Eleanor Roosevelt, Volume One, 1884-1933 Study Guide

Eleanor Roosevelt, Volume One, 1884-1933 by Blanche Wiesen Cook

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Contents

Introduction

Blanche Wiesen Cook's *Eleanor Roosevelt, Volume One*, 1884-1933 is the first of a three-volume biography that reexamines the life and work of Eleanor Roosevelt. When published by Viking in 1992, it quickly became a bestseller. It was also controversial.

The biography is written from a feminist perspective, and it presents Roosevelt as a role model for women today. Cook explains that Roosevelt was unwilling to live her life within the strict limits imposed by a male-dominated society. As a woman of wealth and privilege, married to a rising politician, Roosevelt would normally have been expected to confine herself to managing the household, raising the children, perhaps engaging in some worthy charitable work, and supporting her husband's career. But Eleanor Roosevelt insisted on developing a more independent life. She forged a new identity for herself by engaging in meaningful political activity at a time when women had just received the right to vote. Cook sees Roosevelt as a committed progressive who championed an agenda of social reform and who attained genuine political power in her own right.

The controversial aspect of the biography mostly concerned Cook's argument that when Eleanor Roosevelt was married and in her forties, she had an affair with her bodyguard, Earl Miller, and also had an erotic relationship with a female reporter, Lorena Hickok. Previous biographers have been far more cautious in assessing both of these friendships. Cook argues her case persuasively from the available evidence, but not everyone has been convinced of the truth of her conclusions.

Author Biography

Blanche Wiesen Cook was born on April 20, 1941, in New York, New York, the daughter of David Theodore and Sadonia (Ecker) Wiesen. Cook graduated from Hunter College with a B.A. in 1962; she then received an M.A. from Johns Hopkins University in 1964 and a Ph.D. in history from the same university in 1970.

Cook decided to make her career as a teacher and historian. She was an instructor of history at Stern College for Women, Yeshiva University, New York, from 1964 to 1967. Since 1968, Cook has been a professor of history at John Jay College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York. She also teaches women's studies.

Cook enjoys a distinguished career as a historian. She has contributed many articles on history to scholarly journals, and she was the senior editor for the 360-volume *Garland Library on War and Peace* (1970-1980) and the *Jewish Women's Encyclopedia* (1997). She was coeditor of and contributor to *Past Imperfect: Alternative Essays in American History* (Knopf, 1973), and she is the author of four books: *Crystal Eastman on Women and Revolution* (Oxford University Press, 1978); The *Declassified Eisenhower: A Divided Legacy of Peace and Political Warfare* (Doubleday, 1981); *Eleanor Roosevelt, Volume One, 1884-1933* (Viking, 1992); and *Eleanor Roosevelt, Volume Two, 1933-1938* (Viking, 1999). A third and final volume of Cook's biography of Roosevelt is in progress.

Cook's achievements in her profession have earned her a number of awards. She won the Feminist of the Year award from the Feminist Majority Foundation in 1992 and the Lambda Literary Prize in 1992. In 1996, Cook was named Scholar of the Year by the New York Council of Humanities. She is a member of the Organization of American Historians, in which she is cochair of the freedom of information committee, and the American Historical Association, in which she was vice president for research from 1991 to 1994.

In addition to her scholarly work, Cook has worked as a producer for broadcaster program stations WBAI and WPFK Radio Pacifica, in New York City and Los Angeles, and she is also a syndicated journalist.

Plot Summary

Introduction

In her introduction to *Eleanor Roosevelt, Volume One,* Cook explains that many years after Eleanor Roosevelt's death, she remains a controversial figure. People disagree about whether she was a paragon of goodness or foolishly naïve. In addition, stereotypical ideas of what kind of life a woman should lead have obscured the full measure of Roosevelt's achievements. For Cook, Roosevelt's life was a personal and political journey that reflected all the complex issues at work in the twentieth century. It was a life of noble ideals and practical achievement.

Chapters 1-3: Ancestry and Early Childhood

Eleanor Roosevelt was born into an aristocratic family in 1884. Her mother was Anna Livingston Ludlow Hall, who married Elliot Roosevelt in 1883. Elliot was the older brother of Theodore Roosevelt Jr., who would later become president of the United States. When the boys were young, Elliott was the more accomplished of the two, but he did not live up to his promise. He was often unhealthy, and by adulthood he was drinking to excess.

Eleanor's mother was aloof and made Eleanor feel unloved and unattractive. But Eleanor felt understood by her father, who encouraged her to excel. Elliot, however, had become an alcoholic. Although he could be charming, he was also given to moods of anger and self-pity.

Eleanor's early childhood was not happy. Her father's alcoholism worsened, and fearing public scandal, Theodore Roosevelt tried to persuade Anna to leave her husband. Eleanor was sent to a convent school, where she was lonely. Theodore demanded that Elliott be put in an asylum and declared insane, a proposal that divided the family. Elliott entered an asylum near Paris.

Eventually Elliott returned to the United States, where he entered a treatment center. He regained his health and left the center in the spring of 1892, but his wife did not want to see him. Tragedy struck when Anna contracted diphtheria and died at the age of twenty-nine.

Chapters 4-6: Death of Father, School, and Courtship

Shattered by his wife's death, Elliott started drinking again, but he continued to write warm letters to Eleanor. She treasured these letters and worshiped her father. Elliott died suddenly on August 14, 1893.

Eleanor was now living with her maternal grandmother, Mary Livingston Ludlow Hall, and her aunts Maude and Pussie. Eleanor enjoyed this six-year period in her life, acquiring a sense of belonging that she had never felt in the turbulent home of her parents.

When she was fifteen, Eleanor was sent to Allenswood School in England, where she spent three happy years. Allenswood catered to the daughters of wealthy European aristocrats and America's leading families. It was run by a Frenchwoman, Marie Souvestre, an earnest teacher with a feminist outlook. Eleanor became Souvestre's favorite student; Eleanor's confidence grew and her personality flourished.

Returning to the United States, Eleanor felt out of place in the world of New York dances and parties. She knew that she was not the belle her mother had been. By 1903, she had met her distant cousin, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and in November they became engaged. The engagement was kept secret for a year at the request of Sara Delano Roosevelt, Franklin's mother.

Chapters 7-9: Marriage and Politics

Franklin and Eleanor were married on March 17, 1905. For the first few years of her married life, Eleanor was dominated by her strong-willed mother-in-law, whose imperious running of the house left Eleanor feeling inadequate. Sara arranged everything for Franklin's benefit, and Eleanor submerged her own needs. Her first child, Anna Eleanor Roosevelt, was born in 1906; James followed in 1907. In 1909, an infant son, Franklin, died at age seven months. Another son, Elliott, was born in 1910.

In 1913, FDR became Assistant Secretary of the Navy. The Roosevelts moved to Washington. Eleanor gave birth to two more children, but she and her husband began to spend more time apart, and FDR had an affair with a secretary, Lucy Mercer. When Eleanor discovered this in 1918, she offered FDR a divorce, but FDR turned down her offer. As Eleanor struggled with her feelings of betrayal, she resolved to build an independent life for herself.

Chapters 10-12: More Political Activities

In 1919 and 1920, Eleanor became involved in a number of political organizations, including the League of Women Voters and the Women's Trade Union League. She was convinced that progressive change was the answer to the social disruptions, such as strikes, that followed World War I. When FDR ran for vice president on the Democratic ticket in 1920, he and Eleanor formed an effective political partnership. The Democrats lost, but Eleanor was ready to begin her own political career.

The Roosevelts returned to New York, and Eleanor became more involved in feminist causes. In 1921, she attended the annual convention of the New York League of Women Voters and the national League convention in Cleveland. She became involved in all aspects of the women's political movement, befriending such prominent figures as

Esther Lape and Elizabeth Read. Roosevelt worked for social reform, including issues such as protective labor legislation for women and children, and equal pay for equal work.

Chapters 13-16:1920s, Teacher and Political Activist

In 1921, FDR contracted polio and was paralyzed. Eleanor nursed him and encouraged him to remain in public life. After 1923, however, the Roosevelts spent less and less time together. Eleanor developed different interests and moved in different circles than her husband. But their relationship remained warm, and they kept few secrets from each other. To the outer world, they appeared a devoted couple. Eleanor began to earn money from lectures and magazine articles, and she became financially independent. She also continued to develop her circle of politically active women friends, such as Nancy Cook and Marion Dickerman. Eleanor raised all the funds to start up the *Women's Democratic News,* a monthly publication that first appeared in 1925. Eleanor was also the editor. During this period, she taught at the Todhunter School in New York City, which she partially owned.

By the mid-1920s, Eleanor was heavily involved in women's political organizations in New York state, including the League of Women Voters and the Women's Division of the New York State Democratic Committee. She raised funds, edited newsletters, and took part in debates. She toured the state on behalf of candidates and social reform causes, such as the forty-eight hour work week and other measures that increased government protection for women and children. She also worked on behalf of international peace, launching a women's peace movement in 1927. Eleanor became a nationally known figure.

By 1928, when FDR became governor of New York, Eleanor had become a major political force in her own right, one of the best known Democrats in the nation. She also had a large influence on FDR's daily activities, political policies, and selection of advisers. During the years of FDR's governorship, from 1929 to 1933, one of her main interests was teaching at the Todhunter School. She was a successful teacher, much admired by her students.

Chapters 17-20: The Great Depression; New Friendships

With the coming of the Great Depression in 1929, Eleanor continued to advocate a woman's right to work. She argued that the idea that a woman's place was in the home was out of date. As the depression worsened, she called for imaginative ways of ending unemployment and considered unionization a key to economic security for working women.

In 1929, FDR appointed Earl Miller, a state trooper, as Eleanor's bodyguard. Over the next few years, they developed a warm friendship. In 1932, FDR was elected president,

and Eleanor became First Lady. At about this time, she began to develop what Cook describes as a "romantic and passionate" friendship with a reporter, Lorena Hickok, who was assigned by the Associated Press to cover the First Lady.

Chapters 1, 2, and 3

Chapters 1, 2, and 3 Summary

Eleanor Roosevelt is Blanche Wiesen Cook's biography of Eleanor Roosevelt from her birth in 1884 until the time she steps into the role of First Lady of the United States in 1933. Cook captures Eleanor's troubled childhood that occurred in spite of a privileged lifestyle, her marriage and life with Franklin D. Roosevelt, and her career as a champion for women's rights and social reforms.

Eleanor Roosevelt's heritage is one of privilege and wealth, with both her parents being from socially prominent families in New York. Eleanor's mother, Anna Livingston Ludlow Hall, is, according to Eleanor, "one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen." Anna Hall marries Elliott Roosevelt in 1883 and Eleanor is born in October the following year. Anna is only twenty when Eleanor is born and unprepared to be a mother and society wife in one of the most important families in New York.

Elliott Roosevelt is the only brother of Theodore Roosevelt and the cousin of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, both of whom would one day hold the office of President of the United States. Elliot is the opposite of his rambunctious brother, preferring quiet study and solitude to outdoor activities, but the two brothers are extremely fond of each other.

Due to her delicate nature, Anna Roosevelt has a difficult time raising Eleanor, whose willfulness and independence are counter to Anna's obedient, socially compliant personality. This difference in personality would continue until Anna's death when Eleanor is only eight years old. Eleanor is her father's darling and naturally gravitates toward him for affection.

Trouble early in the marriage between Anna and Elliott brings bouts of opiate use and alcohol abuse on Elliott's part, with the couple subsequently having several separations. Ultimately, two sons are born to the couple, but Elliott's drinking and womanizing lead to a permanent estrangement with Elliot seeking help in French institutions while Anna lives with the children in New York.

Eventually, Elliott begins to master his substance abuse and emotional problems and returns to New York only to find that Anna has moved to a different house and will not allow him to see her or the children. Eleanor remembers feeling completely abandoned as her mother struggles with her own sense of loneliness and depression and her father is banished from the household. Shortly after Elliot's return to New York, Anna is stricken with diphtheria after a surgical procedure and dies. Eleanor who is only eight -years old is sent to stay with cousins, but remembers thinking that perhaps now she will be able to see her beloved father.

Chapters 1, 2, and 3 Analysis

This story of Eleanor Roosevelt is a biography of her life from the years 1884 to 1933. A biography means the nonfiction account of a person's life with facts and data to support the narrative. Naturally the most important events and circumstances in a person's life are included in a biography and the tone of the writing is straightforward with few literary devices. The purpose of a book such as this is to illuminate more details and background of this notable woman in order to understand the factors that shaped her life and character.

The author makes liberal use of excerpts from documents and letters written to and from Eleanor's family, including her mother, father, and famous uncle, Theodore Roosevelt. These documents provide veracity to the telling of Eleanor's story and help to communicate the time period in which she lived as a girl.

Although there are no typical literary devices used in the book, there are a few passages that can possibly be considered elements of foreshadowing. For example, while explaining Eleanor's lineage, the author states that Eleanor's side of the Roosevelt family, the side more concerned with social reform, stayed in New York while the other part gravitated to the Hyde Park area of New York. There are two important elements in this, as Eleanor will one day be known almost as well for her social and philanthropic work as for marrying one of the Hyde Park Roosevelts and becoming the First Lady of the United States.

