

# **The Family Study Guide**

## **The Family by Kitty Kelley**

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# Plot Summary

Tracing the history of the Bush-Walker clan that produces two presidents, George H. W. Bush and George W. Bush, this book follows the famous family from their origins in Connecticut to their more modern homes in Maine, Texas, and Florida. Including many of the little-known family members as well as the political heavy hitters, Kelley exposes many of the family secrets, delves into the past to recreate events and people who have been made over for political purposes, and show the Bush family that lies behind the picture of the perfect family that is often presented to the outside world. Chronicling a line of privilege and wealth, the book balances the public portrayal of the Bushes with their real life struggles and sorrows.

The Bush political legacy begins with Prescott Bush. He is the father of George H.W. Bush and the grandfather of George W. Bush. He grows up in a home of wealth and privilege and attends the best boys schools in the United States. He attends Yale and establishes a family tradition of attending this University. Like his progeny, he is not a great scholar, but instead thrives in athletics and socializing. He carries a positive memory of Yale throughout the rest of his adult life and seeks to instill these same values in the later generations of his family. As an adult, he becomes very influential in banking in New York City and the surrounding suburbs. As he grows older, he transitions from business to politics and becomes a respected senator from Connecticut. In his position in the Senate, he works from many of the social values that he holds dear and takes many stands based on the principles he believes in, including voting against his party in condemning Senator McCarthy's communist witch hunts.

George Herbert Walker Bush, the second son of Prescott Bush, is eager to follow his father's footsteps into the political arena. After serving in World War II as a fighter pilot, he marries Barbara Pierce and attends Yale just as his father did. The couple moves to Texas to establish a fortune in the oil industry. Through family connections, George H.W. Bush succeeds in building a successful oil company with which to launch his political ambitions. He runs several unsuccessful campaigns in Texas before joining the administrations of Nixon and Gerald Ford. With each new position, be it Ambassador to the United Nations, Ambassador to China, or Director of the CIA, George positions himself to run as the vice presidential or presidential candidate for the Republican Party. He finally succeeds in getting on the ticket with Ronald Reagan, though the two men strongly dislike each other. His vice presidential role carries over into a nomination for president, which is successful for one term.

George W. Bush and Jeb Bush are the two oldest sons of George H.W. Bush. While George flounders in school and business, Jeb takes up the family traditions and is considered the best hope for a continuation of the Bush family political legacy. George, however, outdoes his brother in becoming first governor of Texas and then the president of the United States. George's long road to the presidency is marked with personal problems and business failures resulting in the surprising upset of both family and national expectations when he is elected to the country's highest office.



# Chapter 1

## Chapter 1 Summary and Analysis

The chapter opens as Prescott Bush is a troublesome thirteen year old boy. His mother, Flora Sheldon Bush, is nervous about his habit of playing practical jokes. She hopes that sending him off to boarding school in Rhode Island will help. The year is 1908 and that fall young Prescott leaves his home in Ohio to take up residence in Rhode Island at St. George's School. He leaves behind his family who own a steel manufacturing plant.

St. George's school is very exclusive and Prescott Bush thrives there. He becomes the leader of several clubs and distinguishes himself in many sports. During his senior year, he is elected head prefect, the highest honor in the school. The following year he heads off to Yale University, the place he will feel a strong connection to for the rest of his life. His time at Yale is not devoted to studying. Instead, he works hard to excel at sports and establish important friendships. Prescott remains committed to Yale University throughout his life.

The most controversial of these attachments is to the Skull and Bones Society, an exclusive, secret society devoted to creating the future leaders of the world and molding them for this leadership. Prescott's involvement in the Skull and Bones Society expresses many of his tendencies toward practical joking. While training with the military in the Southwest, he digs up bones from a graveyard and claims them to be Geronimo's remains. The joke continues for many years, even to the point where historians demand the bones return to Geronimo's tribe. The bones are not really Geronimo's, though they continue to be referred to as such by members of the Skull and Bones Society.

The other major prank that Prescott plays is during World War I. While serving in France, his hometown newspaper receives a report that Prescott has single-handedly saved the leaders of the American, British, and French military. The report is questioned by many people in the town until Prescott's mother is forced to write a letter to the newspaper retracting the story and apologizing for her son's joke on the newspaper. The story, however, continues to be told in Yale circles and it credited to Prescott's history in the yearbook.

Prescott Bush is the patriarch of the modern Bush family. His youthful exploits at Yale and in World War I set the standard by which the future generations of his family judge themselves. His connection to Yale as both a student and an alumnus is one of the driving passions of his life and foreshadows the importance that this university will play in the shaping of his children and grandchildren. The Yale that Prescott Bush attends, however, also represents the type of lifestyle that his family experiences as their birthright. Prescott, like those Bushes to come later, does not have an exemplary scholarly record and instead relies on family connections to assure his entrance into the elite realms of American society.



## Chapter 2

### Chapter 2 Summary and Analysis

This chapter introduces the Walker family, established for several generations in the upper class of St. Louis. D.D. Walker holds strong political views, many of them controversial. Some of these include segregation, eugenics (the idea that people with mental or physical handicaps should be kept from breeding), and the use of lynching and whipping posts as punishments for crime. D.D. Walker is succeeded by his son, George Herbert Walker, known as Bert. Bert is extremely good at making money and amasses a large fortune through stock speculation. His fortune continues to be the financial stability behind future generations of the family.

The Walker family live in the highest circles of St. Louis society but also have strong ties to New York City and Kennebunkport, Maine. A twenty-something Prescott Bush arrives in St. Louis to start his first job and quickly begins a relationship with Dorothy Walker, the younger daughter of Bert. Their relationship flowers and a wedding is planned in Kennebunkport. Shortly before the wedding, however, Prescott receives news that his mother has been killed in a car accident. After the period of mourning for his mother, he marries Dorothy Walker in an elaborate ceremony.

The Walker family is as important as the Bush family in establishing the place of the political powers of Prescott, George H.W. Bush, and George W. Bush. The Walkers represent the solid financial foundations on which the Bush empires rest. Dorothy Walker, the woman who marries Prescott Bush, is one of the most influential figures in the Bush family and sets the standard for the wives of Bush men throughout the next several generations. Dorothy's personality and personal ethics influence the way that Bush men are raised and stresses the importance of a strong female presence that takes a supporting position to the powerful men in her life.

Another aspect of the Walker history is the recurring theme of racial and social inequality that serves as the foundation for the Bush family code of ethics. At various points throughout history, various members of the family make public and private declarations of their feelings that their race and class place them in a position above others and that those who do not share their genetic package are somehow unfit for public office or high standing in society. This brand of elitist rhetoric serves as both the glue that holds the family together as well as the constant threat to undermine their attempts to reach broad based American voters of all races and classes.



# Chapter 3

## Chapter 3 Summary and Analysis

The marriage of Dorothy Walker and Prescott Bush develops through the years. While Prescott deals with the pressures of running an investment bank during the Depression, Dorothy concentrates on raising their children. The Bush family lives in the Northeast in a modest home in a wealthy neighborhood. The family struggles financially during the early years of their marriage and works hard to save money to pay off their mounting debts. Prescott's possible career in politics has to be put on hold because of his large debts.

The Bush family is raised in a very competitive atmosphere. The children are pushed to compete in all fields, especially sports. Dorothy and Prescott set the standard with their own physical prowess. The children learn to compete in everything and to work hard to get what they want. At the same time, the children, especially George, learn the benefit of cheating in order to win. All the children are pressured to always be the best in everything that they do. At the same time, the children live in fear of their alcoholic father. The family, particularly Dorothy, denies that Prescott has a drinking problem, though it is a clear reality. This atmosphere of secrets and denial shapes the thinking of young George Herbert Walker Bush, who learns to guard his personal life and resist the attempts of others to examine his inner world.

The Walker-Bush clan develops the traits that will carry over from generation to generation. Their home life in the Northeast is characterized by immense privilege but tempered by the comparison to other families that are even wealthier than they are. The Bush children grow up in a world that has strict racial segregation as well as a very small circle of high society friends and neighbors who encourage them to develop a taste for wealth and privilege.

