sets for himself years before any friend or enemy suspects what it may be.

We watch him, while still at college, instinctively (and ruthlessly) creating the beginnings of the political machine that was to serve him for three decades. We see him employing his extraordinary ability to mesmerize and manipulate powerful older men, to mesmerize (and sometimes almost enslave) useful subordinates. We follow, close up, the radical fluctuations of his relationships with the formidable "Mr. Sam" Rayburn (who loved him like a son and whom he betrayed) and with FDR himself. And we follow the dramas of his emotional life?the intensities and complications of his relationships with his family, his contemporaries, his girls; his wooing and winning of the shy Lady Bird; his secret love affair, over many years, with the mistress of one of his most ardent and generous supporters....

We see Johnson at once unscrupulous, admirable, treacherous, devoted. And we see the country that bred him: the harshness and "nauseating loneliness" of the rural life; the tragic panorama of the Depression; the sudden glow of hope at the dawn of the Age of Roosevelt. And always, in the foreground, on the move, LBJ.

In preparation for this audiobook, Caro has?through some seven years?immersed himself in Johnson's life and world; has lived in Johnson's Hill Country, has crisscrossed the United States, finding and talking to hundreds of men and women?his boyhood friends and sweethearts, his college classmates and rivals, the men

who politicked with him in congressional cloakrooms, the young New Deal aides (among them Corcoran, Cohen, Fortas, Rowe) who helped him rise and rose with him.

Here as never before is Lyndon Johnson's Texas, his Washington, his America?in an audiobook that brings us as close as we have ever been to a true perception of political genius and the American political process.

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like *The Path to Power*, received the National Book Critics Circle Award.

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74 of 76 people found the following review helpful.

Fantastic and revealing

By Amazon Customer

I loved "The Path to Power" but I held off on reading this volume because I could not understand why Caro would devote an entire volume to seven years in LBJ's life. After I read this book, I have no doubt that this decision was a good one. These years--particularly the 1948 Democratic Senatorial Primary--were some of the most historically significant events on the last hundred years. It was this election that perhaps more than any other lay the foundation for politics as we know it. Without the eventual win in this election, Caro argues that LBJ's political career would have been finished. If that were true, he never would have gone on to be president. And if that did not happen, one must ask would Vietnam or "The Great Society" ever have happened quite the way they did. Caro is very convincing in arguing that this dramatic election is one of the most important in U.S. History.

Aside from the significance of the year, I would like to emphasize what a truly exciting read this volume is. I was utterly enthralled to read about what unfolded next in the battle for the democratic candidacy for Texas' senatorial seat. This in spite of the fact that everyone reading the book already knows the outcome. Many have said that this is a hatchet job on LBJ. While this is not a positive portrait of LBJ as a moral figure, it praises him highly as a calculating politician--possibly one of the greatest of all times. The other thing to remember is that Caro is highlighting an election in 1940s Texas, which has always been notorious for corruption in politics (witness the cartoonish and stranger-than-fiction Pappy O'Daniel). The difference in this case was that Coke Stevenson was not as willing to accept that corruption as LBJ was. It is also a lament for the loss of politicians like Stevenson, who one feels Caro holds in much higher regard than LBJ, as will most readers--despite political leanings--once they complete this volume.

This volume is--hands down--one of the most exciting books I have read in a long time. I found it fascinating and could not put it down. I look forward to moving on to the third volume (*The Master of the Senate*) but I fear how long I will have to wait for the next volume after that.

96 of 102 people found the following review helpful.

The Zenith of Biographical Writing

By Candace Scott

Thank God for Robert Caro, who is a brilliant researcher, compiler of facts and an outstanding writer. His way with words is leagues ahead of other historical biographers, he writes with the flair of a novelist but he backs up his words with years of diligent research. What other biographer pulls up stakes and lives for *five years* in the Texas hill country in order to better understand his subject? This first volume stands at the pinnacle of the biographical art.

Many have criticized Caro (John Connelly most vociferously) for being overly critical of Johnson. I share this concern and feel he sometimes bends over backwards to "stick it to" Johnson. Caro has said repeatedly that he will deal with LBJ's Presidency with a more charitable outlook and this is to be hoped.

I am an unabashed fan of Lyndon Johnson and this will stand as the definitive biography of him for many years. Though it's caustic and critical, it's so beautifully written you can read it again and again. A masterpiece of biography.

83 of 88 people found the following review helpful.

The Best Biography Written

By scott_from_dallas

Forget about what your opinion of LBJ is. You still need to read this book. I don't care if you like him, hate him, care nothing for him, or whatever. The way Caro writes a biography is almost breathtaking. Ever wonder what a summer day deep in the Texas Hill country is like? You'll find out in here, and rest assured, it won't put you to sleep.

This book is a great introduction to 20th Century Texas politics. The first few chapters hardly mention LBJ as Caro goes back to LBJ's father and discusses his life. For those of you that have read this book and the 1987 sequel, *Means of Ascent*, you may be wondering why the third volume covering the 1960s hasn't been written. I have it on good authority that the entire LBJ clan -- family, friends, and close advisors -- have made it clear to Caro that he is unwelcome around them. Hatchet job, or sour grapes because of the truth? Well, read the book and find out. But my guess is that Caro's terrific sources have simply dried up, and he isn't going to put his name on something where the quality is less than this book. Unfortunately for him, that might be near impossible.

One more thing to the quality of this book: there are about a dozen other LBJ books out there ranging from good to just plain bad. Every one of them without exception use this book as a source.

UPDATE: I am extremely happy to be wrong with my guess about Caro's sources drying up. I am looking forward to reading *Master of the Senate*.

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