Chapters 4 and 5

Chapters 4 and 5 Summary

The impact of Eleanor's mother's death will haunt Eleanor her entire life because she was never able to secure her mother's approval. Eleanor's hope to regain a life with her father, Elliott, is short lived as he resumes his alcohol abuse and his wife's family continues to withhold the children from his custody. Eleanor's relationship with her beloved father consists of brief visits and lyrical letters in which he encourages her education and declares his undying love. Unfortunately, Elliott resumes his alcoholic lifestyle and soon dies from complications of the illness.

Eleanor and her brothers, Elliott Jr. and Gracie Hall live in New York City with their maternal grandmother and their mother's sisters. Ironically, Eleanor finds this arrangement more like home than she ever felt living with her own parents. Eleanor's father's alcohol abuse and her mother's frail sensibilities and dependence upon social acceptance never created the nurturing environment in which children can thrive. Eleanor finds the female-dominant household of her grandmother's home to be the perfect environment to study and expand her aesthetic sensibilities.

Eleanor adapts perfectly to her schooling abroad at the Allenswood School in England where she studies for three years under the avant-garde French instructor, Marie Souvestre. Souvestre encourages Eleanor to strive for a life of purpose unlimited by the typical restrictions of a male-dominated society. Eleanor and the elder Souvestre become friends and traveling companions during Eleanor's stay in Europe. So great is Souvestre's influence on Eleanor's life, that Eleanor will keep a portrait of Souvestre on her desk throughout the balance of her life.

Chapters 4 and 5 Analysis

Although a biography, the book does contain some literary elements to add to the dimension of Eleanor's life. The author uses a metaphor to convey the loss Eleanor will feel for her entire life over the early death of her mother. "Anna Roosevelt Hall died too quickly, too unexpectedly, to resolve any of the bitter feelings that were left now forever unspoken. Whispers in the ether of her lost life remained a substantial part of Anna Hall Roosevelt's lasting legacy" (p. 79). By comparing Mrs. Roosevelt's death to "whispers in the ether" the author is able to appropriately describe the fleeting essence of Mrs. Roosevelt.

Eleanor's relationship with her father, although limited, is strong and his influence is stronger than that of anyone else on the young Eleanor. Eleanor probably receives her artistic and literary inclination from her father who writes to Eleanor with lyrical style. For example, when encouraging Eleanor to pursue her studies, her father writes, "He suggested that she watch workmen build a house, place 'one stone after another . . .

and then think that there are a lot of funny little workmen running about in your small head called Ideas which are carrying a lot of stones like small bodies called Facts and these little Ideas are being directed by your teachers in various ways, by Persuasion, Instruction, Love and Truth to place all these Fact Stones on top of and alongside each other in your dear Gold Head until they build a beautiful house called Education."

Chapters 6 and 7

Chapters 6 and 7 Summary

Upon completion of her education in England, Eleanor returns home to begin her entrance into New York society. More an academic than a socialite, Eleanor suffers through an endless whirl of balls and social events necessary for a young woman of her position in one of New York's finest families. Eleanor has many friends, however, and gravitates toward those whose intellectual pursuits mirror her own. Eleanor also has a fair amount of suitors; but, in the fall of 1902, she meets her distant cousin, Franklin D. Roosevelt, on a train bound for Hyde Park and the two strike up a friendship that soon transitions into love.

Franklin courts Eleanor in secret for a year before the couple announces their engagement. Franklin's mother, Sara Delano Roosevelt, is dismayed with the engagement. Since the death of Franklin's father, Sara Roosevelt has learned to rely on Franklin and dotes on her son. Sara approves of Eleanor's social standing but would prefer that Franklin would wait to marry. She sends him on a cruise to separate the young couple. The love between Franklin and Eleanor surpasses any of Sara's manipulations and the couple is married in March of 1905 with Eleanor's uncle, President Theodore Roosevelt, giving away the bride.

Sara's completely takes over the young couple's three-month European honeymoon arrangements with her influence and management style, and Sara even locates their first home, furnishing it and hiring the servants before Franklin and Eleanor return. When visiting the family homes in Hyde Park, New York, and Campobello in New Brunswick, Canada, Eleanor feels estranged, as the homes are not amended to accommodate Eleanor's entrance into the lives of Sara and Franklin. Eleanor's frustrations at not being able to manage her own home are exaggerated by Franklin's continuing deference to Sara and not Eleanor. Even with the birth of Franklin and Eleanor's children, Anna, James, Franklin, Jr., and Elliott, Sara continues to intervene and make household and family decisions without regard for Eleanor's preferences.

Chapters 6 and 7 Analysis

For the first time in her life, Eleanor is prevented from making her own decisions through the control of her mother-in-law, Sara Roosevelt. Sara Roosevelt is in direct contrast to the other major female influence in Eleanor's life, Madame Souvestre. "Marie Souvestre encouraged Eleanor Roosevelt to grow according to her own inner vision, to be critical about the world - its shibboleths and rigidities. Sara Delano Roosevelt liked the world the way it was. She believed it had been created by her and her class, for her and her class. She wanted those around her to think precisely as she did, to share her concerns and her priorities. Indeed, she believed that those around her did believe as she did. To be loved freely by Sara meant to become fully like Sara. To be loved by

Marie Souvestre had meant to display an independent spirit with individual flair, and a playful imagination."

Chapters 8 and 9

Chapters 8 and 9 Summary

In 1910, Franklin Delano Roosevelt wins a New York Senate seat and he and Eleanor select a home in Albany; it is their first home chosen without Sara Roosevelt's interference. Eleanor launches into establishing her own home with as much gusto as Franklin devotes to his new political career. For the first time in her married life, Eleanor experiences confidence in managing her own household and children.

Before long, Eleanor begins to establish herself as a politician's wife by visiting with city and state officials and their wives. Franklin notes Eleanor's value as a public relations expert, an attribute that will bind the couple for the rest of their lives. This political partnership also reinforces the marriage, and Eleanor and Franklin are at the happiest time in their marriage. Eleanor also reaches out into the community to serve the less fortunate and establishes an altruistic platform of her own.

By the summer of 1912, Franklin declares his support of Woodrow Wilson over Eleanor's uncle, President Theodore Roosevelt, and Eleanor has her first experience at a Democratic National Convention. It is also in 1912 that Franklin hires Louis Howe who will become his lifelong career strategist, beginning with Franklin's bid for reelection to the New York Senate.

Eleanor and Franklin's eighth wedding anniversary in 1913 is noted not for romantic overtures but for Franklin's appointment as the Assistant Secretary of the Navy. Eleanor is not in Washington with her husband on this day, which becomes a pattern of separation that will repeat itself frequently over the next several years as the Roosevelts begin a period of public service.

In the autumn of 1913, Eleanor moves her family to Washington, D.C. to be with Franklin, and she employs her same political shrewdness there that she did in Albany. The Roosevelts' youth, wealth, and energy make them one of Washington's most dynamic couples, and Franklin and Eleanor enjoy their new professional and personal lives. As Franklin establishes himself in Wilson's political camp, Eleanor immerses herself in philanthropic and civil rights issues such as women's rights, anti-racism efforts, and employment issues.

The beginning of World War I in 1914 officially separates Franklin and Eleanor from Theodore Roosevelt's political position and establishes Franklin as an important voice in the Democratic Party. During this time, Eleanor immerses herself in war-related support groups while Franklin spends much of his time in social pursuits such as late-night parties with much drinking and smoking, both vices Eleanor abhors. Eleanor agrees to let Franklin attend these parties on the condition that she will not be forced to attend with him. Eleanor seeks out her own social contacts and attends events that support causes or allow intellectual repartees.

Over the next few years, Franklin and Eleanor spend less time together under their new arrangement in Washington and soon Franklin opts to stay in Washington for the summers instead of joining the family at their home in Campobello. Eleanor's suspicions of Franklin's marital infidelities increase after Eleanor hires the attractive Lucy Page Mercer as her personal assistant. Lucy adapts well to the Roosevelts' personal and professional style and soon rumors abound about the inappropriate relationship between Franklin and Lucy.

Eleanor's fears about the illicit affair are confirmed when Franklin returns from Europe during the great influenza epidemic of 1918 and Eleanor discovers love letters from Lucy in Franklin's luggage. Not wanting to remain in a marriage or home where she is not wanted, Eleanor offers Franklin his freedom through divorce. Franklin opts to stay in the marriage when Sara Roosevelt declares that she will withdraw financial support for Franklin should he leave Eleanor and the children.

Although he does not leave Eleanor, Franklin maintains sporadic contact with Lucy and she is with him in Georgia when he dies of a cerebral hemorrhage in 1945. Eleanor's betrayal and humiliation over Franklin's infidelity wounds her deeply but in characteristic style, Eleanor eventually rises above her personal pain to forge a new bond with her husband. Ironically, Franklin's infidelity strengthens the relationship between Eleanor and her mother-in-law, who is disappointed with her son for the first time in their lives.

Chapters 8 and 9 Analysis

Cook uses the metaphor of the sea to illustrate Eleanor's unpredictable personal life at this point. "Increasingly afloat in a sea upon which she never got to chart the course, never fully understood the tides, and could not quite count on her mate for support in a storm, Eleanor found the early years of her marriage to be the loneliest of her adult life." This allusion to the sea seems especially prophetic because of Franklin's imminent appointment as Assistant Secretary of the Navy and the launch of his extramarital affair with Lucy Mercer.

The author makes note of two important trends that will have a long-lasting effect on Eleanor's life. Although not technically considered foreshadowing in this biography, Eleanor's growing interest in public service begins during this period of her life and will continue until her death. The other event that provides a hint at the scope of Eleanor's life is a polio outbreak in the summer of 1916 in the northeastern United States. Franklin will be afflicted with polio five years later, forever altering the scope of his life and their marriage.

The author also points out an important theme of abandonment present during Eleanor's life. As a child, Eleanor is emotionally abandoned by her distant and disapproving mother; Eleanor loses her father to alcoholism and early death; Eleanor is alienated by her mother-in-law during the early days of her marriage; and now Eleanor suffers the intimate betrayal of Franklin's infidelity. These events are important to note because of the strength Eleanor gains by cultivating more independence and resiliency

that allow her to extend herself in social and philanthropic causes which will help countless numbers of people.

Chapters 10 and 11

Chapters 10 and 11 Summary

In the immediate aftermath of World War I, the Women's Suffrage Movement rises to prominence and Eleanor finds a cause with which she can associate and fully support. Eleanor also joins the League of Women Voters, the Women's Trade Union League, and the Foreign Policy Association. Eleanor's long-standing membership in the Daughters of the American Revolution is challenged when the organization takes an anti-radical position on education and books. Eleanor's stance is that poverty and injustice are the real threats to America, not necessarily Communism.

From this point, Eleanor adopts a position of progressive change, declaring, "Courage, justice and fair play do not breed revolutions, let us bear that in mind" (p. 244). Eleanor's efforts are directed toward racial equality; global peace; economic security and collective bargaining; the right of all for proper housing, education, and healthcare; and, international human rights. For the rest of her life, Eleanor is associated with every progressive issue declared un-American, resulting in vigilant monitoring of her activities by the FBI.

Although Eleanor lobbies for the causes close to her heart, she does not enter politics outright and, during the time in Washington, Eleanor recovers from Franklin's betrayal and determines a new direction for her passions in her causes. During Eleanor's recovery and the rebuilding of her marriage, she frequents a Washington cemetery to visit a statue dedicated to another Washington wife who killed herself as a result of her husband's infidelity. Eleanor finds comfort near the special statue called *Grief* where she finds a quiet place to process her feelings away from the glare of her public life. Eventually, Eleanor emerges from this period with the phrases that will become her guideposts, "The life you live is your own" and "Life is meant to be lived" (p. 250).

During the summer of 1919, Eleanor resides at Hyde Park away from the social and professional responsibilities of Washington where Franklin opts to remain. Eleanor and Sara rekindle their slightly antagonistic relationship which adds more stress to Eleanor's frayed nerves. During the autumn of the year, Eleanor resumes her Washington life and enters a satisfying period of promoting women's rights, second only to her life with Souvestre as a young girl.

During the year 1920, Franklin makes his formal declaration for a life in politics and leaves his position with the Navy. Franklin's campaign for Vice President of the United States forges a new political bond with Eleanor who accompanies her husband on his cross-country promotional train trip. Eleanor's presence on the campaign tour squelches rumors of the couple's divorce and helps to solidify the personal bond between Eleanor and Franklin once more.

Eleanor rebuffs Franklin's tendency to drink and smoke too late into the night and she distances herself during these times. Louis Howe, Franklin's main advisor, realizes the positive benefits that Eleanor's presence brings to Franklin's campaign efforts and works to align himself with Eleanor. Eleanor is a positive presence with the ever-present press corps and she develops a relationship with the media that will last throughout her life.

The Democrats lose the election of 1920 but Franklin, undaunted, vows to try again, and returns to New York to await the next election. Eleanor accompanies her husband but does not wait to act, preferring instead to immerse herself in the political causes important to her.

Chapters 10 and 11 Analysis

Eleanor reaches a pivotal point in her life during this period. She vows not to be ruled by her husband or her children, and determines to "no longer allow anyone to feel assured of love and unquestioned loyalty unless it was justified by specific behavior." Eleanor has filled a subordinate and supportive role her entire life, but Franklin's infidelity marks the beginning of Eleanor's claim to her own life, rendering her more powerful than her own highly visible husband in the view of some people.