In addition to their financial foundation, the Bushes raised by Dorothy are much more interested in winning than in fair play. This sort of environment influences the adult Bush children, such as George H. W. Bush, who learn that winning is the most important thing that there is. The Bush family is encouraged to find ways to cheat and manipulate others in order to get what they want and are rewarded for winning at any cost. This influences the younger Bush members to view life as a competition for power rather than the cultivation of the ideal or values or equality.



# Chapter 4

## Chapter 4 Summary and Analysis

This chapter explores the activities of the Bush family during World War II. The first pressing concern is the amount of business done between Prescott Bush and his father-in-law Bert Walker and the Nazi government of Germany. The investment bank they own and manage has early ties with companies taken over by the Nazi government. One of these is a Polish mining company that is nationalized by the Nazi government after the invasion of Poland. The investment firm does not withdraw its support or ties to the company, though it is against US law to invest in Nazi-controlled businesses. The second connection is through a bank, supposedly operated by a Dutch man, but really one of the top bankrolling operations of the Nazi government. The US government personally accused Prescott Bush and Bert Walker of collaborating with the Nazis financially, though personal friends insist that they had no political commonalities.

As World War II heats up, George Bush is at school in Andover, Massachusetts. He enjoys his time there. Though he does not excel as a student, he gains recognition for his athletic ability. During his senior year, Pearl Harbor is attacked, causing George to enlist in the navy as a pilot. At the same time, he meets Barbara Pierce at a country club party and instantly forms a bond with her. The couple shares a complex family history of wealth, alcoholism, and emotional distance from their parents. They complement each other in various ways and quickly develop a strong bond. George goes off to war with the intention of testing his manhood and gaining his independence from his family.

During World War II, the Bush family places a wide spectrum of roles. While Prescott Bush's investment firm dabbles in Nazi business, George H.W. Bush goes to war to fight against the Japanese. George H.W. Bush is conflicted in his view of himself. Overshadowed by his father's accomplishments, he is desperate to carve out a niche for himself. His courtship and marriage of Barbara Pierce becomes another factor in his separation from his father. Their relationship begins just as George prepares to ship out with the Air Force. The relationship between Barbara and George at this early point is characterized by mutual understanding and bonding based on the sadness of their childhoods. This early bond becomes increasingly ironic as their adult relationship unfolds, which is generally devoid of emotional ties or affection for each other.





# Chapter 5

## Chapter 5 Summary and Analysis

World War II forms the backdrop to the Bush family. George Bush goes to North Carolina to train and writes home to his mother describing his experiences and his views on life. He expresses his distaste for the propaganda used to encourage the young soldiers, particularly the racist attitudes towards the Japanese. He also expresses his feelings about sexual purity concerning his relationship with Barbara Pierce. He states that he does not believe in sex before marriage and holds himself to a high moral standard. He looks forward to starting his new life with Barbara on this moral plane.

After George ships out overseas, his letters become full of his wartime experiences. He writes to his family whenever he brushes with danger. In particular, he recounts a near death experience where the crew on his plane all dies but he survives. Other soldiers disagree with the exact details of his story. George volunteers for another tour of duty immediately after his first. In December 1944, he returns home to marry Barbara. Neither family is happy about the marriage and each thinks their own child could have made a more important match. However, the young couple persists in their love and get married to each other. They hope that this new partnership will help them to overcome their fear of their parents and begin their new lives together.

George's experiences in World War II represent some of the most clearly positive and clearly negative experiences of his life. On the positive side, he sees real combat and receives many awards recognizing his bravery. On the negative side, he experiences the event which will haunt him for the rest of his life. Sandwiched in the middle of his war experience is his relationship with Barbara. Their early marriage is characterized by the same absence that they will experience in later years. For the most part, the role established for Barbara is one of sitting and waiting in the wings while her husband competes on a larger stage. Just as the early days of their marriage are spent apart as George returns to war, the later years of their marriage will also be spent apart as George establishes his business and political careers.

# Chapter 6

## Chapter 6 Summary and Analysis

Returning from the war, George Bush follows in the family tradition and attends Yale University. He does very well in school and works hard at both sports and academics. His university years are defined by his commitment to joining as many groups as possible and running for office in them. His proudest membership, however, is with Skull and Bones. During the initiation phase, George shares his vulnerabilities about the war. This makes him feel bonded to the Skull and Bones Society. This bond continues throughout his life and influences the people that he chooses to associate with later in his career.

At the same time, he and Barbara are struggling to make ends meet. During his first year at Yale, Barbara gives birth to their son, George Walker Bush. While George is in school, Barbara cares for their young child. Both are passionate about George's sports career, bringing their infant son to games. George graduates from Yale and searches for a way to make money to support his young family. His relatives advise him to go to Texas and become involved in the oil industry. He goes out with Barbara and starts a new life in Texas. While in Texas, Barbara gives birth to a daughter, Pauline, named after Barbara's mother who recently died. Pauline appears healthy but will cause problems in the future.

After the war, George goes on to fulfill the other major family legacy by attending Yale. At Yale, George follows closely in his father's footsteps, including the same fraternity and secret society. His relationship with Barbara continues to develop the patterns that will define their marriage in decades to come. Their concern over money and the very small ways in which Barbara is controlled by the financial rules of George's ambition will continue to be a hallmark of their marriage throughout, despite their ever-expanding fortunes.



# Chapter 7

## Chapter 7 Summary and Analysis

This chapter chronicles the beginning of Prescott Bush's political career. While serving as a member of a committee of the town of Greenwich, Connecticut, Prescott becomes interested in running for office. His initial forays into public life are very difficult as he battles against the local Catholic Democrats who criticize him for his wealth and privilege. He insists that he is not as wealthy as they think he is.

His friends persuade him to run for the Senate for the state of Connecticut. At first he is reluctant because of his family debts and wants to be financially independent. His friends convince him to run in 1950. Despite his efforts, Prescott loses the election. In 1952 he prepares to run again and sets out campaigning throughout the state. The Republican party, however, nominates another candidate who can appeal to the large Irish Catholic population of the state. Prescott's break comes at the expense of another politician. The sitting Republican representative dies of cancer shortly before the elections. The Republicans scramble for another candidate to run for his seat. Prescott reluctantly agrees to reenter the race.

During the campaign, Prescott is accused of anti-Semitism for using a controversial campaign slogan. However, he manages to win the election. As he prepares to go to Washington to assume his new position, Prescott reassures his other obligations that he will continue to work for them. In particular, he reassures the Yale Corporation, the financial body of Yale University of which he is a member, that he will continue to be active in his work for the school.

Prescott Bush's first political campaign sets the tone for both his own career and those of his relatives to follow. The major stumbling block in each case is the high social station held by the Bushes in relation to the lifestyle of the general population. All the Bushes struggle to connect with the common voter and show that they can understand the needs of the common voter despite the lack of experience in their own privileged lives. Bush's election to the Senate is facilitated by his influential social position within the community and his financial ties as an investment banker.

The other similarity shown in Prescott Bush's entrance into politics is the pattern that he sets for his relatives in how to achieve such an office. He firmly believes in establishing a strong financial foundation before attempting to run for office. This understanding of the essential connection between money and power is one that will continue to serve as a model for Prescott's son and grandson as they go about establishing themselves financially and politically.



# Chapter 8

## Chapter 8 Summary and Analysis

George Bush goes through various partnerships as he begins his career in the Texas oil industry. His investment plan relies on funding from the East coast, particularly his wealthy relatives. George Bush uses this funding to start an oil speculation company. In the oil speculation of the 1950s, big oil companies would make contracts with landowners whose land is adjacent to land where oil has been discovered. If oil is discovered on this land, the landowners are paid a royalty from the big oil company. George Bush's company begins as an independent oil company, meaning that his company purchases a share of the royalties that are promised to the landowners. Then his company pays to drill for oil. The gamble exists in the chance that the investment in royalties and the land drilling will not turn up any oil.

The other major incident in this chapter involves young Pauline "Robin" Bush. At the age of three, Robin is diagnosed with leukemia. The doctor in Texas does not give her much time to live, but her parents take her to a specialist in New York. The special treatment in New York prolongs her life for six months. Barbara goes to stay in New York to be with her daughter. George flies in when he can. Barbara does the best that she can for her daughter but George cannot handle the situation and leaves the hospital room crying. During an experimental operation, Robin dies. She is buried in the Bush family plot in Connecticut.