It is symbolic that Eleanor frequently visits the cemetery statue because she is subconsciously burying her old life of subservience and feelings of abandonment. Eleanor's resolve will not allow her to submit to suicide, as did the woman whose grave she visits; and, ironically, Eleanor finds strength from the poor woman's tragic life.

It is also ironic that during the time in which Eleanor feels most estranged from Franklin due to his personal infidelity is the time that Eleanor is called upon to wholeheartedly support his political efforts. This period is a testament to the unconditional love and commitment to the greater good, which are Eleanor's core values and beliefs. Eleanor ultimately believes that her husband can effect the appropriate change necessary for the country, and her support of his efforts is both personal and altruistic.

Chapters 12 and 13

Chapters 12 and 13 Summary

For Eleanor, World War I alters life in the United States and renders the social climbing lifestyle of her relatives irrelevant. Eleanor aligns herself with progressive organizations and adopts the position of a social feminist, political activist, and a New Woman dedicated to women's rights and social reform. During Eleanor's tenure as head of the League of Women Voters, she meets other activists such as Elizabeth Read and Esther Lape. Eleanor often stays with the women in their Greenwich Village townhouse immersed in the company of intellectual and independent women.

In spite of her own departure from New York society, Eleanor encourages her daughter, Anna, to engage in the debutante rituals of the wealthy. Eleanor's belief that each of her children should have the opportunity to make his or her own decisions is what rules most of Eleanor's childrearing efforts, although it is a position not always embraced by Sara, who never passes up the opportunity to remind Eleanor of her inadequacies. Anna attends her debutante events, finds that she enjoys them, and rejects the idea of a college education in favor of Sara's position that Anna should find a suitable husband instead. Eleanor convinces Anna to try one year at Cornell University but Anna hates the experience and leaves to get married before the year is over.

Eleanor worries that her political connections and activities may negatively affect Franklin's political career, but her worry is superseded by the purposeful life she is living again after a long time. Eleanor's worries about Franklin extend into his personal life, too, as his loss of the vice presidency leaves a void in his life that he fills once more with alcohol and late parties. Eleanor finds relief during the summer of 1921, during a visit to Campobello with her children and some of her New Woman colleagues.

In August of that year, Franklin joins his family at Campobello, playing the convivial host to the group of guests. Franklin engages his children and the houseguests with fishing expeditions and boat rides in the Bay of Fundy. Although Franklin complains of fatigue, he pushes himself to keep pace with his children and takes a swim in the bay one afternoon after a two-mile run on the beach. Later that afternoon, Franklin complains of aches and chills and foregoes dinner with the rest of the household.

The next day Franklin has a fever and soon pain in his back and legs prevent him from walking. Franklin's condition deteriorates in spite of the attention of medical specialists and, for a while, Franklin is compromised by fever, delirium, eye problems, and paralysis of his hands and arms in addition to his legs. Eleanor never leaves Franklin's side, tending to even his basic life functions while attempting to keep Franklin's mood elevated. A few weeks later, Franklin is officially diagnosed with polio and the scope of the Roosevelts' marriage will change once more.

In conjunction with Louis Howe, Eleanor keeps Franklin's business and political life intact while tending to Franklin's health needs. Eleanor believes that Franklin's physical recovery hinges on his positive outlook so she encourages Franklin to look ahead toward the political life he had planned. Once more, Eleanor finds herself in conflict with Sara who wants Franklin to drop out of politics and save his strength as much as possible. Sara's husband, James, lived as an invalid and Sara is content to assist Franklin in the same manner.

Eleanor manages all the elements of the Roosevelts' life with apparent ease until she breaks down while reading to her boys one afternoon in April of 1922. Eleanor's sobbing, which lasts several hours, alienates her from the rest of the household and she writes in a journal that this is the first and only time in her life that she has displayed such an uncontrollable burst of emotions. This vulnerability opens up Eleanor to her children and she forges a new, strong relationship with Anna where there once was hostility and anger. Eleanor is forced to engage more with her sons since Franklin is unable to play physically with them anymore and Eleanor finds new relationships with all her children during this period.

Beginning in 1923, Franklin spends much of his time in Florida and Warm Springs, Georgia, where the warm waters convince Franklin of the possibility of his walking again one day. Eleanor does not take up residence with Franklin at his southern locations but visits periodically even though she does not care for the scenery or the warm climate. Franklin's new assistant, Missy LeHand, manages Franklin's life in the South and Eleanor is content that Franklin is receiving the necessary care.

The marriage between Eleanor and Franklin becomes more of a partnership after 1923 and the two are rarely together with the exception of family holidays. In spite of their physical separation, Eleanor and Franklin maintain a vigorous correspondence and support each other's political agendas.

Franklin's medical bills and unsound business ventures create a financially volatile situation for the Roosevelts during many of the years in the 1920s. Eleanor supplements her allowance by writing articles for popular women's magazines, an activity which horrifies her mother-in-law but provides Eleanor with a gratifying sense of independence.

During this period, Eleanor establishes friendships with Marion Dickerman and Nancy Cook, important figures in the Democratic Women's League. In conjunction with Marion and Nancy, Eleanor creates the *Women's Democratic News,* a vehicle for promoting women's rights and informing women of the political climate in America.

Eleanor, Marion, and Nancy also pool their resources to build a cottage adjacent to Franklin's Springwood estate where they can host parties, read, and strategize their efforts. The cottage, called Val-Kill because of its location on the Val-Kill stream, is a refuge for Eleanor who can escape family demands and immerse herself in her beloved intellectual pursuits. Franklin wholeheartedly supports Eleanor's Val-Kill cottage while Eleanor supports Franklin's southern retreats shared with Missy LeHand.

In 1926, Eleanor, Marion, and Nancy purchase the Todhunter School in New York City where Eleanor opts to teach for a while. This period is one of self-fulfillment for Eleanor in other areas, too, as she learns to fly an airplane, go mountain climbing, drive a car, swim, and ride horses. Even Sara notices the difference in Eleanor who seems genuinely happy for the first time ever.

Chapters 12 and 13 Analysis

The period beginning in 1920 and extending through the rest of Eleanor's life places her in conflict with her heritage and wealthy lineage and the world of injustices and inequality she fights to remedy. Although it is Eleanor's wealth that allows her to devote her life to social reform, she rejects much of the shallow and superficial ways of the wealthy. Eleanor's hunger for intellectual stimulation is found among the independent women she meets during this time and she is reminded of her days at Allenswood School spent in academic and cultural pursuits.

This period also marks the extension of Eleanor's marriage to Franklin as a respectful partnership as opposed to a passionate marriage. Probably the most important testament to Eleanor's character arises when she cares unrelentingly for the newly paralyzed Franklin. Out of a sense of personal responsibility and of a vision of what Franklin can do for the country politically, Eleanor's noble character allows her to care for the man who has hurt her so profoundly..

Eleanor's character also develops a new independence personally and professionally as she engages with her children in new ways and also forges new methods to generate supplemental income. This is not common for women of the period and Eleanor blazes this trail in conjunction with support efforts of the Women's Movement.

Chapters 14, 15, and 16

Chapters 14, 15, and 16 Summary

Although Eleanor and Franklin both pursue political careers, Eleanor believes that men and women enter the area for different reasons; men pursue politics for career advancement while women choose politics to improve the daily conditions of life. Life for women in politics in the 1920s is not for the faint of heart and Eleanor aligns herself with her trusted women confidantes and intellectual partners who support and promote her objectives.

In spite of her wealth, Eleanor opts to work actively in her social and political organizations, which earns her the respect of those around her. Eleanor is driven by the courage of her convictions to not only speak out about inequities in society but to take action to create necessary change. This personal philosophy extends into Eleanor's lobbying for a reduced workweek of forty-eight hours for women working outside the home, and is the first to call her a "feminist" who fully supports the Equal Rights Amendment. Eleanor's initiatives in the areas of women and children's issues also include the Child Labor Amendment, The Children's Bureau, The Women's Bureau, fundraising for pediatric and maternity clinics, and healthcare programs for women and children.

Eleanor is a major political entity by the time Franklin becomes governor of New York in 1928 and is regarded as one of the highest-ranking Democrats in the United States. Through her affiliations and media connections, Eleanor encourages other women to exercise their political rights by voting and becoming involved as much as possible to better the conditions for women and children.

Eleanor is one of the few of Franklin's advisors who condones his run for the Governor position but she views the job as a method of improving his physical and mental health, counter to some who think Franklin's health will be weakened by the strains of the position. Eleanor also believes that a life in politics is in Franklin's destiny and he cannot allow his physical limitations to restrict his potential and the potential good for those he can serve.

Upon assuming her responsibilities as the First Lady of the State of New York, Eleanor does not alter her prior commitments to the organizations she cherishes. The only rule that Eleanor abides by now is to avoid commitments to groups with definite political overtones that would conflict with Franklin's position as Governor. Eleanor also establishes the Roosevelt household in the Governor's Mansion, reducing some staff and operational expenses, and leaving much of the daily operation to Missy LeHand.

Despite her commitments as New York's first lady, Eleanor's first responsibilities lie in education; primarily, her work at the Todhunter School for Girls in New York City. Eleanor views education as the perfect platform from which to instruct young women not

only about history and current events, but also how they can alter their futures by becoming involved in social and political arenas. For four years, Eleanor maintains a grueling schedule of teaching in New York for three days each week and then returning to Albany for the balance of the week to tend to events at the Governor's Mansion.

Eleanor suffers some personal conflict with her views of expansive and unlimited education while teaching at one of the most exclusive institutions in the country. To Eleanor, education should serve as a time when students are exposed to many differing cultures, views, and lifestyles of a vibrant society, and she supports public education for all children. Eleanor says, "To bring children up with a conception that their own particular lives are typical of the whole world is to bring up extraordinarily narrow people."

Chapters 14, 15, and 16 Analysis

Despite her personal ambitions, Eleanor suffers the conflict typical of self-actualizing women of the 1920s who must apologize for their achievements in order to appear socially acceptable. Eleanor writes to Franklin who has praised her for an accomplishment and says, "You need not be proud of me dear. I'm only being active till you can be again. It isn't such a great desire on my part to serve the world and I'll fall back into habits of sloth quite easily! Hurry up for as you know my ever present sense of the uselessness of all things will overwhelm me sooner or later!" Fortunately, for women now and then, Eleanor does not truly believe this position and projects herself with fervor to further women's rights.

Although a fact and not a crafted literary device, the author writes about a symbolic turning point in Franklin's and Eleanor's life when Franklin, now paralyzed below the waist, pulls himself up to the podium at the Democratic National Convention in 1924, and the gray clouds part to allow a ray of sun to shine directly on Franklin. This moment is the illumination the couple needs to cement their goals for Franklin's political future and the sign that Eleanor needs that her instincts about her husband have been accurate despite the opinions of so many others.

Eleanor's destiny of dedication to public service may be symbolized by her lack of ever having a home of her own as she remarks when moving into the Governor's Mansion, "You know this isn't my home. That isn't my room that I sleep in down there. You know, I've never had a home of my own. First I lived with my relatives . . . Then I lived in a boarding school. Then I came home and still lived in somebody else's house. Then I married Franklin and Franklin's mother took us right in. Nothing could ever be said about it. She went and bought new carpets, rugs and furniture. I've never bought so much as a tea cup for myself. I never had anything." Ironically, Eleanor feels no sense of ownership of a home or furnishings but is a tremendously secure individual who provides immeasurable benefits to those who technically have so very little during hers and Franklin's political lives.

Eleanor's tenure at the Todhunter School mirrors her own education at Allenswood many years ago and Eleanor revels in the company of the young people and the intellectually stimulating environment. Eleanor shares her personal mantra, "Be Somebody. Be Yourself. Be All You Can Be" with her students and encourages their personal and education achievements. Eleanor's belief is that education of young women is the grass roots movement to groom future generations for political service and social reform.

Chapters 17 and 18

Chapters 17 and 18 Summary

During the four years that Franklin is governor of New York, he and Eleanor fully support each other's agendas but also guard their own interests and initiatives. The marriage between Franklin and Eleanor is one of respect but other people and interests consume most of their time and the governor's mansion is a constant site of both casual and formal entertaining. The days of gaiety are brought to a somber close in October of 1929 when the U.S. Stock Market crashes, plunging the United States into the Great Depression.

Instead of reining in her efforts on women's rights and equality issues, Eleanor increases her communications, encouraging women to buy small businesses because of the value of women's management skills that will help bring the country back to prosperity. While Eleanor does not discourage any woman from seeking employment, she does encourage those who are affluent or comfortable financially to stall their entrye into the workforce until after the Depression so that a woman who needs to work to support her family may find necessary employment. Eleanor continues to push for women to join political and reform groups, believing that women have tremendous power to enact grassroots change.

October 1929 also marks Eleanor's forty-fifth birthday, one in which she revels for its liberating aspects of personal growth and satisfaction in a well-raised family. Eleanor believes that her passions will now lie in support of Franklin's political career and her own reform initiatives but this period marks a turning point in Eleanor's personal life and new love interests.

An unlikely relationship arises in 1929 between Eleanor and a former New York state trooper, Earl Miller, when Franklin appoints Earl to work as Eleanor's bodyguard during her years as the First Lady of New York. Although Earl is no intellectual match for Eleanor, the couple embarks on an intimate friendship, allowing Eleanor the sense of fun and physical outings missing from her life in the wake of Franklin's paralysis. Earl teaches Eleanor to dive to perfection, shoot a pistol, ride horses, and play tennis among other sporting activities.

Eleanor seems attracted to the fact that Earl is also an orphan who has been unlucky in love and the two build on that mutual foundation. Eleanor's friends and confidantes do not understand how the First Lady can spend time reading poetry by the fireside and taking weekend excursions with someone so unlike herself, but Eleanor revels in Earl's physicality and utter devotion to her. Earl's almost chivalric respect and protection of Eleanor appeals to the young girl inside her whose sense of abandonment has never disappeared.

Earl also assumes the responsibility of monitoring the purchasing activities at the governor's mansion, uncovers gross abuses and overcharges, acts that appeal to Eleanor's frugality. Eleanor and Earl also create and perform in self-directed home movies and the two delight in entertaining others with impromptu minstrel shows.

Earl's role in the governor's mansion extends to public relations for Franklin's political campaign for the presidency when Earl orchestrates a successful photo session with an Atlanta newspaper in which Franklin is shown riding horses at Warm Springs, Georgia. Earl's idea that Franklin needs to be perceived as healthy and uncompromised by his paralysis is hugely successful and plays an integral part in Franklin's ultimate win in 1932.

At the height of her relationship with Earl, Eleanor writes an article entitled "Ten Rules for Success in Marriage" in which she counsels women to strive for stable marriages but not to rule out divorce if the relationship becomes and stays toxic for either party. Eleanor's friends are reminded of her offer of divorce to Franklin in 1918 and are further surprised when the topic resurfaces in 1932 as Eleanor faces with dread the life as the First Lady of the United States. Many of Eleanor's confidantes suggest that Eleanor will run away with Earl in order to avoid a life in the White House but Eleanor accepts her fate, ends the relationship with Earl, and steps into the history books in 1932 with Franklin's presidential win.

Chapters 17 and 18 Analysis

Eleanor remains steadfast in her support and encouragement of women during the Great Depression and urges them to "face the fact that we may have to have great changes . . . new solutions. So we must be prepared to meet things with open minds and go to the roots of questions as they come up. We can't go on drifting." The theme of Eleanor's life in promoting women's rights and acceptance of full, self-actualizing lives continues even in times of immense struggle for the country. Eleanor is, and always has been, convinced of the power that women hold to effect change and considers women one of the most important resources during this national crisis.

Eleanor's relationship with Earl Miller is a great irony on many levels. Eleanor is several years older than Earl and their backgrounds are worlds apart. Eleanor comes from a wealthy, established family while Earl is an orphan who has held many temporary jobs, even one as a gymnast in a circus performance. Earl is not an educated man, which is in stark contrast to Eleanor's extensive intellectual pursuits. Probably the most glaring contrast is in their physical incompatibility as Eleanor at this time in her life is considered a frumpy, unattractive matron while Earl is a robust, physically active outdoorsman. Perhaps it is the contrasts that bring the unlikely pair together; but, whatever the reason, it is clear that Eleanor does not deem Earl's attentions inappropriate, as do her friends, and actually encourages the relationship.

There is also irony in the appearance of Eleanor's article on "Ten Rules for Success in Marriage" at the same time that she is involved in a relationship with Earl. This is just

one more avenue in which Eleanor finds herself in conflict with her personal and public lives both of which, unfortunately, are held up to public scrutiny.

Chapters 19 and 20

Chapters 19 and 20 Summary

Eleanor's resistance to becoming the wife of the President of the United States is complicated by her major irritation of press coverage and the presses unrelenting interest in her personal life. Although she is always cordial and professional, Eleanor resents the intrusion into her life and evades the media at all times, gladly relinquishing the spotlight to Franklin.

Franklin's presidential campaign in 1932 immerses Eleanor in the publicity she abhors and she is not at all pleased to learn that the Associated Press has assigned a reporter named Lorena Hickok to dedicated coverage of her activities. Ironically, it is Eleanor's public persona related to women's rights and social reform that earns her the dubious distinction of being the first candidate's wife to merit press coverage.

Eventually, Eleanor warms to Lorena during time spent together on the campaign trail, and soon Eleanor begins to reveal information about her life, as she feels secure in Lorena's professionalism and discretion. As Lorena learns more about Eleanor, she is both impressed and amused by Eleanor's interests. Eleanor's utter devotion and calm demeanor for Franklin's benefit provides Lorena with a newfound respect for Eleanor whose personal characteristics have been overshadowed for so long by Franklin's very public persona. Lorena is amused to find that Eleanor frequents drugstore counters for lunch, uses public transportation, and has no interests in common activities such as major league baseball games, activities that are of great interest to Lorena.

By the end of Franklin's campaign in 1932, Eleanor and Lorena have become great friends and Lorena fully understands Eleanor's reluctance to live life in the fish bowl of the White House. When Franklin wins the presidential race, it is with mixed feelings that Lorena accepts the job of reporting on Eleanor's White House activities.

Lorena's brusque manner and masculine physical characteristics are assets to her profession in a male-dominated industry, but set her up for ridicule among Eleanor's friends who dub Lorena "one of the boys." Lorena enjoys the camaraderie of her male colleagues and feels perfectly at ease with her persona and reputation. As one of the original "feminists," Lorena appeals to Eleanor's appreciation for women actively involved in professional pursuits.

Before long, the attraction between Eleanor and Lorena bridges from professional to personal and the pair begins an intimate romantic relationship which will last thirty years, ending only with Eleanor's death in 1962. During the course of the relationship, the couple exchanges love letters reflecting the state of their personal feelings. On the evening of Franklin's presidential inauguration, Eleanor writes to Lorena, "Hick my dearest - I cannot go to bed tonight without a word to you. I felt a little as though a part

of me was leaving tonight. You have grown so much a part of my life that it is empty without you, even though I'm busy every minute."

A few weeks later Eleanor writes to Lorena, "Hick darling, All day I've thought of you and another birthday and I *will* be with you and yet tonite you sounded so far away and formal. Oh! I want to put my arms around you. I ache to hold you close. Your ring is a great comfort. I look at it and think she does love me, or I wouldn't be wearing it."

Eleanor revels in the relationship with Lorena who challenges her intellectually and provides an intense infatuation long missing in Eleanor's life. Unfortunately, for both women, the relationship must be kept in secret and Eleanor is denied once again the full realization of authentic happiness while she steps up to her responsibilities as one of the most famous women in the world.

Chapters 19 and 20 Analysis

The author ends the book emphasizing the theme of self-knowledge, prevalent throughout Eleanor's life. Eleanor's search for her true identity begins in a troubled childhood, continues through a passionless marriage, and peaks during her intellectual pursuits, and relationships with colleagues, and intimate companions. At this mid point in Eleanor's life, she has lived many roles personally and professionally and is comfortable to engage in the relationship with Lorena for the personal gratification it brings. Eleanor no longer sees herself only as a wife and mother, but rather, as an individual capable of effecting social reform and one who can comfortably meet another in an honest, mutually gratifying relationship.

The author begins the book noting Eleanor's declaration of love and awe for her mother whose dissatisfaction with Eleanor pervades Eleanor's life. Perhaps Eleanor's lifelong professional and personal affinity for strong women is an attempt to capture the approval of important women to make up for the love she never fully received from the most important woman in her life, her own mother.

Characters

Marion Sturgis Hooper "Clover" Adams

Clover Adams was an educated and accomplished woman who was also known as the most brilliant hostess in Washington, D.C. She committed suicide in 1885, at the age of forty-two, after discovering that her husband, Henry Adams, was having an affair with another woman. The statue that her husband had erected in her memory, known as Grief, was an inspiration to Eleanor Roosevelt.

Jane Addams

Jane Addams was a social feminist who championed many of the causes that Eleanor believed in.

Corrine Robinson Alsop

Corrine Robinson Alsop was a cousin of Eleanor Roosevelt and like Eleanor Roosevelt attended Allenswood School in England.

Annie

See Anna Bulloch Gracie

Bamie

See Anna Roosevelt Cowles

Anna Eleanor Roosevelt Hall Boettiger

Anna Eleanor Roosevelt Hall Boettiger was Eleanor Roosevelt's daughter. Their relationship was often a difficult one. Anna felt misunderstood at home and wanted more say in decisions that affected her life. Eleanor Roosevelt could be cold and distant toward her daughter, but later their relationship began to heal. Anna attended Cornell School of Agriculture and married the financier Curtis Hall in 1926. In 1932, she divorced her husband and married John R. Boettiger, a journalist.

Brother

See Franklin Delano Roosevelt Jr. (II)

Dorothy Strachey Bussy

Dorothy Strachey Bussy was a classmate of Eleanor Roosevelt's at Allenswood School. She wrote a novel, *Olivia* (1948), based on her time at Allenswood. She married Simon Bussy, a French painter.

Bye

See Anna Roosevelt Cowles

Carrie Chapman Catt

Carrie Chapman Catt was a pioneering feminist and a leader of the women's suffrage movement. Catt inspired Eleanor Roosevelt, and they became colleagues in organizations such as the League of Women Voters and the national Conference on the Cause and Cure of War.

Katharine Delano Robbins Price Collier

Aunt Kassie was the aunt of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the sister of Sara Delano Roosevelt.

Nancy Cook

Nancy Cook was a feminist and close friend of Eleanor Roosevelt. They first met in 1922. Cook was a capable administrator and political organizer and worked with Eleanor Roosevelt on many projects, including the founding of the Todhunter School and the *Women's Democratic News*. Cook was active in the Women's Division of the New York State Democratic Committee.

Calvin Coolidge

Calvin Coolidge was a Republican Massachusetts governor who became vice president of the United States in 1921 and president in 1923. Eleanor Roosevelt opposed his policies in many areas.

Anna Roosevelt Cowles

Bamie was Eleanor Roosevelt's aunt, and the sister of Theodore Roosevelt Jr. Although she held no political position of her own, she was influential behind the scenes during her brother's presidency. Eleanor Roosevelt was inspired by her example.

Josephus Daniels

Josephus Daniels was Secretary of the Navy during the administration of President Woodrow Wilson and boss of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. He was known as a stern moralist.

Marion Dickerman

Marion Dickerman was a feminist and intimate friend of Nancy Cook and Eleanor Roosevelt. One of the first women ever to run for office, she was a candidate for the New York State Assembly in 1919. Later she became dean at the New Jersey State College in Trenton. During the 1920s, with Eleanor Roosevelt and Cook, she was a dominant influence in the Women's Division of the New York State Democratic Committee.

Anna Bulloch Gracie

Anna Bulloch Gracie, "Annie," was Eleanor Roosevelt's great aunt. Eleanor Roosevelt was fond of her and described her as gentle and patient. She married New York banker James King Gracie.

Maude Hall Waterbury Gray

Maude Hall Waterbury Gray was Eleanor Roosevelt' s aunt. Eleanor Roosevelt lived with her (as well as Maude's sister and mother) for six years after her parents died. Eleanor Roosevelt adored Maude and regarded her as very unselfish, with a gift for appreciating the abilities of others. She married polo player Larry Waterbury. After they were divorced, she married writer David Gray.

Mary Livingston Ludlow Hall

Mary Livingston Ludlow Hall was Eleanor Roosevelt's grandmother. Eleanor Roosevelt lived with her for six years after the death of her parents. Hall was strict, but Eleanor felt warmly toward her. She died in 1919, at the age of seventy-six.

Valentine Hall

Valentine Hall, "Vallie," was Eleanor Roosevelt's uncle on her father's side. He was an alcoholic and his behavior was often unpredictable. He was irresponsible with money and often squandered what money he had.

Warren G. Harding

Warren G. Harding, a Republican, was president of the United States from 1921 until his death in 1923.

Hick

See Lorena Hickok

Lorena Hickok

Lorena Hickok was one of the foremost reporters of her day and from 1932 on was a close friend of Eleanor Roosevelt. Hickok's mother died when she was young, and her father was abusive. Her first job in journalism was on the *Battle Creek Journal,* after which she became society editor for the *Milwaukee Sentinel*. In 1917, Hickok joined the *Minneapolis Tribune,* where she worked until 1926. In 1928, she became a reporter for the Associated Press (AP) and covered New York state politics. She first met Eleanor Roosevelt in 1928. Their friendship blossomed in 1932 when Hickok was assigned by the AP to cover her during the presidential campaign. It was an intense relationship. Hickok could be willful, difficult, and emotional, but she was also loyal and generous in her love for Eleanor Roosevelt.

Herbert Hoover

Herbert Hoover, a Republican, was president of the United States from 1929 to 1933. Eleanor Roosevelt campaigned against him, on behalf of the Democratic candidate, Al Smith, in 1928.

Louis McHenry Howe

Louis McHenry Howe was a close friend and political adviser to FDR, and he also became a close friend of Eleanor Roosevelt. Howe served as FDR's chief assistant when FDR was Assistant Secretary of the Navy. He exercised great influence over his boss, and continued to do so up until FDR's election as president. Eleanor Roosevelt at first resented Howe, but in the presidential campaign of 1920 they became close friends. Eleanor Roosevelt placed great trust in Howe, and he did not let her down.