Robin's death has a profound affect on her brother George W. Bush, who is six years old at the time. Young George is not told of Robin's illness and is angry at being left out of the grieving process by his parents. Young George takes on the role of surrogate friend to his grieving parents. In particular, he spends a lot of time comforting his mother, Barbara. This emotional background takes a different turn in his adult life as he recreates the childhood that he misses.

The major events of George W. Bush's childhood boil down to the death of his sister. The emotional pain of his parents deeply affects George and establishes much of his patterns of relationships both with his mother and other people. George is never the shining star of the family and spends much of his childhood playing a supporting role to his mother. The repression of his natural role as a child breaks apart during his teenage and adult years when he rebels against his former supportive image by engaging in reckless and dangerous behavior.

Robin's death also deeply affects George and Barbara Bush, who build the remainder of their relationship based on the loss of their first daughter. They have more children in order to make up for this loss and are understanding of the plight of disabled Americans much more so than they are for any other disadvantaged group. At the same time, this event in their lives follow the same pattern in which they spend the majority of their lives apart, even during such emotional moments as the death of their child.



# Chapter 9

## Chapter 9 Summary and Analysis

Prescott Bush enjoys his position as a senator from Connecticut. He serves on a number of important committees and is known for his snobbish and impersonal demeanor. His wife, Dotty, also enjoys life in Washington. She writes a column in a local newspaper describing her experiences in Washington. Dotty takes an active interest in politics and spends many days sitting in the audience of the Senate chamber during important votes. The two become very well known both politically and socially in Washington.

The defining moment of Prescott's term in office is his involvement with the McCarthy hearings against Communism. Prescott is personally disgusted by the accusations and lies that he sees around him. However, Prescott is worried that his conservative state will be angry if he votes to censure McCarthy. After a long wrestling match with his conscience, Prescott chooses to vote to censure McCarthy. Many of his political partners are angry at him and assume that he will lose the next election. At the same time, others praise his actions and are happy that he stands up for what he believes.

Prescott's other political decisions are often controversial. On the one hand, he belonged to many clubs and societies where people of other races were excluded. In office, however, he often voted against segregation and other forms of government discrimination. Many of the policies that he begins in the 1950s become a source of problems for his grandson, George Herbert Walker Bush, when he becomes president thirty years later.

Prescott Bush's time in the Senate is characteristic of the Bush clan. He takes his position for granted as something which is due to him. At the same time he dismisses people of other social or ethnic groups as being unfit for public office. He and his wife are greatly enamored of the public life, something that will continue in his son George and daughter-in-law Barbara's love for the public arena. Politically, the pattern of generational Bush politics is set in the career of Prescott Bush. Each successive member of the Bush political dynasty works both for and against the policies and ideals of the one before him. George H.W. Bush's political career is overshadowed by his father's and many of the stands that he takes to win votes are opposite from what his father once supported. This pattern will continue in the relationship between George and his own son as the two separate politicians work to define himself against the successes and failures of his famous relative.



# Chapter 10

## Chapter 10 Summary and Analysis

Prescott Bush's political career brings him in contact with the leaders of the nation. At the same time, however, he has many problems in office. One of the first problems in his term is the creation of a slush fund to help finance his next campaign. This slush fund, similar to one created by then Vice President Richard Nixon, collect secret campaign contributions from supporters to be used to hire a famous publicist to promote Bush's campaign. Bush denies any wrong doing, though the slush fund is in violation of Connecticut's ethics rules about campaign contributions. A local newspaper runs a story about it to discredit Bush, but he manages to squash the story before it reaches national attention.

The second crisis of influence comes from Bush's son, George, who is beginning in the oil industry in Texas. There is a bill in Congress to deregulate the gas industry. George is very interested in seeing the bill passed and tries to use his influence on his father to get the bill passed. Prescott does not want to vote for the bill because he thinks that people in the urban areas of his state will be at the mercy of the gas companies and have to pay high prices. He refused to vote for the bill and tells George not to try to influence him. George pleads with his father to vote for it to please George's friends and business partners in Texas. Prescott does not vote for the bill, though it passes through Congress nevertheless.

Prescott has a very strong admiration for then President Eisenhower. He tries to be photographed with the President and play up his connection to him. There is no real historical evidence that the friendship was mutual. At the same time, Bush tries to promote himself by naming many acts of Congress after himself. On a more positive side, however, Bush supports ongoing efforts for civil rights. His commitment to civil rights goes unmatched by his son and grandson, whose political opposition to civil rights does not follow from their relative's political stance.

Prescott Bush's political career is marked by the same struggles his son and grandson will experience. His connections to secret campaign contributions as well as other aspects of big business tarnish his political reputation and put his future in jeopardy. However, because these aspects are so essential to his political survival, he is unable to cut such ties. The other major issue that connects Prescott and his son, George H.W. Bush, is their love of public recognition and their need for strong public idols, such as the presidents that they serve under. Prescott's adulation of Eisenhower is very similar to the feelings George develops for Nixon. Similarly his need to be publicly recognized by naming acts of Congress after himself is carried on in the political career of his son, who also works diligently to have his name noticed by others in power. The pattern is not clearly continued in the younger George Bush, who strikes out on his own politically and does not show strong admiration for other politicians.

# Chapter 11

## Chapter 11 Summary and Analysis

In this chapter, the political ambitions of a range of Bushes are explored. First, Prescott Bush, Jr. seems poised to follow in his father's footsteps but never makes the leap to politics. This is due to his own ambition as well as his inability to say the right thing in public. Prescott Bush makes many racist comments that are mirrored in many family members' behavior as well.

George H.W. Bush is also preparing for a political career. He raises his family in absolute frugality and tells his wife that they must keep to a strict budget. At the same time, George is adamant about creating a nestegg to fuel his political ambitions. He often uses money to promote his own personal life, including vacations with his other family members. Barbara, on the other hand, stays at home with the children and keeps herself busy with her domestic life. She tries to reach out to George but he is not interested in changing their relationship in any way. Instead, she remains supportive of her husband and tries to make herself the best wife for his position.

The relationship between George and Barbara Bush settled into the pattern which will define them for the rest of their marriage and also provide the example which will guide George W. Bush in his own relationship with his wife, Laura. While George's social calendar is never empty, Barbara makes the financial and social sacrifices to nurture his ambition. She accepts her place in the shadows and defers to George in all things. This pattern is replicated over and over in the Bush family as the needs of the women are subservient to the needs of the men. Barbara's model of supportive wife and mother without ambitions for herself becomes one of the hallmarks of her private and public roles in the Bush family.





# Chapter 12

## Chapter 12 Summary and Analysis

This chapter traces the early political career of George H.W. Bush. Beginning as Chairman of the Republican Party in Houston, George becomes very interested in the political landscape of Texas, which has traditionally been a stronghold for the Democratic Party. During the years of the 1960s, the whole country is in tumult over civil rights issues and Texas is not an exception. George H.W. Bush believes strongly in racial segregation and opposes civil rights acts of all kinds, including those involving the poor and elderly, as well as African-Americans.

In 1964, Bush runs for the United States Senate against Yarborough. George is an adamant supporter of Barry Goldwater, the Republican nominee for the presidency. George campaigns strongly on a platform opposing the civil rights movement. He is certain of his victory and many of the polls leading to the election support his view. On the day of the election, however, George is defeated decisively by the Democratic candidate and the Democratic candidate for president, Lyndon Johnson, is elected with great popular support. George is shaken by this loss and takes a long time to recover from the blow to his pride. His son, a freshman at Yale, takes his father's defeat hard and mentions the time in later years as one that is especially hard for him.

George H.W. Bush's early political career is marked by failure. This failure, however, is often the result of Bush's inability to understand the common voter or to appeal to wide range of people. He does not understand why he is unable to connect with voters of different races and classes though all his political positions are clearly against the equal roles of such people in public and private life. George does not understand how others could fail to like him, a problem that will continue to dominate his life, both politically and personally for decades to come. George's attempts to appeal to the broader masses stem from his first defeat but he rarely develops any greater connection or appeal to the common voters and instead remains propped up by his own small circle of elitists.





# Chapter 13

## Chapter 13 Summary and Analysis

George H.W. Bush recovers from his loss of the 1964 election. He sues the federal government to redraw the districts in Texas to ensure a Republican district in the Houston suburbs. George campaigns to win this seat. Though he politically opposes the civil rights movements, he takes steps to attract black voters by claiming to be active in organizations such as the United Negro College Fund, which he never really is. He wins the seat but fails to connect with black voters, a trend that continues throughout his political life.