Aunt Kassie

See Katharine Delano Robbins Price Collier

Esther Everett Lape

Esther Everett Lape was a journalist, researcher, teacher and publicist, companion of Elizabeth Read, and friend of Eleanor Roosevelt. She was also a feminist and was influential in the League of Women Voters.

Marguerite LeHand

Marguerite LeHand was FDR's secretary from 1920 on. She and FDR became close, and she was his main companion after he became governor of New York in 1928. Eleanor Roosevelt always treated Missie graciously and showed no jealousy.

Alice Roosevelt Longworth

Alice Roosevelt Longworth was Eleanor Roosevelt's cousin. She and Eleanor did not get along, and Alice often spread malicious gossip about her. Alice married Nicholas Longworth, who was Speaker of the House, but the marriage was a failure. Each came to hate the other.

Lucy Mercer

See Lucy Page Mercer Rutherford

Earl Miller

Earl Miller was a state trooper, who was assigned as Eleanor Roosevelt's bodyguard in 1929. He was athletic and had been a middleweight boxing champion in the Navy. He and Eleanor Roosevelt became constant companions; he enjoyed protecting and defending her, and she was charmed by his attentiveness. He coached her at tennis and taught her to shoot a pistol. There was gossip about their relationship. Miller married in 1932, and again, following a divorce, in 1941, to quiet the rumors that he and Eleanor Roosevelt were having an affair.

Missie

See Marguerite LeHand

Mittie

See Martha Bulloch Roosevelt

Edith Livingston Ludlow Hall Morgan

Edith Livingston Ludlow Hall Morgan was Eleanor Roosevelt's aunt, whom Eleanor Roosevelt held in high esteem. It was Aunt Pussie who gave her an appreciation of music, theater and poetry. Pussie married Forbes Morgan; the marriage ended in divorce. In 1920, Pussie died with her two daughters in a house fire.

Elizabeth Hall Mortimer

Elizabeth Hall Mortimer was Eleanor Roosevelt's Aunt Tissie. She helped to introduce Eleanor Roosevelt to the arts. She married Stanley Mortimer and lived most of the time in England.

Caroline Love Goodwin O'Day

Caroline Love Goodwin O'Day was a wealthy suffragist and pacifist and a friend of Eleanor Roosevelt. She was a contributor to the Val-Kill partnership, which produced the Democratic Women's News, and the Todhunter School. She married Daniel O'Day and after his death devoted herself to social reform.

Pussie (I)

See Edith Livingston Ludlow Hall Morgan.

Pussie (II)

See Corinne Roosevelt Robinson

Elizabeth Fisher Read

Elizabeth Fisher Read was a scholar and attorney who became one of Eleanor Roosevelt's closest friends and her financial adviser. Read was an influential figure in the League of Women Voters in the 1920s.

Corinne Roosevelt Robinson

Corinne Roosevelt Robinson was Eleanor Roosevelt's aunt on her father's side. She worked behind the scenes to advance the career of her brother, Theodore Roosevelt Jr.

Anna Eleanor Roosevelt Roosevelt

Anna Eleanor Roosevelt Roosevelt was born into an aristocratic family in 1884. Her parents, Elliott Roosevelt and Anna Rebecca Livingston Ludlow Hall Roosevelt, both died when Eleanor was a child. During Eleanor's adolescence, she lived with her aunts and her grandmother and went to Allenswood School in England. At the age of twenty she married her distant cousin, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. They had five sons, one of whom died in infancy, and one daughter. Eleanor supported her husband's political career, but she also asserted her own independence, developing interests and friendships of her own.

Working within the Democratic party, she eventually became a powerful political figure in her own right. She spoke out on many issues of social reform, particularly those involving the welfare of women and children. She was also an outspoken campaigner for women's political rights and during the 1920s was an influential figure in the League of Women Voters. She also campaigned for the cause of world peace. As one of the "New Women" of the 1920s, she was a feminist who believed that women should not be limited in what they were able to achieve merely because of their gender. Eleanor was a dynamic organizer who gave herself passionately to the causes in which she believed. Her tireless energy became legendary□in addition to her political work she was also a writer and teacher□ and by the time FDR was inaugurated as president in 1933, Eleanor was known nationally as a woman of vision and achievement. As a pioneer, she also attracted controversy and opposition.

Anna Rebecca Livingston Ludlow Hall Roosevelt

Anna Rebecca Livingston Ludlow Hall Roosevelt was Eleanor Roosevelt's mother. Her father, Valentine Hall, died when she was seventeen. Anna received little education. She was beautiful and loved a life of gaiety and pleasure, valuing social success above everything. She married Elliott Roosevelt when she was nineteen years old. The marriage was a troubled one, due to Elliott's drinking, and Anna learned to keep her emotions under control. She often treated Eleanor in a cold and aloof manner, and Eleanor was unable to really please her. Anna died of diphtheria when she was twenty-nine.

Edith Carow Roosevelt

Edith Carow Roosevelt was Eleanor Roosevelt's aunt, the wife of Theodore Roosevelt Jr. Edith's relations with Eleanor Roosevelt were not especially warm.

Elliott Roosevelt (I)

Elliott Roosevelt was Eleanor Roosevelt's father. He married Anna Rebecca Hall in 1883, at the age of twenty-three. Elliott was charming and attractive, but he drank to

excess and became an alcoholic. Although he doted on his daughter Eleanor, who idolized him, his relationship with his wife deteriorated. He became abusive and suffered from mood swings. In 1891, he was admitted to an asylum near Paris, and his brother Theodore wanted to have him declared incompetent and insane. Elliott recovered his health but was unable to repair his marriage. Then when his wife died, he started drinking heavily again. He died in 1894.

Elliott Roosevelt (II)

Elliott Roosevelt was Eleanor Roosevelt's son, born in 1910.

Elliott Roosevelt Jr.

Elliott Roosevelt Jr. was Eleanor Roosevelt's brother. He was born in 1889 and died in 1893 of scarlet fever and diphtheria.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Franklin Delano Roosevelt was Eleanor Roosevelt's husband. He was educated at Harvard and Columbia Law School, and he married Eleanor in 1905. FDR began his political career in the New York Senate in 1910 and became Assistant Secretary of the Navy in 1913. In 1920, he ran as the vice presidential candidate on the Democratic ticket and was defeated. In 1921, he contracted polio, which paralyzed his legs. He became governor of New York in 1928 and was reelected in 1930. In 1933, he became president of the United States. Eleanor supported her husband's career, but his affair with his secretary Lucy Mercer in the late 1920s strained their relationship. However, they came to an understanding, and warm feelings were restored. Eleanor Roosevelt remained a political asset to FDR, even though, in many respects, they went their separate ways.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt Jr. (I)

Franklin Delano Roosevelt Jr. was Eleanor Roosevelt's son. He died of influenza in 1909 at the age of seven and a half months.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt Jr. (II)

Franklin Delano Roosevelt Jr. "Brother," was Eleanor Roosevelt's son, born in 1914.

Gracie Hall Roosevelt

Gracie Hall Roosevelt was Eleanor Roosevelt's younger brother, born in 1891. Popular and charming, he was successful at Harvard and earned an advanced engineering degree there. He married Margaret Richardson and served as an aviator in World War I.

James Roosevelt

James Roosevelt was the father of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. A wealthy widower, he married Sara Delano Roosevelt at the age of fifty-two. Although in some ways a snob, he also possessed a social conscience, and he urged the wealthy to work for the good of humanity.

John Aspinwall Roosevelt

John Aspinwall Roosevelt was Eleanor Roosevelt's youngest son, born in 1916.

Martha Bulloch Roosevelt

Martha Bulloch Roosevelt was Eleanor Roosevelt' s grandmother and mother of Elliott Roosevelt and Theodore Roosevelt Jr. She died of typhoid fever in 1884, eight months before Eleanor was born.

Sara Delano Roosevelt

Sara Delano Roosevelt was the mother of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Often rigid and opinionated in her views, she was a strong-minded woman who liked to keep control over her son's affairs. In the early years of Eleanor Roosevelt's marriage to FDR, Sara dominated Eleanor and ruled the household without consulting her. Eleanor tried hard to win her mother-in-law's approval. Eventually, Sara came to respect Eleanor Roosevelt's political activities.

Theodore Roosevelt Jr.

Theodore Roosevelt Jr. was Eleanor Roosevelt's uncle. He was president of the United States from 1901 to 1909. He and Eleanor Roosevelt felt warmly towards each other, although Eleanor had little interest in politics during the time of his presidency. He died in 1919.

Lucy Page Mercer Rutherford

Lucy Page Mercer Rutherford became Franklin Delano Roosevelt's secretary in 1914. She was young, attractive, and efficient, and she and FDR had an affair. When Eleanor Roosevelt discovered this in 1919, it strained their marriage.

Rose Schneiderman

A Russian immigrant, Rose Schneiderman was one of the leaders of the Women's Trade Union League and a friend of Eleanor Roosevelt.

Alfred E. Smith

Alfred E. Smith was governor of New York and the Democratic nominee for president in 1928, when he lost to Herbert Hoover. Believing that Smith was committed to social reform, Eleanor Roosevelt was one of Smith's biggest supporters and worked hard on his campaigns.

Marie Souvestre

Marie Souvestre was the founder of the Allenswood School in England and Eleanor Roosevelt's teacher. A Frenchwoman, Souvestre was a strong-willed, independent feminist thinker and a demanding teacher who encouraged her students to think for themselves and challenge accepted beliefs. Eleanor Roosevelt became her favorite student.

Squire James

See James Roosevelt

Tissie

See Elizabeth Hall Mortimer

Vallie

See Valentine Hall

Narcissa Cox Vanderlip

Narcissa Cox Vanderlip was a wealthy friend of Eleanor Roosevelt. A Republican, she was committed to feminism and progressive politics, and she was chair of the New York State League of Women Voters.

Woodrow Wilson

A former president of Princeton University, Wilson became president of the United States in 1913 and was supported by FDR. Wilson took the United States into World War I in 1917. Wilson distrusted FDR and Eleanor Roosevelt, and after the war he thought the Roosevelts were allied with his opponents.

Themes

Self-Discovery

The central theme of the biography is Roosevelt's process of self-discovery, or self-realization. As she matured, she grew to understand the value of her unique talents and created a life for herself that not only offered her personal fulfillment but also helped to improve the lives of others. In this process, she discovered that she need not be bound by the old traditions that restricted women's roles in society. With determination, she could forge an independent path, focusing not only on her family but also on larger issues that mattered to her, such as social reform and the emancipation of women.

For Roosevelt, this was a long journey because she had a lot to overcome. In the upper-class society in which she grew up, a woman's duties were to supervise the household and support her husband in his career. Ambition was frowned upon since it was believed that God had ordained that a woman's place was in the home. A woman was expected to find complete fulfillment in the life that was prescribed for her.

From the time of her marriage until 1919, Roosevelt imagined that this traditional framework might satisfy her. In her early years as a wealthy society matron, she had few responsibilities other than raising the children, putting on lavish parties, and arranging seasonal travel. Later, she found pleasure in performing the duties of a political wife, helping to advance FDR's career. She did not envision a separate role for herself, but Roosevelt eventually grew to resent having such limited horizons imposed upon her. She had the courage to recognize her dissatisfaction and do something about it. The shock she suffered when she discovered that her husband was having an affair proved the stimulus for her to reexamine her life. During the 1920s, as she developed her own circle of friends and her own political activities, she began to live more independently. She was aware that she was pursuing a life purpose that she had freely chosen. This new life was one that satisfied the demands of her own nature rather than that of an inherited tradition which no longer spoke to her needs and desires or those of many other women.

Self-Worth

Linked to the theme of self-discovery is the theme of self-worth. At a very early age, Eleanor was made to feel that she was unworthy of love. Her mother did not extend to her the same affection she gave to Eleanor's brothers. Anna even mocked the seriousness of her two-year-old daughter, calling her "Granny" and assuming that she would be a social failure. Eleanor admitted in her memoirs that she was a "shy and solemn child." This attitude of rejection on the part of her mother had a devastating effect on young Eleanor. It was compounded when her mother died when Eleanor was only eight. Eleanor felt abandoned, and she may even have believed that it was her fault that her mother had died.

These early circumstances had far-reaching consequences. As Cook states, "Her mother's disapproval dominated Eleanor's childhood, and permanently affected her self-image. With her mother's death, she became an outsider, always expecting betrayal and abandonment."

Throughout her life Eleanor made heroic efforts to overcome this early trauma and to prove herself worthy of love. Later events provided similar challenges to her sense of self-worth. She fought an uphill battle to win the approval of her mother-in-law and then was faced with abandonment issues once again when her husband had an affair with Lucy Mercer. This was so traumatic that for a while Eleanor suffered from anorexia. But always Eleanor sought new ways of finding fulfillment and demon strating her worth. The empathy she showed for downtrodden individuals and groups may well have sprung from her personal struggles.