George is a strong supporter of the Vietnam War and travels to the area to report back on the positive outlook of the war. At the same time, he arranges for his son, George W. Bush, to be enrolled in the National Guard to avoid service in Vietnam. George W. Bush is given special treatment to enroll in a program for pilots though he is not well qualified for it. Neither Bush acknowledges these political favors at work in their lives. George H.W. Bush campaigns strongly on civil rights issues, trying to keep civil rights reform movements from passing. One exception is a fair housing act which he votes for without fear of losing his district. This one act in support of racial equality is used by the Bush camp for many years to come as proof of his support for black voters.

George works hard to arrange a political landscape where he knows he can win. His successful redistricting of Texas gives him the base to run a successful campaign. During this time, some of Bush's initial lies and deceptions to appear more egalitarian than he actually is emerge, including his stories geared toward showing respect and equality for members of other races. Though he is, for the most part, committed to a very conservative segregationist stance, he has moments of civil rights awareness which he tries to capitalize on in order to conceal his larger segregationist agendas.

This point is also the breaking of one of the Bush family traditions. While both Prescott and George H.W. Bush serve actively in the military during international conflicts, George W. Bush is shielded from such service. These actions will come up later in the political careers of both Georges, as each seeks to promote and defend their war records.



# Chapter 14

## Chapter 14 Summary and Analysis

This chapter catalogs George W. Bush's days in high school and college. As a student at Andover in Massachusetts, George barely manages to pass his classes and struggles with the strenuous academic demands of the school. He sees himself as an outsider because of his childhood in Texas. Though he is not a good athlete, he joins many organizations to build ties with the athletes on campus. George becomes somewhat popular on campus and engages in a lot of games that show an often abusive nature. George, like his brothers Jeb and Marvin, gets into a lot of trouble both academically and legally during his time at Andover but is forgiven most of his transgressions because of the influence of his father and grandfather.

George's grades are not good enough to gain him admission to Yale but the connections of his father and grandfather assure him a spot in the class of 1968. He enters the school full of contempt for the institution and the social groups on campus. George follows in his father and grandfather's footsteps and enters the same fraternity and secret society. He rarely applies himself to his studies and spends most of his time drinking and getting in trouble with the law. His conservative worldview makes him very different from other students on campus and he makes few friends outside of his fraternity brothers. Few other students remember him fondly. One of the significant events of his college years is his fizzled engagement to Cathryn Wolfsen, his girlfriend of the time in Texas. They get engaged but break up during their senior year in college.

After graduating from Yale with a C average, George avoids the school and his associations with it. This is a big departure from how his father and grandfather view their attachments to the school. George feels unconnected with the political and social aspects of Yale and does not attend reunions or speak fondly of his college experience. As President, he hosts a thirty-fifth reunion party at the White House. At the party, which many protesting members of the Class of 1968 refuse to attend, George makes many jabs at the intellectual ideas of many graduates of Yale and expresses his satisfaction at his own triumph by his election as president.

George W. Bush's youth and young adulthood are in marked contrast to his father and grandfather. Though he manages to attend Yale based on their connections, he never bonds with the university in the same way. He works very hard to remain an outsider in the university environment and to show his contempt for all such academic pursuits. Both during his years in Yale and his adult life after Yale, he is openly critical of the university and the liberal politics that are often bred there. His attitude toward Yale is extremely different from how his father and grandfather felt about the university.

At the same time that George rejects Yale, he seeks out other ties to his father and grandfather. He becomes engaged in order to try to recreate the life that his father experienced on the Yale campus. Similarly, he works to establish himself as the friend of

the athletes on campus though he is not personally able to compete on the same level. George W. Bush shows a strange conflict as he both attempts to emulate his father while rejecting many of the social institutions that his father and grandfather most believed in.



# Chapter 15

## Chapter 15 Summary and Analysis

Returning to George H.W. Bush, this chapter catalogs his ongoing political career. Unsatisfied with his seat in the House of Representatives, George wants to run for Senate again. Many people counsel him against it, asking him to consider the security of his House seat versus the gamble of running for a statewide office as a Republican in a Democratic state. George gains confidence from a visit with former president Johnson and counts on Johnson's support, though he is from the other party. George hopes that his election to the Senate will make Nixon replace Spiro Agnew with George as his running mate in the upcoming 1972 Presidential election. George campaigns hard again and loses the race to his Democratic opponent.

George is devastated by the loss and considers bowing out of public life. His friends, however, work to have him made the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. George has no foreign policy experience and a personal dislike of the United Nations. He accepts the job and goes to live in Washington. His role is largely social, entertaining diplomats and other social functions rather than any real intellectual focus or concern for international relations. His time in the United Nations is marked by his strong support for Nixon's foreign policy in Vietnam as well as the transfer of a Security Council seat from Taiwan to Communist China.

On a personal note, the senior George Bush and his wife Barbara have very little contact with their children as they enter public life in Washington and New York. George Bush is rarely at home and largely uninvolved in his children's lives. Barbara is often occupied entertaining and attending political functions. The three children still living at home during this time are generally looked after by maids and the families of school friends. Another personal issue at this time is the diagnosis of Prescott Bush's lung cancer. Shortly after the diagnosis, Prescott succumbs to the disease and is mourned both by the family and by his large public following.

George Bush's political career continues to flounder when he steps outside of his carefully selected base. His attempt to run for state-wide office again fizzles because the majority of voters do not identify with either him or his policies. His disappointments in elections are balanced by the favors conferred on him by his high-placed friends and relatives. His placement as the Ambassador to United Nations is a purely political post and not based on any merit on George's part in the field of international relations. His role in the United Nations is primarily social, not intellectual. He and Barbara are very separate from their family during this time. Their energy is concentrated on George's political career first and foremost. This is one of the many times when George's political career is based on developing influential friendships rather than an ideological stance to lead the country or the world.



# Chapter 16

## Chapter 16 Summary and Analysis

George W. Bush's military record is the main focus of this chapter. Though his father is a big supporter of the war in Vietnam, he immediately takes steps to secure his son a position in the National Guard when he graduates from Yale. Bush barely passes the pilot exam and is selected for one of very few spots in the Texas Air National Guard. There are many inconsistencies in his record of military service, including a break of several months in 1972 when it is speculated that he attends a rehabilitation facility after failing a drug test. This is one of many incidents of drug and alcohol abuse given during this period of his life.

George W. Bush generally stumbles to discover his calling in life. His father arranges jobs for him. One is with an oil company, which George leaves after nine months. Another job is working for the political campaign of the Republican candidate for governor of Alabama. George goes to Alabama to work on this campaign, causing another breach of his military service record because he misses his required meetings during his time in Montgomery. The governor's campaign is a complete failure and George is left again without any job or purpose. His father arranges for him to work with a volunteer group called PULL in poor neighborhoods in Texas. George works with this program before leaving to attend Harvard Business School.

George's experience at Harvard is similar to his experience at Yale. He expresses his Texas roots as well as his contempt for liberal political views on campus. His professors and fellow students remember him negatively. His grades are poor and he is clear that his presence there is based on his connections through his family, particularly his father.

George W. Bush's military record is a continuing problem for both his family and his political career. Much of the rhetoric supported by the Bushes includes a commitment to the use of the military in international conflicts. One of the defining issues between the Republican and Democratic parties is their feeling about the Vietnam War. George W. Bush often uses the image of himself as a warrior and military patriot when he never actually served in combat and never intended to. While he is loathe to discuss such issues currently, his statements at earlier points in his life testify to his contempt for the draft and the people who were forced to serve in the war against their wills.

The other issue that comes to the forefront in this chapter is the length that the Bush family is willing to go to protect its members. The special consideration in avoiding the draft is the smallest contribution of the Bush machine to George W. Bush. His ongoing struggles with drug and alcohol addiction are constant problems that the family works hard to cover up. These initial cover-ups, combined with the later expunging of records during his various political campaigns, present a distorted picture of George W. Bush's youth and his frequent substance abuse problems.

# Chapter 17

## Chapter 17 Summary and Analysis

This chapter returns to the political career of George H.W. Bush. His time as Ambassador at the United Nations fulfills Barbara Bush's social desires. As Nixon begins his second term in office, he reshuffles his staff and places George as head of the Republican National Committee. Shortly thereafter, the Watergate scandal explodes in Washington and George is put on damage-control for the party and the president. George has immense loyalty for Nixon and works diligently to defend him and to slow the investigation into the Watergate incident. George's hard work, however, does not pay off and Nixon resigns from office before Congress can impeach him. George maintains loyalty to Nixon the person while expressing his disapproval for political reasons.

George hopes to be made the new Vice President under Ford but Ford chooses to appoint someone else. To make up for not selecting him, Ford offers George the choice of any job that he wants. He chooses to be the ambassador to the newly recognized government of Communist China. The post in China exposes many of the cracks in the marriage between George and Barbara. George begins an affair with his secretary, Jennifer Fitzgerald, as Barbara takes on more and more of a motherly role toward her husband.

The Bushes quickly grow bored of China and George leaps at the possibility of a new post from the president. Ford offers him the directorship of the CIA. George quickly accepts though his friends and family warn him that the job is very unpopular. George and his wife prepare to return to Washington to take up their new posting.

George H.W. Bush's ambition and his actual qualifications for office come into conflict in this chapter. On the one hand, Bush aspires to the highest office in the land. On the other hand, Bush is not qualified for a series of positions presented to him from President Ford. What emerges from this is the understanding that George feels entitled to some political position within the Republican Party as well as the recognition of party leaders. His position is tenuous because it rests not on his accomplishments but on his connections.

The other important issue to surface in this chapter is the relationship between George H.W. Bush and Jennifer Fitzgerald. Their relationship would come at a great political sacrifice of his loyal friends and staffers. While the affair goes against Bush's professed family values, it also symbolizes many of the problems in his marriage. Barbara Bush is often seen as more of a motherly than a wifely figure in Bush's life. Her position is one of asexuality and her role of supportive wife has taken on less emotionally binding functions. The two continue to be separated throughout much of their married life, opening the possibility as well as the motivation for the long standing affair George establishes with Jennifer Fitzgerald.



# Chapter 18

## Chapter 18 Summary and Analysis

George goes through the process of the Senate confirmation for the directorship of the CIA. He succeeds but has to give up his ambition of being Ford's next vice president. George fits in well at the CIA because there are many old friends from Yale working there. George does not learn much about the secret world of the CIA but he does use his privileges to read some confidential files about the Kennedy assassination. During his time at the CIA, Barbara goes through a severe depression and has suicidal thoughts.

After only about a year in office, George is dismissed as the director of the CIA by the newly elected president, Jimmy Carter. George is angry at his dismissal and returns to Texas with his wife. He is slowly planning his election campaign for the presidency in 1980.

At the same time, the younger Bushes are going through changes of their own. As a foreign exchange student in Mexico, Jeb meets and marries a Mexican woman, Columba. He brings her home to meet his parents, who disapprove of his marriage to someone not of their social class or status. George decides to run for the Texas State Legislature. During his campaign, he meets and marries Laura Welch, his political and personal opposite. Laura Welch, an elementary school librarian, travels with George on his failed campaign across Texas.

In this chapter, George takes on a role that is strangely suitable to him. As director of the CIA, George is privy to secrets of national importance. This power soothes his ego over his other political disappointments. In this case, his lack of knowledge of the field he is in is actually a benefit for those working around him. His staff is allowed to carry out things as they see fit as long as they give George something to make him feel connected and powerful. George's lack of knowledge becomes comical as he flaunts the spy gadgets that his staffers give him to show off. His lack of expertise allows him to maintain a good relationship with those around him because he trusts in their knowledge and does not push for his own agenda. This leadership style is often characteristic of George H.W. Bush as he moves throughout his public career. He is never known as a man of ideas or vision, but instead a servant to the overall system.





# Chapter 19

## Chapter 19 Summary and Analysis

George H.W. puts together his presidential campaign. He spends a year organizing and conducting the campaign, focusing on the first primary elections of Iowa and New Hampshire. His major opponent is Ronald Reagan. During the campaign, Bush makes very negative comments about Reagan. During formal debates, however, Bush is unable to overcome the pressure and appears weak. He slowly loses his lead in the polls and has to drop out of the election. Reagan chooses Bush to be his running mate despite his personal dislike of Bush. The two win the election in 1980 and enter Washington with strong personal dislike and political distance between them.

The Bushes are very acquiescent to the Reagans and always follow whatever the President and First Lady want. This creates an image of George as a very weak person. At the same time, George brings Jennifer Fitzgerald onto his staff, causing a lot of division among his staff, who dislike the power that Fitzgerald holds over the new Vice President. George and Fitzgerald make little attempt to hide their relationship but are protected by the press.

Politically, George Bush's first term as Vice President has high and low points. When Reagan is shot, Bush is given credit for his calm demeanor and loyalty to the President. At the same time, there are connections between the Bush family and the family of John Hinckley, the man who shot Reagan. During the re-election campaign of 1984, Bush goes against the Democratic vice Presidential candidate, Geraldine Ferraro. Bush shows his sexism towards Ferraro as well as other women in the press corps. His debates against Ferraro get favorable coverage in the press despite his lackluster performance. His personal views about women, as well as those by other members of his family, are very conservative and resistant to the role of women in public life.

After winning re-election, the next major issue of Bush's political career is the Iran-Contra affair, in which the US government secretly pays for the release of hostages in Iran while funding the activities of guerrilla groups known as the Contras in Nicaragua. Bush denies his role in the affair, but evidence exists linking both him and President Reagan. Reagan's personal popularity saves him during the political crisis as does Bush's ability to bend the truth to suit the policy of the White House.

The relationship between the Bushes and the Reagans is the stuff of legend and controversy. Reagan is undoubtedly one of the most popular presidents of all time and this reputation is based on his strength of personality. Bush represents the opposite value, studied acquiescence. Bush submits humbly to the attitude of the Reagans, people he does not respect either politically or socially. He believes himself to be better than they are but at the same time is anxious not to rock the boat in order to secure his nomination as the next president. The effort he goes to to make himself subservient to the Reagans is often comical in its attentions to protocol over self-assertion.





During the reelection campaign, Bush works hard to change his image. He is described by many as a wimpy character but he takes the opportunity to challenge the female vice presidential candidate for the opposing party, Geraldine Ferraro. Bush uses sexual differences as his method for discrediting her. Just as he often relies on racially charged campaign strategies, his choice of gender discrimination as a campaign tactic defines his understanding of how to win an election.



# Chapter 20

## Chapter 20 Summary and Analysis

This chapter follows the Bush fortunes as the family gains political clout through the career rise of George H.W. Bush. The use of family connections has long been a Bush tradition, though individual members of the family deny such maneuverings and present themselves as wealthy by their own individual efforts. The peddling of political influence becomes a common practice among the relatives of George H.W. Bush as he serves his terms as Vice President and later President. The most frequently cited abusers of this power include his brother, Prescott Bush, Jr. and his sons, Jeb, Neil, and George.

Prescott Bush uses his brother's name to begin deals with companies in Asia as well as heads of state. Many people feel that his connection to the White House through his brother assures their business ventures will get support in Washington. Though George H.W. Bush denies that this is the case and issues orders to foreign branches of the State Department not to give special treatment to his brother, many of the connections created by Prescott Bush in Asia carry over into his brother's political career, including special visits to the White House, etc. The financial floundering of Prescott Bush abroad becomes embarrassing for the Bush family at home.

Jeb Bush, the child with the most potential growing up in the Bush family, moves to Florida to start his life there. He gets his first job with a real estate firm through his father's connections. Using his father's position, Jeb arranges financial dealings with companies in South America, including some associated with organized crime. His company is never fiscally sound, but Jeb and his investors always manage to come away from deals richer, often at the tax payers' expense. Jeb uses this platform to launch his political career in Florida, moving up the ranks of the Republican Party of Miami.

Neil Bush starts his adult life in Colorado. He tries to start an oil business but gets caught up in a Savings and Loan scandal in which he both borrows and lends money between a bank that he works with and the companies that he co-owns. His loans from the bank are often earmarked for high-risk investment deals involving those who have provided funds for his shaky business start-ups. Eventually, Neil's financial maneuverings are uncovered and he is banned from banking for life. Neil claims to be persecuted by the press and returns to Texas to a job provided by his father's business connections there.