The main theme of Eleanor's public activity was the goal of equal opportunity for women, combined with other social reforms that would create a more fair and just society. Once her public life gathered strength, in the 1920s, she was a tireless advocate of the rights of women and children, and she fought for a prominent role for women within the Democratic party. By 1928, as director of the Bureau of Women's Activities of the Democratic National Committee, she was one of the highest-ranking Democrats in the nation, although many barriers were still being placed in the way of women who wanted to achieve political power.

Eleanor also took every available opportunity to broaden understanding of women's capabilities and demolish old stereotypes. When she gave the keynote address to the eighth annual Exposition of Women's Arts and Industries, for example, she attacked a remark by Henry Ford that women were too "imprecise" for industrial work and should remain in the home. Eleanor dismissed this as, in Cook's words, "narrow-minded, old-fashioned silliness."

Style

Symbolism

In telling Eleanor's story, Cook follows the chronological order of events, but like a good novelist she also turns one incident into a central motif of the biography, carrying both structural and symbolic significance.

In 1919, when suffering from the shock of her husband's infidelity, Eleanor made numerous visits to Rock Creek Cemetery, outside the center of Washington, D.C. There she would contemplate in solitude the statue of Marion Hooper Adams (known as Clover). Clover was a woman who in 1885 committed suicide when she learned that her husband, Henry Adams, was having an affair with another woman. Adams commissioned the statue in his wife's memory. The statue had no name to identify it but was often known simply as Grief.

Eleanor felt a kinship with Clover. Both women were betrayed by men; both sought to expand the roles that women could play in life. Clover was a highly educated woman who as researcher and translator contributed to her husband's work as a historian, and who also attained distinction as a photographer.

Cook paints a picture of Eleanor sitting in quietness, drawing sustenance from the statue: "ER found comfort in that sheltered green holly grove, with its curved stone benches facing a hooded, robed figure of timeless beauty and endurance."

The incident is presented as a pivotal moment, the turning point in Eleanor's life. Structurally, the incident is placed at the center of the book and acts as the fulcrum of the narrative. The calm stillness of the statue becomes a symbol of strength; it is the springboard for Eleanor's own years of transformation.

There is an implied contrast too. Clover was a woman who was defeated by the weight of life. Eleanor, at this fork in her own road, chooses another path. One woman was beaten down by her circumstances; the other makes a conscious choice to rise above them.

Foreshadowing

Cook uses another literary device, foreshadowing, to prepare the reader for her conclusions about the nature of some of Eleanor's friendships in mid-life. (Foreshadowing is a device used to create expectation or to set up an explanation of later developments.)

Cook devotes several pages in her chapter on Eleanor's schooling in England to a novel published in 1948 entitled *Olivia*. The novel was written by Dorothy Strachey Bussy, who was a student at Allenswood at the same time as Eleanor. The novel is relevant

because in *Olivia* there is a character named Laura who is based on Eleanor. But Cook goes on to provide details about the theme of the novel. It is about romantic passion between women; it is a "lesbian romance" (although the romance does not involve the character based on Eleanor). Since one theme of the biography is that of friendships, in some cases passionate ones, between women, Cook takes pains to point out that Eleanor, in spite of the denials of other biographers, fully understood the meaning of *Olivia*.

By dwelling (at what might otherwise seem unnecessary length) on *Olivia*, Cook manages to prepare the reader not only for the lesbian couples encountered later in the biography□friends of Eleanor such as Nancy Cook and Marion Dickerman□ but for the author's controversial interpretation of Eleanor's relationship with Lorena Hickok.

Historical Context

Feminism

Cook began her research for *Eleanor Roosevelt* in the early 1980s. By that time, the modern women's movement was entering its third decade. It had begun in the early 1960s, with the publication of Betty Friedan's best-selling book, The *Feminine Mystique* in 1963, and gathered strength from the formation of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966. One of the goals of NOW was to end sex discrimination. The time was right since a 1964 report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) documented pervasive discrimination against women. (The original chair of the PCSW, which was set up in 1961, was Eleanor Roosevelt.) Even though Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 banned sex discrimination there was still much work to be done in that area.

During the 1970s, NOW began to pursue a more radical agenda, advocating not only equal pay, equal rights, abortion rights, and child care but also lesbian and gay rights. It also made passage of the Equal Rights Amendment a priority. Membership of NOW soared to 210,000 in 1982, but the failure of the ERA to win ratification by the states in that year was a setback to the feminist movement as a whole.

However, throughout the 1980s, women made gains in political representation. Although the number of women holding national office increased only slowly, at state level the number of female legislators tripled between 1973 and 1987. Similar progress was made in education and the professions. In the late 1980s, 25 percent of all new graduates of law, medical, and business schools were women, compared to only 5 percent twenty years earlier.

Nevertheless, during this time, there was also a countermovement in American culture. The conservative administrations of President Ronald Reagan and George Bush (1981-1992), were not supportive of feminist causes such as abortion rights or gay rights.

The conflict between conservative and feminist attitudes to the role of women was thrown into sharp relief in the presidential campaign of 1992. Marilyn Quayle, wife of Vice President Dan Quayle, made a point of emphasizing that she had stayed at home and raised their children rather than pursue an independent career of her own. She expected her position to win support from conservative voters. And Democrat Hillary Rodham Clinton, wife of then-candidate Bill Clinton, found herself in hot water with some voters for saying that she had preferred to pursue her own career rather than stay at home "baking cookies."

When her book was published in 1992, Cook was surprised at how much animosity and antifemi-nist sentiment it stirred up. "I had hate calls on every single radio talk show I did," she said in an interview with *The Progressive*.

Feminist Biography

The burgeoning feminist movement resulted in an increase in the study of women's lives. During the 1970s and 1980s, universities developed women's studies programs, which trained a generation of feminist scholars who have since reexamined the lives of many women, both past and present. The advent of a new kind of biography of women, according to feminist scholar Carolyn G. Heilbrun, came in 1970, with the publication of *Zelda,* by Nancy Milford, about the wife of F. Scott Fitzgerald. Up to that point, it had not been permissible, according to Heilbrun, in either biography or autobiography, for women to acknowledge "unfeminine" emotions such as anger. Nor had it been acceptable to admit that a woman may, like a man, have a desire for power and control over her life and that she may not define her life in the way that the male-dominated culture has always sought to define her role as a woman.

Since 1970, hundreds of biographies of women have been written that have sought to bring out the different and varied ways in which notable women have lived and sought fulfillment. Cook pays tribute to this work of the 1970s and 1980s, noting that it helped to make her own work possible. Like other feminist biographers, she examines how the private life of her subject connects to her public one. Cook sought to penetrate beyond the sanitized versions of Roosevelt's life, which emphasized her devotion to duty and service to her husband and family, and to emphasize her passionate quest for new experiences. As such, Cook's book is a major contribution to the genre of feminist biography.

Critical Overview

Eleanor Roosevelt was an immediate commercial success. The book was on the *New York Times* bestseller list for about three months and sold about 100,000 copies. It also won the Los Angeles Times Book Award.

While the book-buying public was enthusiastic, the response of critics and scholars was decidedly mixed. Cook's conclusions about Eleanor Roosevelt's private life proved controversial. Not only was the Roosevelt family angered, conservative critics also were aghast at Cook's argument that Roosevelt probably had an affair with her bodyguard, Earl Miller, and with her friend, the reporter Lorena Hickok. In a mocking article in National Review, Florence King made fun of many of Cook's premises, as in the following passage:

Lesbianism is often on the author's mind and she goes out of her way to find it, even hinting that Elliott Roosevelt's sister□ER's Aunt Corinne□had some sort of passionate interlude with her brother's mistress, to whom she wrote overheated poems that Eleanor Roosevelt kept and cherished. This is supposed to prove how worldly Eleanor Roosevelt was on the subject, but in case we still don't get it, we are told that Eleanor Roosevelt was the model for a character in *Olivia,* a lesbian schoolgirl novel by her old classmate, Dorothy Strachey.

Geoffrey C. Ward, himself a biographer of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, weighed in with a long review in the *New York Review of Books,* in which he refuted both of Cook's controversial claims about Eleanor Roosevelt's alleged affairs. Ward argued that most scholars who have examined the evidence did not agree with Cook's conclusions, that Cook offered no new evidence to support her claims, and where existing evidence contradicted them, Cook simply left it out. Ward pointed out that Miller himself denied any affair, and the passionate exchange of letters between Eleanor Roosevelt and Hickok did not prove anything, since Roosevelt wrote in a similar vein to many of her friends. Although Ward had some praise for the other aspects of Cook's work, he also accused her of presenting many of the men in the book unjustifiably as cads, while almost all the women seemed "uniformly worthy."

David M. Kennedy in the *New York Times* was less willing to reject the controversial aspects of Cook's arguments, and he offered praise for the book as a whole. He wrote:

Ms. Cook scrupulously notes the gaps in the evidence, and alerts the reader to the inferential leaps she makes from the documented record.... The author makes her case responsibly and cogently, and she tells her story with verve and charm.

In general, Cook's exposition of the public aspects of Roosevelt's life won high praise. According to Joyce Antler in *The Nation,* "In Cook's splendid biography, Roosevelt emerges as a bold and innovative feminist politician who was convinced that women's public activities would determine America's political future." Merle Rubin, in the *Christian Science Monitor,* applauded Cook's "timely and interesting account" of the split in the

early feminist movement between those who supported the equal rights amendment and those, including Eleanor, "who feared such an amendment might undo the legislation that they were urging to protect women and children from exploitation in the workplace."

One dissenting note in this area was sounded by Christine Stansell in *New Republic,* who argued that Cook's Eleanor Roosevelt seemed a little too good to be true, and that Cook sometimes drew grand conclusions based on scanty evidence: "Cook sees positions as courageous and radical chiefly because Eleanor Roosevelt espoused them." Stansell sees little merit in Cook's argument that in the Red Scare of 1919 to 1920, Eleanor voiced principled opposition to the repression of radicals. According to Stansell, Cook relies

on assertions about Eleanor Roosevelt's state of mind extrapolated from the scantiest of evidence and one resolution she introduced at the League of Women Voters' convention in 1921 to condemn Calvin Coo-lidge's polemic against women's colleges as hotbeds of Bolshevism. On this frail bark Cook floats a typically booming assessment of Roosevelt's political virtue: 'She rarely hesitated when a cause was just and compelling.'

Scholarly disagreements of this kind notwithstanding, Eleanor Roosevelt, together with volumes two and three of this multi-volume biography, is likely to prove an influential book for many years to come.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3
- Critical Essay #4

Critical Essay #1

Aubrey holds a Ph.D. in English. In this essay, he considers Cook's book in terms of some of the principles of feminist biography.

In her seminal work, *Writing a Woman's Life* (1988), feminist scholar Carolyn G. Heilbrun points out that it was not until recently that women found the means to write truthfully about their own lives. Up until about 1970, it was difficult even for women of achievement to break out of the passive mold□that centuries of cultural conditioning had imposed upon them□and take credit for their accomplishments. Following the conclusions of another scholar, Patricia Spacks, Heilbrun notes that when women such as Emmeline Pankhurst, Golda Meir, and Eleanor Roosevelt, all of whom made substantial contributions to history, wrote their autobiographies, they, in Spack's words, "fail directly to emphasize their *own* importance.... These women accept full blame for any failures in their lives, but shrink from claiming that they either sought the responsibilities they ultimately bore or were in any way ambitious."

This reticence on the part of women to break with traditional expectations of a woman's role plays a large part in the story of Roosevelt. Cook notes in particular that in her autobiography Roosevelt passes over much of her inner life in silence. She says nothing of her relationship with her husband or her friends, nor does she mention any political ambitions that she may have had for herself. Cook writes, "ER never missed an opportunity to discount her influence, to minimize her power, and to discredit her work." This does not mean that Roosevelt deliberately falsified her account of her life, but simply that inherited and internalized cultural expectations conditioned her to undervalue her achievements and, as Cook puts it, "never [to write] the truth about her heart." There were simply no precedents, no alternative exemplars, for Roosevelt to record her life in anything other than the traditional way for a woman. Even though she had the courage to shape her life in terms of what Heilbrun calls a "quest plot," which was normally the prerogative of men, she was unable to capture that reality in her autobiographical writing.

Furthermore, Roosevelt's biographers have been only too willing to continue the one-sided picture that Roosevelt herself promoted. Particularly tenacious has been the portrait of Roosevelt as the passive Victorian wife and mother, selflessly devoted to duty, virtuous, and devoid of passion or erotic desire. For Cook, as for other feminists, such a woman is a male-created myth used only for purposes of social control. Cook's purpose in her biography is to deconstruct this myth and show a woman□Eleanor Roosevelt□as she really was, in all her fullness, complexity, and passions. Cook points out that recently opened archives□including the FBI file on Roosevelt, as well as many letters of Roosevelt's friends ignored by other biographers□ have enabled a more complete account of her private life to be written. It is an axiom of feminist theory that "the personal is the political," and in Cook's view there has in the past been too little examination of the connection between a woman's private loves and passions and her achievements in the public sphere. For great women writers and activists, "it was

frequently their ability to express love and passion.... that enabled them to achieve all that they did achieve." In women's lives, passion is the key to power.

In *Writing a Woman's Life,* Heilbrun points out the importance for a biographer of examining a woman's network of female friends, without whose support the woman's public life might not have been possible: "We begin to surmise that if we look beyond the public face of those few notable women in the past, we may find an untold story of friendship with women, sustaining but secret."

The principle of feminist biography here enunciated by Heilbrun is exemplified throughout Cook's biography of Roosevelt. In Roosevelt's life, intimate friendships with women, such as Nancy Cook, Marion Dickerman, Esther Lape, Elizabeth Read, and later Lorena Hickok, were vitally important to her. When one reads of the interlocking close personal relationships that held together the group of leaders in women's political circles in New York in the 1920s, one cannot doubt that these nourishing friendships did indeed make a vital contribution to Roosevelt's public success. These were women who had the vision to seek a fulfilling life outside the standard paradigm of female service to men.

Some of these "New Women" (as they were known) in Roosevelt's circle were lesbians. One of the reasons that Cook's biography ran into such a firestorm of criticism was her argument that Roosevelt's passionate friendship with Hickok extended into the realm of physical love. On this point, Heilbrun's comments are again illuminating. She argues that under our societal norms, sexuality has often been too narrowly confined in marriage and forbidden in friendship, and the effects of this have not been positive: "both marriage and friendship have suffered from the separation of sexuality and the more general energy of love and life itself. We have not dared to say 'I love my friend.'" The point Cook makes in this connection is that Roosevelt strove during the course of her life to integrate love, sexuality, and power, not to separate them, and this enhanced the flow of energy that she brought to her public activities. Roosevelt also knew enough about societal attitudes to such matters to keep the exact nature of her close relationships private, just as she honored the secrets of others.

Societal attitudes were indeed harsh. In her account of Roosevelt's intense friendships, Cook emphasizes the pervasive nature of sex and gender stereotyping during that era. The New Woman, who sought independence and emotional freedom outside conventional categories, was often derided as "spinster," "old maid," "she-man," and "mannish lesbian." Cook suggests that similar rigid attitudes have up to now prevented biographers from acknowledging the true nature of Roosevelt's relationship with Hickok. She notes that Doris Faber, who wrote *The Life of Lorena Hickok: Eleanor Roosevelt's Friend* (1980) virtually ignored the evidence that bore on the intimate relations between the two women, assuring her readers that one particularly intimate phrase used by Hickok in a letter to Roosevelt "could not mean what it appears to mean."

Cook also sees stereotyping at work in the repeated unwillingness of biographers to acknowledge that Roosevelt may have had a sexual affair with her bodyguard, Earl Miller, who was thirteen years her junior. (Cook does not state absolutely that the affair

took place, but she implies that it did.) Cook refers to biographers who assert that Roosevelt was not sexually attractive to men, and in any case she could not "let herself go" emotionally or sexually. Cook finds two stereotypes here: "Frumpy older women do not have sex□because they cannot; aristocratic women do not□because they will not." In Cook's view, neither stereotype is valid.

Another issue that Heilbrun raises for the feminist biographer to consider is the question of marriage. She counsels the biographer to ignore Victorian "angel in the house" models, with their romantic, patriarchy-inspired clichés, when assessing a woman's marriage. A marriage based on foundations other than these should not be regarded, as has often been the case, as second best, a compromise. To judge marriages so simply would be to remain stuck in rigid traditional ideas about what the "correct" roles for men and women are. Instead, the biographer must assess the extent to which the marriage in question has been "reinvented" and embodies true friendship and equality, a partnership in which both husband and wife are permitted to pursue their own "quest plots." Heilbrun writes, "The sign of a good marriage is that everything is debatable and challenged; nothing is turned into law or policy."

Cook has clearly followed Heilbrun's advice. She carefully demonstrates how after fifteen years of marriage, Eleanor and Franklin Roosevelt gradually renegotiated the terms of their union in a way that left them both free to follow their individual paths while retaining a warm, supportive personal connection. This did not happen overnight, and there were periods when feelings were hurt and disagreements arose. But during the 1920s, "Out of their joint but separate paths toward greater health and fulfillment emerged a vision of a complex future that was to unite them in work and action as never before, while allowing each a full measure of autonomy."

Having established that, Cook has opened up a rich new approach to Roosevelt's life by following the principles of feminist biography, that is not to say that all her conclusions are by definition correct. The biographer, like the historian, must cast an objective eye on all the available evidence, even when it does not support her theories. It should be noted that Cook's views on Roosevelt's friendships have generally not been endorsed by other scholars, and some argue that Cook slanted the evidence. For example, she dismisses the statement by Roosevelt' s daughter Anna that her mother found sex "an ordeal to be borne," which if correct would hardly suggest that Roosevelt would have engaged in a sexual relationship outside of marriage. Nor does Cook take seriously the belief of Roosevelt's children James and Elliott that their parents never resumed a sexual relationship after Eleanor's discovery of Franklin's affair with Lucy Mercer. Cook offers the comment, "children are unreliable sources concerning their parents' sexuality," and yet later she is willing to take James Roosevelt at his word when he wrote that his mother may have had an affair with Miller.

Biographers spend many years researching their subjects' lives, and it would be unwise for someone who has not done the same to offer any definitive judgment about matters of interpretation. The question might also be asked, does any of this matter? Does it matter whether Roosevelt had affairs with men, or women, or both? Cook would answer that it does since her premise is that Roosevelt's life can serve as an example for

contemporary women. Cook's interpretation of Roosevelt's life thus becomes part of today's contentious debate about sexuality and lifestyles, gay rights, and a host of other deeply held beliefs, on all sides of the political spectrum, about morality and human nature. What Cook's biography and the reaction to it shows is that not only is the personal the political, the historical is also the present.

Source: Bryan Aubrey, Critical Essay on *Eleanor Roosevelt: Volume One, 1884-1933,* in *Nonfiction Classics for Students,* The Gale Group, 2001.

Critical Essay #2

Thompson is a freelance writer who writes primarily in the education field. In this essay, she remarks upon the weaknesses in this biography that keep it from rising to the level of its subject.

This thick biography begins with great promise and with several promises. First, Cook asserts in her preface that her readers will discover that Eleanor Roosevelt was one of the most admired and controversial women of all time. The quotations in the introduction seem to confirm that. They range from "she was so unbearably righteous" to "she was so modest" and from "she hardly understood the New Deal and knew nothing about foreign policy" to "Everybody knows she was president [sic]; that was why he was called Franklin D'Eleanor Roosevelt." Cook also promises in her preface that this book is an objective biography that will answer the questions "Who in fact was Eleanor Roosevelt?" and "What did she really think?"

These two promises□the promise to present a portrait of one of the world's most admired women and the promise to answer questions such as "Who in fact was Eleanor Roosevelt?"□are enough to keep a reader engaged through over five hundred pages of text, reading on in the hope of finding these promises fulfilled. However, idealistic anticipation soon collides with reality, and the reader finds that the promised goals may not be reached. In fact, the book clearly seems to move toward accomplishing another goal, fulfilling a different, vague promise also set forth in the preface. In this other statement, author Cook states that to "some extent this book is 'a life and times' of Eleanor Roosevelt and her generation." That would be fine if this book was titled *The Life and Times of Eleanor Roosevelt,* but it is not. It is called *Eleanor Roosevelt: Volume One 1884-1933*. Thus a person with an avid interest in the singular person of Eleanor Roosevelt might be disappointed in this book's attention (or inattention) to its subject, in its overall presentation, and in its style.

First, this biography may disappoint those who desire exclusive coverage of Eleanor Roosevelt. Cook shows her intention of covering secondary subjects in the first chapter, which is devoted to the ancestry and early lives of Eleanor's parents, Elliott Roosevelt and Anna Delano. This attention to Eleanor's parentage can be understood, but the first chapter is followed by a second titled "Elliott and Anna." In all, the reader must cover over thirty-five pages before encountering the child, Eleanor. In chapter eleven, Cook devotes several pages to Franklin Delano Roosevelt's responsibility for and involvement in a scandal that rocked Newport, Rhode Island, and the Naval War College in Newport. Apparently, FDR had enlisted spies and "entrappers" who were to seek out military personnel involved in homosexual activities. Ultimately, after senate hearings, no charges were brought against FDR or the Navy. But that is not what is most important. Of importance here is the fact that Eleanor Roosevelt was not involved to any degree in the scandal, was never mentioned as having knowledge of her husband's activities, and did not comment upon the events. So why should such extensive coverage be given to the scandal in a biography of Eleanor Roosevelt? It shouldn't.

What is particularly sad about Cook's attempts to provide exhaustive details about every person and every event remotely related to Eleanor Roosevelt is that Cook shows a genuine talent for providing exactly the right amount of information on her own. At times her prose is clear and effective and negates the need for excessive detail. Cook relates the story of a young Eleanor, between the ages of six and eight, waiting for her father outside the Knickerbocker Club. Elliott went into the club for what was supposed to be a single drink, but instead he got completely drunk. For over six hours Eleanor waited for him until several men carried her drunken, unconscious father out of the club, and a kind doorman accompanied Eleanor home. Cook quite adroitly sums up the effect this and other incidents had on Eleanor:

Like most children of alcoholics, Eleanor felt that she could never do enough to protect her parent, to care for him, to ward off danger, to change or try to control the situation. But she never knew when his eruptions of rage, self-pity, or despair might occur. With him, the world was always on the verge of spinning out of control, leaving her insecure and powerless.

The pages and pages that Cook previously devoted to describing Elliott's alcoholic excesses are simply unnecessary.

Cook's failure to siphon irrelevant information from this biography might be summarily dismissed by some people, but her failure to present the substance of the book in a clear way cannot besimilarly set aside. As readers prepare to learn about Eleanor Roosevelt, they are soon confronted by an indecipherable maze of repetitious surnames and given names. At first, readers might be inclined to forgive Cook for any confusion, since she faced a truly difficult task.

Take the difficulty Cook encountered when trying to describe Eleanor and Franklin's first meeting during an evening in a private box of Roosevelt-Roosevelts at a horse show in New York. As if a host of Roosevelt/Roosevelts would not be confusing enough, the box additionally held a number of Delano/Roosevelts. This number included Eleanor, whose mother, Anna Delano, married Elliott Roosevelt to become Anna Delano Roosevelt, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt whose mother, Sara Delano, was married to James Roosevelt. The Delanos boasted a family history to rival that of the Roosevelts, and supposedly Franklin's mother could recite the Delano lineage back to William the Conqueror.

This background provides a nearly impossible task for Cook as she tries to document which Roosevelts were present in the box that night. One can see how with words alone no writer could effectively pair and separate the different limbs of the Roosevelts and Delanos. But the author bears a responsibility for, above all, communicating to the reader. Perhaps Cook should have included a family tree or other visual aids to help the reader follow the complicated family relationships. Readers seventy or more years after the events in this book took place should not be expected to be able to distinguish the Roosevelts from one another. Confusion over which Roosevelt belonged to which household has always existed. Supposedly, President Theodore Roosevelt' s widow was so angry upon receiving an errant congratulatory message about the nomination of

her "son Franklin" as the Democratic candidate for President that she ended years of seclusion and introduced Herbert Hoover to the Republican National Convention to make a point about where she stood in the family's bipartisan feud.

As this biography progresses, Cook creates more confusion by her poorly written sentences, confusing placement of pronouns, and careless repetition of stories. Some of her sentences create a labyrinth in which the unsuspecting reader becomes lost. Her mention of Isaac Roosevelt requires several readings before it can be read correctly. She writes that "Isaac Roosevelt, born in 1726, was known as the first American Roosevelt because he was the first to conduct his business in English and, later, because he supported George Washington, as Isaac the Patriot." A reader expects the second dependent clause beginning with "because" to give another reason for Isaac's being known as the first American Roosevelt. Instead, the clause provides another nickname for Isaac, and the reader is forced to read and reread the sentence before it can be understood correctly.

In addition to offering up awkwardly constructed sentences, Cook further confuses readers by her careless omission of antecedents when using numerous pronouns. One paragraph begins this way: "TR [Teddy Roosevelt] had persuaded Anna to choose between a long probation and divorce. The plan involved his removal to Abingdon, Virginia, where his brother-in-law, Douglas Robinson, hired him." The pronouns "his" and "him" seem to refer to Teddy Roosevelt. However, by the middle of the paragraph it becomes evident that the pronouns refer instead to Elliott Roosevelt, though Elliott's name has not been mentioned previously in the paragraph.

One last flaw in the structure of this biography is the repetition of long passages. In some instances, whole stories are retold and characters are described in the exact detail in which they had previously been described. One story repeated in its entirety is a story about Eleanor and Franklin's marital difficulties. One evening Eleanor left a party early because Franklin was openly flirting with another woman. When Eleanor reached her home, she discovered she had no keys. Rather than return to the party and borrow Franklin's keys or wake the house servants, Eleanor spent hours on the cold, cramped porch and eventually fell asleep. This story is told in its entirety later in the book. Perhaps Cook did not expect that her readers would remember the incident when it was mentioned again and so retold it. Whatever the reason for its dual appearance, the effect of the repetition is to annoy readers who feel either that they are the victims of careless writing or that the writer does not respect their comprehension skills. Furthermore, in what can only be an oversight, Cook describes Louis Howe, a Roosevelt advisor, in complete detail right down to the unpleasant smell of his Sweet Caporal cigarettes. One hundred pages later Cook again describes Howe in detail as if no previous description has been given.