George W. Bush builds a reputation as a luckless oil investor who is always assured of funds through donors who want access to his father. He forms several oil business ventures, all of which are unsuccessful and all of which make a profit for Bush if not for the other investors. Many people invest money as a tax write off, expecting failure but wanting the prestige of doing business with the Bush family. During this period, there is also strong speculation that much of George W. Bush's business activity has

connections to South American drug business as well as the possibility of a personal drug habit on the part of George W. Bush. At the same time, Laura and George struggle to become pregnant. They have twin daughters, Jenna and Barbara, with the help of a fertility specialist.

This chapter exposes the darker side of the Bush family dynasty on world and national affairs. The stunning simplicity with which members of the family work to defraud both Americans and people abroad shows the level to which the Bush family feels a sense of entitlement to gain at the expense of others. Prescott Bush's international investment scams are both publicly condemned by the Bush White House and yet privately assured through the high level contacts that exist between the Bushes and officials all over the world. Back a home, Neil Bush's investment scams are fully funded by family connections and his ability to circumvent the law is also based on these connections. Despite the clear legal findings against him and his partners, he does not believe that he has done anything wrong. He, along with his other relatives, shows an inability to consider the lives of those around them, whose fortunes are tarnished if not lost through their risky ventures.



# Chapter 21

## Chapter 21 Summary and Analysis

This chapter opens with the inauguration of George Bush Sr. for his second term as Vice President. After a meeting to heal the rift between himself and Democratic Vice Presidential candidate, Geraldine Ferraro, Bush begins his campaign for the nomination to be the next president. This hinges on the acceptance of President Reagan and his recommendation, which Bush waits for anxiously. He gathers his family around him to help him plan his campaign. Bush transfers his girlfriend, Jennifer Fitzgerald, to another office so that there is no danger of the press discovering their relationship.

Professional pollsters advise George Bush Sr. to get in touch with some of the constituencies that he has never courted before. One such group is Jewish voters. George Bush schedules a world tour of Jewish holy sites in Israel and Holocaust sites in Poland and other parts of Eastern Europe in order to appear to be more involved in Jewish affairs. During this tour, one of the major issues that surfaces is the role of Barbara Bush. She is uncomfortable in the glare of public approval, especially regarding her appearance. She also feels strongly for the traditional role of the woman in the home, subservient to the man, which puts her out of touch with the large proportion of working women in America. The expected positive response from the Jewish population does not materialize, especially as the controversy over the freeing of hostages in Lebanon begins to receive press attention. The Bush campaign worries that this will hurt his chances of winning the Presidential nomination.

On a personal front, Marvin Bush develops colitis, an intestinal problem that requires many operations. His wife develops cancer around the same time. George W. Bush falls deeper into alcoholism, embarrassing his family and causing strain on their relationship. He is not able to attend family functions for several years because of his uncontrollable drinking. He turns to Bible study as a way to overcome his alcoholism. He is invited back into the family business, campaigning for his father, during this time.

During the opening of the campaign, one of the potential problems is George Sr.'s relationship with Jennifer Fitzgerald. The Gary Hart scandal brings to the forefront the idea that politicians are no longer protected by the press in regards to their sexual affairs. George uses his family image to try to show that he is a good and respectable person. Many people in the press question this tactic and work to show him as unconnected to his family, as having problems in his family, and as politically ineffectual. George Bush Jr. attacks reporters and others who write such opinions about his father, often becoming violent and abusive.

Bush gains some strength in his reputation by challenging Dan Rather during a live television interview. At the same time, he faces tough questions about his war record and is challenged by those that knew him during World War II. Bush receives another blow when the President offers him a weak and reluctant nod as his successor. During a



dinner party, Reagan states that Bush is his choice for the next president but then leaves abruptly without giving any real support. This infuriates the Bush family. Bush scrambles to improve his standing in the public view. He takes elocution lessons to improve his public speaking and relies on his aides to come up with the slogan, "Read my lips, no new taxes," which defines his campaign. He also selects his running mate, Dan Quayle, a young and inexperienced senator, because he thinks Quayle's handsome appearance will appeal to female voters.

Despite these difficulties, Bush is elected president in 1988. Pollsters during the election state that most voters explained their choice as a vote against the other side and that most voters did not approve of either Bush or his opponent, Michael Dukakis. After his election, Bush sends notes to those who had opposed his nomination and election in an attempt to smooth things over. He also faces the challenge of a divided government during his term as president.

In this chapter, Bush comes into his own as he makes the transition from the Vice President to the Presidency. Again, his chief campaign tactic is fear, in the form of a racially charged attack against Michael Dukakis. At the same time, George Bush's carefully crafted supporting role for Reagan only gives him the very weakest of endorsements from the man he served doggedly for eight years. Incidents such as these show the personal conflicts within George Bush and his sense that he has earned his power through his long self-abasement in the service of others.

The other recurring issues in this chapter is the role of Barbara Bush and all women in the Bush family. Barbara Bush is insistent on her supportive role as the wife and mother of her family. She is adamantly opposed to the ways in which women live throughout the country. Instead, she relies on a relationship based on the subservience of the woman and the power of the man. Her beliefs set her at odds with many women's groups throughout her time as First Lady. This idea, however, is one that is continued in her daughter-in-law, Laura, when she becomes First Lady.



# Chapter 22

## Chapter 22 Summary and Analysis

George Bush Sr.'s term as president is characterized by many important events. One of the first factors to emerge is the popularity of Barbara Bush, who sets out to show herself as a simple grandmother who is very different from her predecessor, Nancy Reagan. She is known to be very angry and abusive to her staff and those who cross her but in most public venues, she is portrayed as simple and kind. This image continues throughout her time in the White House, despite many opinions by staff and family that she is not the wallflower that she is portrayed as. One of her most important acts is writing a book about her dog, Millie, who is her constant companion at the White House.

George's political outlook is not good during the opening years of his administration. During the first two weeks, he nominates a Secretary of Defense who is rejected by Congress. This is a major blow to Bush, and throws off a lot of his presidency. Another major incident is when Bush goes against his famous campaign promise of "no new taxes" by passing a large tax increase. Bush reacts to many of these setbacks with a reliance on personal loyalty. He becomes well known for the vindictive nature of his relationships with those who he feels have betrayed him. Many notable figures are barred from the White House in retribution for their public or private statements or actions that Bush feels are negative towards him.

The event that shifts attention in the Bush White House is the emerging problems with Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher urges Bush to take strong action against Hussein and his invasion of Kuwait. Bush consults many people before making his decision to oust Iraq from Kuwait. After quick debates in Congress and the United Nations, it is decided to pursue a military action against Saddam Hussein's forces in Kuwait. This would be one of the defining events of George Bush's presidency as well as offering fodder for the presidency of his son.

One of the issues that spans the presidencies of both George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush is the conflict with the nation of Iraq and its leader, Saddam Hussein. During the administration of the father, the initial conflict with this Middle Eastern nation begins when Saddam Hussein's forces invade Kuwait, one of the allies of the United States. In characteristic indecision, George H.W. Bush is unable to come to a decision about what to do in Iraq and follows the advice of much stronger willed leaders, such as Britain's Margaret Thatcher. Thatcher's concerns for George's ability to stick to the decision to invade show the way that he is perceived abroad.

The war against Iraq is one of the most popular acts of his presidency and pushes his poll numbers to the highest in history. The events following the end of the war, including the lack of a definitive solution to Iraq, will carry over into the presidency of his son, who will make the relationship between the US and Iraq one of his top priorities.



# Chapter 23

## Chapter 23 Summary and Analysis

During Bush's presidency, several key events occur. The first of these is his nomination of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court. Bush treads a fine line in this nomination because he wants to appoint someone who clearly supports conservative values such as opposition to abortion but who can appeal to those who support civil rights. Bush counts on Thomas' skin color to give him a boost in Civil Rights. The plan backfires when Thomas becomes embroiled in a sexual harassment allegation from Anita Hill. Controversy takes over the hearings as both sides tell their stories. Though Thomas is narrowly approved for the Supreme Court, the fallout from the nomination forces Bush to sign the Civil Rights Act of 1991.