Cook seems to fail her readers in the style in which she presents her content. For an author who claims to be objective, she often compromises her objectivity in lengthy personal editorializing. Early in the book, she speaks at length and on her own behalf in what can only be seen as a diatribe against the idea of Social Darwinism. Again, toward the end of the work, Cook sermonizes a bit when discussing the two women's groups

that opposed each other in the battle for an Equal Rights Amendment. A reader of a biography on Eleanor Roosevelt is grateful to know that Eleanor backed not the supporters of the ERA, but those who were against it in favor of protective legislation for women and children. Eleanor Roosevelt's position in the debate and the thinking behind it are important, interesting, and timeless, since they can be used to study similar debates today, but Cook need not give what amounts to a personal plea on behalf of the women who worked in dangerous conditions.

Also, readers may be overwhelmed by Cook's constant use of direct quotes and her distracting practice of forging long chains of direct quotations. Her use of direct quotes where they are unwarranted is especially annoying and serves to fragment the narrative and distract the reader. In the passage describing Eleanor's wedding to Franklin, Cook focuses heavily on the stir created by then-President Theodore Roosevelt's attendance. Cook notes that "Theodore Roosevelt arrived at three-thirty to 'give the bride away'" and also that "he had 'scuttled' into New York, he wrote his son, to review the Saint Patrick's Day parade."

Perhaps Cook believes that authentic language from letters, memos, and other sources lends credibility to her work. Quotes can work this way, but such mundane information as Cook presents in the above examples should not be directly quoted. Paraphrase would have worked well in many instances. Additionally, Cook forces quotation after quotation together unnaturally, which has the effect of making her finished book read in some cases like a rough draft of her notes. In one instance, she uses quotation marks to identify a sentence from a letter that Elliott Roosevelt wrote to his daughter. Immediately following the quotation marks, she includes a long block quotation from the same letter. On the page, so much direct quotation with no intervening commentary appears as notes. It leaves the impression that the author was too lazy to work the quotes into the narrative or that she lacked the belief that her readers would accept the accuracy of her paraphrases.

How does a book with so many flaws achieve the status of a classic? The question is answered by a simple analogy which Blanche Wiesen Cook would have done well to remember as she wrote this biography: The cream does not rise to the top of the pitcher because of the words that are spoken about it; it rises because of its particular qualities. The same is true of Eleanor Roosevelt. Even weighed down by the burden of cumbersome prose, Eleanor Roosevelt rises like cream to the top of the list of remarkable women. Therefore, despite Cook's unnecessary commentary, repetitive passages, injudicious use of direct quotes, and inattention to details such as sentence structure, this book succeeds because of its extraordinary subject.

Critical Essay #4

*In the following review of the first volume of **Eleanor Roosevelt**, King says "Lesbianism is often on the author's mind and she goes out of her way to find it."*

To qualify as a feminist heroine a woman must meet three tests. She must have a successful career "in her own right"; she must be "assertive and aggressive"; and she must have a pre-, extra-, or non-marital sex life, preferably ambidextrous.

What to do with Poor Nell, who did not even need to go through the trauma of changing her maiden name? Poor Nell, nicknamed "Granny" as a child and "Patient Griselda" as a young wife, who slept on the doormat rather than wake the servants. Poor Nell, whose sons claimed she didn't know what a lesbian was, whose daughter said she regarded marital relations as "an ordeal to be borne," and whose cousin, Alice Roosevelt Longworth, present at the doormat incident, remembered her "rising like a string bean that had been raised in a cellar."

Women's Studies professor Blanche Wiesen Cook blames this politically incorrect image of ER on stereotypes, such as the one that sets the tone of this book: "White, Protestant, aristocratic, and 'unattractive' women are not supposed to flourish in the political arena, and are not presumed to have sex or independently passionate interests."

Unliberated women lock their bedroom doors and go without sex to punish straying husbands, but feminist heroines do not, so we must revise our assumptions about the aftermath of FDR's dalliance with Lucy Mercer. "Was there anything left be tween them? Was there love? Could there be trust? Could they start over? Might they even try?"

Yes, Miss Cook says, they did. She is sure of it, because the only evidence for a post-Lucy sexless marriage comes from daughter Anna and sons James and Elliott, who *said* their parents stopped sleeping together: "But children are unreliable sources concerning their parents' sexuality, and are particularly vulnerable to the historical stereotype that conjures up the frigid mother and the deprived father."

Age does not wither feminist heroines, so at 45 ER had an affair with 32-year-old Earl Miller, the New York State trooper who served as her bodyguard during FDR's governorship. Miss Cook can't prove it because somebody burned their letters□ she knows not who, but she knows why. "There are two stereotypes at play here: frumpy older women do not have sex□because they cannot; aristocratic women do not□because they will not." She is sure ER did, however, and bolsters her contention by quoting James Roosevelt, one of those unreliable child sources she dismissed earlier, who wrote: "I believe there may have been one real romance in mother's life outside of marriage. Mother may have had an affair with Earl Miller."

ER certainly knew what a lesbian was because she had an "inevitable and undeniable" affair with AP reporter Lorena Hickok, a victim of "hateful stereotypes" due to her

homeliness. Hick had already had an affair with contralto Ernestine Schu-mann-Heink, a victim of the fat-opera-singer stereotype, whose favorite encore was *Sapphische Ode*.

Surviving letters between ER and Hick prove they went to bed, Miss Cook insists, "although Hickok typed, edited, and then burned the originals of ER's letters between 1932 and 1933," when the alleged affair was at its height. Having said that, Miss Cook blithely ignores the possibility that the feverishly romantic Hick might have "retyped" the affair into being. Certainly a number of phrases simply don't sound like ER. The "Oh! Darling!" passages and maudlin love poems are tasteless enough, but what really rouses suspicions is a phrase that reeks of middle-class fallen archness: "So endeth my first Sunday."

Lesbianism is often on the author's mind and she goes out of her way to find it, even hinting that Elliott Roosevelt's sister□ER's Aunt Corinne□ had some sort of passionate interlude with her brother's mistress, to whom she wrote overheated poems that ER kept and cherished. This is supposed to prove how worldly ER was on the subject, but in case we still don't get it, we are told that ER was the model for a character in *Olivia,* a lesbian schoolgirl novel by her old classmate, Dorothy Strachey.

Miss Cook goes positively ga-ga when she describes ER's lesbian friends, Esther Lape and Elizabeth Read. Rich liberal activists who held court in Greenwich Village, they "celebrated excellence in food and champagne, art and conversation. They were passionate about music and theater. Cut flowers in great profusion decorated their homes in the city and the country. Their candle-lit dinners were formal, splendidly served, and spiced by controversy. " Less elegant were carpenter Nancy Cook and teacher Marion Dickerman, whom a jealous ER froze out when FDR demonstrated that he could turn even a lesbian into a handmaiden. As Miss Dickerman later recalled: "Never in my life have I met so utterly charming a man"; it seemed to her "only right and natural that people should devote themselves heart and soul to him and his career."

What the author doesn't know she manages to suggest without violating the rules of scholarly research. While the orphaned adolescent ER was living with her father's family, "three strong, very protective locks were installed on the door of her room. Was she ever hurt or abused? Did Uncle Vallie or Uncle Eddie ever actually get into her room? What kind of battle ensued?" Thus, Miss Cook plants the idea of rape when all she really knows is that the uncles were such reeling drunks that they easily could have entered the wrong room by mistake.

Despite Miss Cook's efforts to paint ER as a political titan, she still comes across as one of those freelance female activists, with a finger in every agenda, that Nightline calls on whenever Something Happens. The real towering female figure here, as in every Roosevelt book, is Sara Delano, whom even this author treats with grudging admiration. The disappearance of full-sailed grandes dames has left a void in democracy's heart that mere assertive feminists can never fill.

Adaptations

Eleanor Roosevelt, Volume One, 1884-1933 was recorded on audiocassette, published in 1994 by Books on Tape, Inc.

Although it is not based on Cook's biography, the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) offers a two and a half hour videocassette, *Eleanor Roosevelt,* which explores Roosevelt's "incredible public achievements" and her "surprisingly secret life."

Topics for Further Study

Research the different roles that First Ladies have played in recent American history. How did Nancy Reagan, Barbara Bush, and Hillary Rodham Clinton differ in the way they approached the position?

How should the First Lady be involved in politics, or should she leave all political matters to the president?

Hillary Rodham Clinton once admitted that she held imaginary conversations with Eleanor Roosevelt. If you were to imagine such a conversation between yourself and Eleanor Roosevelt, what do you think you would talk about?

It is sometimes said that behind every successful man, there is a woman. Is there any truth to that statement, and what does it say about the way society regards male and female roles? How are those roles changing today?

There has been considerable progress in the area of women's rights since Eleanor Roosevelt's day. What should be the priorities for further progress over the next few years? How are men affected by the growth of women's rights? Does the growth of new opportunities for women make men feel insecure?

Research some TV advertising for consumer products and discuss the extent to which it either reinforces or undermines gender stereotyping.

Compare and Contrast

1920: Women are allowed to vote for the first time; politicians, especially Republicans, court the women's vote. A National Women's Party exists as an alternative to the Democrats and Republicans. Many feminists, not including Eleanor Roosevelt, believe the two major parties will betray their interests.

Today: The targeting of female voters by political parties becomes very sophisticated. In the presidential election of 1996, both parties seek to win over the "soccer moms"; in 2000, women independent voters are considered one of the key groups. There is a "gender gap" among voters: women are more likely to be Democrats than men are.

1920s: In a period of social change following World War I, the percentage of women in the workforce rises above the turn of the century figure of 20 percent.

Today: More than 75 percent of women age 25-44 are in the workforce. However, women's earnings still lag behind those of men. In 1999, women earn only 72 percent of what men earn. Two-thirds of the differential is accounted for by differences in skills and experience and the fact that men and women tend to work in different industries. The cause of the other one-third of the differential is not known.

1920s: Women are frozen out of positions of political power. In 1928, there are only three female members of Congress.

Today: In November 1998, fifty-six women are elected to Congress (12.9 percent of the total); nine women are elected to the Senate (9 percent of the total). But the United States ranks only forty-eighth in the world in terms of percentage of female national legislators. The highest is Sweden; 42.7 percent of its parliamentarians are women.

1920s: Many occupations and professions are considered unsuitable for women. There is "men's work" (science, engineering, politics, law, etc.) and "women's work" (teaching, nursing, etc.).

Today: An increasing number of women are entering traditionally male fields. In 1997, one-third of all science and engineering doctoral degrees are awarded to women. Fifty-one percent of economists are women; 16 percent of architects are women, up from 4 percent in 1950.

What Do I Read Next?

Edith Wharton' s novel *The Age of Innocence* (1920) gives a vivid picture of the New York high society that Roosevelt grew up in.

Cook points out that Virginia Woolf's life paralleled that of Roosevelt's in many ways. Woolf s *A Room of One's Own* (1929) explores how difficult it was in those days for a woman to make a distinctive mark of her own in life.

Eleanor Roosevelt, Volume 2, The Defining Years 1933-1938 (1999) is Cook's second volume in her three-volume biography. It covers Roosevelt' s life as an innovative First Lady in the early years of the New Deal. This fast-paced, insightful narrative was acclaimed by critics.

The essays in Eleanor Roosevelt's *You Learn By Living* (reprint ed., 1983) contain a wealth of practical advice and wisdom to enable people to live a more fulfilling life: "There is no experience from which you cannot learn something."

Courage in a Dangerous World (1999), edited by Allida M. Black, is a collection of more than two hundred columns, articles, letters, essays, and speeches by Roosevelt that contain her political views on a wide variety of topics. The book includes thirty rare photographs.

Further Study

Hoff-Wilson, Joan, and Marjorie Lightman, eds., *The Life and Career of Eleanor Roosevelt,* Indiana University Press, 1984.

This collection of twelve essays examines the many different aspects of Roosevelt's personal and public life.

Lash, Joseph P., *Eleanor and Franklin,* W. W. Norton, 1971.

Lash was a close friend of Eleanor for over twenty years, and this biography focuses on her relationship with her husband. The author is sympathetic to Eleanor but remains objective.

....., *Love, Eleanor: Eleanor Roosevelt and Her Friends,* Doubleday, 1982.

In this biography, Lash uses hundreds of Eleanor's letters to illumine many aspects of her life and relationships. Many of the conclusions that he draws are different from those reached by Cook.

Roosevelt, Eleanor, *The Autobiography of Eleanor Roosevelt,* reprint ed., Da Capo Press, 2000.

Eleanor's own memoirs make interesting reading both for what they reveal (the details of her busy life and activities) and what they do not reveal (her deeper feelings about her relationships).

Streitmatter, Roger, ed., *Empty Without You: The Intimate Letters of Eleanor Roosevelt and Lorena Hickok,* Da Capo Press, 2000.

These are the letters that have caused so much controversy concerning the relationship between these two women.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Nonfiction Classics for Students (NCfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, NCfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on

□classic□ novels frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NCfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NCfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in NCfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by NCfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NCfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Nonfiction Classics for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NCfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NCfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Nonfiction Classics for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Nonfiction Classics for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NCfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Nonfiction Classics for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NCfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Nonfiction Classics for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NCfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Nonfiction Classics for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NCfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Nonfiction Classics for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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