The second major event of his presidency is the Rodney King trial and its aftermath in Los Angeles. Bush misses many crucial opportunities to take a strong stance during this event. Bill Clinton, who is emerging as a contender for the presidency in 1992, uses the event to his advantage to show his concern for the average citizens affected by the rioting. Bush, on the other hand, does not show the same level of response or does so too late. This event underscores any hope he has of appealing to those concerned with civil rights in his upcoming campaign.

During the campaign, Bush's affair with Jennifer Fitzgerald gains public attention. Though he and his aides deny the story, everyone connected with the Bush campaign knows that the allegations are true. This story competes with allegations describing Bill Clinton's affair with Gennifer Flowers. While Clinton accepts some responsibility for this affair, the Bush campaign becomes mired in the denials of Bush's affair with Fitzgerald. The issue comes to a head during a Rose Garden press conference when reporters ask Bush directly to explain the affair. The family is devastated by this line of questioning. The election unfolds and Clinton is proclaimed the winner. The Bushes pack up their belongings and leave the White House. What they leave behind them is an ongoing military conflict in Somalia for the newly elected Clinton to deal with.

While Bush is successful internationally with his stance in Kuwait, he suffers at home from a lack of compassion for the events unfolding in various parts of the nation. His selection of Clarence Thomas, done with a sense of tokenism for his race, inadvertently divides the nation. Bush, never strong on gender issues, comes across as a supporter of a old boys' club mentality that supports sexual harassment. As if that was not enough, Bush shows his lack of concern for race relations in his characteristically weak approach to the Rodney King trial and the ensuing riots. In both instances, he has a chance to show himself as connected and involved in the issues that affect common people, but instead he chooses to avoid confronting these tough issues and remains viewed as both weak as a president and disconnected as a man.



# Chapter 24

## Chapter 24 Summary and Analysis

After George Bush Senior leaves office, his two sons both decide to run for governor of their respective states. George runs for governor of Texas against Ann Richards while Jeb runs for office in Florida. Their campaign styles are very different. Jeb runs with fire and energy while George is restrained during his campaign. He hopes to turn his ownership of the Texas Rangers into a selling point of his campaign. He also learns valuable lessons in appearing to relate to the common person in order to win the election. George is successful in his election but Jeb is not. George is disappointed by his father's concentration on his brother's campaign rather than his own.

George and Barbara Bush take to retirement with gusto. They command very high fees for speeches and public appearances and travel extensively to speaking engagements all over the world. They raise a lot of money and cement strong friendships with various members of the global elite, including the royal family of Kuwait. During their time in the Middle East visiting these contacts, there is an plan to kill George by the Iraqi president. This will remain in the mind of George W. Bush during his own presidential term, spurring his own involvement in Iraq.

Though only George is successful in 1994, both brothers are successful in 1998 when each of them wins the governorship of their states, Florida and Texas. The double victories prompt many to wonder about the future of the Bush family in politics and hint at presidential ambitions. At the same time, George and Barbara work for various charities and build the presidential library to commemorate George Sr.'s time in presidential office.

As George H.W. Bush's political career comes to a close, his two sons enter the political arena with energy. Jeb Bush has always been the favorite in the family and this is clear in the level of support he receives from his parents. George W. Bush, on the other hand, is the black sheep of the family. No one takes his run seriously and he is often hurt by the lack of interest in his political career on the part of his father. Despite this, the two campaigns show the brothers in very contrasting roles. Jeb, feeling buoyed by the support of his family and connections, takes tough stands on issues and ends up alienating a large swath of his voting block. George, on the other hand, in an uncharacteristic move, takes on a much more low key role in his challenge to a popular Texas governor. Instead of forcing his positions, he courts the different groups in the state and works to gain their trust. The other key campaign tactic that George employs is his use of the "country boy" image to make voters believe that he is one of them and understands them.





# Chapter 25

## Chapter 25 Summary and Analysis

After winning reelection as the governor of Texas, George W. Bush trains his eyes on the presidency. He feels that he has been called by God to run for national office. In anticipation of his campaign, his family and powerful friends work to cover up some of the unsavory facts of his past. This includes making sure that his academic records are sealed and cleaning up his arrest record. One of the issues that worries his staff is his previous alcohol problem. It is important for the Bush campaign to present an image of family - values and respectability in order to contrast with the outgoing Clinton administration.

Tied in with Bush's former alcoholism is the strain on his marriage with Laura Bush. During their marriage, many friends and staffers remember close calls in the areas of spousal abuse, though no charges were actually filed. The couple's marriage is very fragile. The two rarely spend time together or show any display of affection in public. Instead, each pursues a separate lifestyle. Laura Bush establishes her dominant relationships with her friends and takes separate vacations during much of their marriage. Bush family members comment on how removed Laura Bush is from the family network. She often sits apart of other family members at gatherings and shows little to no interest in her husband's political career.

Bush's campaign heats up with the opening primaries of the election season. His main opponent in the Republican primaries is John McCain. Bush launches an intensive campaign, charging McCain with having a bad character, including comments on his wife and children. McCain fights back with similar advertisements. For the first few primaries, the two go back and forth in winning and losing. However, by the end of the primary season, Bush carries the Republican nomination. He chooses Dick Cheney as his running mate. Cheney is the head of the energy company, Halliburton, and a close political and economic ally to the Bush clan.

After running a close election against the Democratic candidate, Vice President Al Gore, Bush's path to the White House is blocked by a problem with voting in Florida, the state controlled by his brother, Jeb. The race is too close to call and the Florida Supreme Court orders a recount of the votes in order to determine the winner. The case goes before the Supreme Court, who decide to halt the recount and declare Bush the winner. Al Gore concedes victory to George.

George W. Bush's campaign for presidency borrows from both the strengths and weaknesses of his father's campaigns. After years in politics, George knows what is successful and what is not. He avoids the issues that he feels were mistakes for his father while concentrating on the issues that he thinks make the most resounding connection with voters. One tactic borrowed from his father is the use of character

assassination in the case of his primary election against John McCain. George hits hard at his opponent and presents himself as the man who represents family values.

At the same time Bush's family is not in the best shape. His relationship with his wife has long since deteriorated past the point of recovery. The two are rarely seen together and often vacation separately from each other. Fortunately for him, his brother has secured the governorship in Florida and can assist him in the constitutional struggle over the counting of the ballots in his first election.



# Chapter 26

## Chapter 26 Summary and Analysis

The early days of George W. Bush's first term in office are marred by problems. In playing to his conservative base, Bush launches many initiatives against abortion and stem cell research. The tide turns quickly after the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. Though Bush initially reacts slowly and without focus, he gains momentum as he participates in planning the reaction of the United States to the terrorist attacks. His first task is his invasion of Afghanistan, which is supported by the international community. Secondly, he pursues Saddam Hussein in Iraq, an action that does not meet with the same international approval. Nevertheless, Bush moves forward, urged on by his belief that he has been chosen for this role by God. He works diligently to show the war as a positive outcome for democracy and the fight against terrorism. During 2004, he makes a dramatic appearance on an air craft carrier to announce the end of combat in Iraq, something that continues for many years after despite his announcement.

In this final chapter, the idea of Bush political dynasty begins to take shape. The Bushes are compared to John Adams and John Quincy Adams, the only other father and son pair to be elected president. The comparison shows the Bush family in a light that is not particularly favorable. Instead, it is characterized by the pair's lack of ideological or academic foundation. George Bush Sr. is reluctant to use the term dynasty because of its connotations of wealth and influence. Instead he wants his family to be respected as individuals and self-made men.

The Bush legacy currently stands with the generation of George W. Bush and his brother, Jeb. Their children, however, do not exhibit any of the qualities of national leaders. George Bush's twin daughters, Jenna and Barbara, experience long-term press coverage of their dangerous drinking habits. Jeb's daughter, Noelle, spends much of her time in and out of drug rehabilitation centers. The marriage of George and Laura Bush also shows signs of fatigue, though many close friends and family applaud Laura's work to keep the relationship together despite George's disrespect and dismissal of his wife.

This chapter analyzes the Bush dynasty. George Bush Sr. is loathe to use the word dynasty because of its connotations of wealth and privilege. This is characteristic of the Bush family, who use connections to achieve their aims but then deny them. Each member of the Bush dynasty claims to have made his own fortune without the helps of family or friends. In each case, however, this has not been true. All that the Bushes have accomplished comes from this network of connections, both within the family and outside of it.

The current generation of young Bushes, however, does not stand poised to inherit the throne. The constant alcohol problems of the Bush twins, Jenna and Barbara are the fuel of tabloid media. Jeb Bush's children, as well, are in the public eye, not as

examples of perfect family values, as their parent would prefer, but as examples of privilege gone awry.



## **Characters**

**George Walker Bush**

**George Hebert Walker Bush**

**Barbara Bush (senior)**

**Laura Bush**

**Prescott Bush**

**Jeb Bush**

**Neil Bush**

**Jenna and Barbara Bush**

**Jennifer Fitzgerald**

**Richard Nixon**

**Richard Cheney**

**Geraldine Ferraro**

**Bill Clinton**

**Dorothy Walker**



## Objects/Places

### Kennebunkport, Maine

The Bush-Walker clan creates a vacation enclave in Maine where the family gathers almost every summer. Usually a family member's position in the family is determined by whether or not they attend these family gatherings.

### Midland, Texas

During the 1950s and 60s, Midland is a small town waiting to be tapped in the oil speculation frenzy. George and Barbara Bush move there when it is still a small town and remain during its quick boom to success.

### The United Nations

George H.W. Bush serves as the Ambassador to the United Nations as a political favor from President Nixon. He serves during the transfer of Security Council powers from Taiwan to Communist China.

### China

When he is denied the Vice Presidency by President Ford, George H.W. Bush suggests the ambassadorship to China as his next post. He and his wife stay there for a year but do not make much headway on the diplomatic front. It is during his posting to China that Bush establishes his relationship with Jennifer Fitzgerald.

### Florida

When Jeb and Columba Bush feel discriminated against in Texas they move to Florida. Here Jeb establishes himself in the real estate industry before moving on to politics. He is elected governor in 1998. During his brother's 2000 presidential campaign, Florida is the deciding state. The decision of the Florida Supreme Court to recount the votes is overturned by the Supreme Court, giving the election to George Bush.

### Houston, Texas

Houston is the political base first of George H.W. Bush and later George W. Bush. The elder arranges for congressional redistricting in order to secure a Republican seat.



## **The Texas Rangers**

George W. Bush buys the struggling team and turns a huge profit when he sells them just prior to his gubernatorial campaign.

## **Andover**

Andover is an elite boy's preparatory school in Massachusetts. It becomes a family tradition to send the sons of the Bush family to this school.

## **Yale**

Yale University is the traditional alma mater of the Bush family. Prescott and George H.W. Bush establish strong ties to the school while George W. Bush dislikes the school and distances himself from it during his adult life.

## **Harvard Business School**

After failing at several business ventures, George attends Harvard Business School. He is just as callous toward this institution as he is toward Yale.

## **Skull and Bones Society**

The Skull and Bones Society is a secret society on the Yale campus. Many of the people who belong to this organization have high positions of power. The society serves as a network of the powerful. Prescott, George H.W. and George W. Bush all become members.

## **DKE**

DKE is the fraternity favored by Bush men. All the Bush men who attend Yale also join this fraternity.

## **Nicaragua**

During the 1980s, the communists take over Nicaragua. Reagan administration give money and weapons to the Contras, a group of non-communists who fight against the leaders of Nicaragua.



## **The Iran - Contra Scandal**

The sale of weapons of Iran in order to secure the release of hostages results in money that is spent to fund the Contras in Nicaragua. This highly secret and highly illegal maneuver takes place during the Reagan administration and his Vice President, George H.W. Bush takes a lot of criticism for his role in it.

## **The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)**

The CIA is the leading branch of the secret intelligence gathering services of the United States. George H.W. Bush acts as the Director of the CIA for one year.

## **Savings and Loan Scandal**

During the 1980s, many Savings and Loans businesses go bankrupt because of the risky investments of their bankers. Neil Bush participates in such ventures during his time in Colorado. He testifies before Congress, is fined, and barred from banking in Colorado for life.





# Themes

## Yale as a Family Tradition

Yale University is a family tradition, especially among the men of the Bush family. Most of the men in the family attend this university. Until the 1970s, members of the family with low grades could still attend as legacies from their famous relatives. Prescott Bush attends Yale and falls in love with the University. He forms bonds in the Skull and Bones Society and the DKE fraternity. After his graduation, he remains intimately connected to the activities of the school.

George H.W. Bush attends Yale after finishing his service in World War II. He lives with his young wife Barbara and his first child is born there. George studies hard and graduates in only three years. He joins the same organizations as his father and develops a sense of pride in his connection to the University. He becomes a dedicated athlete and plays baseball for the Yale team.

George W. Bush would not be accepted to Yale were it not for his family connections. From the very beginning, he shows great disdain for the university and the people who attend it. Though he manages to join the same organizations as his father and grandfather, he distances himself from the other students at Yale. After graduation, he avoids all contact with Yale until he is elected president. He throws a class reunion at the White House to showcase his success to his former classmates. Many choose not to attend because of his political practices.

## The Self Made Man

The legend of the self made man permeates the Bush family despite their obvious connections and privileges. Each successive generation of Bushes is determined to make his own fortune and use that fortune to gain political and public recognition. Prescott Bush goes into the investment banking field during the Roaring Twenties and Depression. He manages to accumulate a fortune in this way. He insists that this fortune is self made despite the connections to both his own family and his wife's family that enable him to be successful in business.

George H.W. Bush has the same idea when he moves to Texas. He is determined to make a fortune in the oil industry. Though he insists on his independence from his father, his business success is directly attributable to his family connections and the influence that they have both in generating opportunities and in securing the legal rights for his business ventures.

George W. Bush's claims to independence are even more tenuous than his father's. George is behind a series of failed oil ventures which are directly funded by his family's wealthy friends. At every point during his life, his family finds him a job to do at a very high salary for very little work and no qualifications. Bush's fortunes are made in scams

both in business and in politics, as he uses his family's name to gain power for himself. His brothers, Neil and Jeb, also use the family name to build their own fortunes.

## **Gender Roles in the Bush Family**

Throughout the generations of Bush political power, one of the constant themes is the loyalty and submissiveness of the women of the family. Each generation has its matriarch who directs the actions of other family members and keeps the family from falling apart. The first of these is Dorothy Walker Bush. She raises her sons to compete fiercely and care only about winning. She is supportive of her husband during his political career and works tirelessly on his campaigns.

Barbara Bush takes the same stance with her own husband. George H.W. Bush leans on her to make sacrifices to further his political aims. Their marriage grows distant but she is always supportive of him. During his campaigns for Vice President and President, Barbara is very vocal about her views on the traditional roles of women. The Bush men are also very clear in their expectations for women within the family.

Laura Bush is both an exception and a further proof of the gender roles in the Bush family. Though highly educated with a career of her own before marrying Bush, Laura takes on the traditional role of wife and mother after marriage. However, the tensions in the marriage between Laura and George create a different relationship between her and her husband. While she maintains the traditional role throughout their marriage, she shows little interest in his political career and separates herself from him.

# Style

## Points of View

The book is told through the third person. It is somewhat omniscient in that it attempts to recreate the thoughts and feelings of some of the characters. However, for the most part, the book is based on factual recreations of the events of Bush family history. The point of view is often critical of the people being discussed, particularly with regard to the two presidents in the Bush family. The tone adopted throughout the book makes it clear that the narrator has a negative view of the Bush family and the political values it stands for.

The point of view encompasses many sources of information about the Bushes, including family letters and memoirs along with newspaper articles and personal interviews. The facts presented are backed up with historical documents and family photographs. Some of these sources are presented directly as inserts in the text while others are explained and cataloged in the notes section at the end of the book.

## Setting

The book spans the Bush family history, focusing mainly on the family activities in Washington, D.C., Connecticut, and Texas. Each location centers on the political and business activities of the particular Bush family members who live and work there. Often the location is described in detail to lend a sense of historical accuracy to the portrayal. At other times, the location remains vague while the activities of the Bush family are expanded on.

Some particular places of note in the book are the White House and other governmental buildings. Because of the Bush family's personal connections to these places, there is a lot of detail about where people live and work as well as how these positions reflect their power and influence in the larger political realm. The move from the Vice Presidential mansion to the Presidential one is something described in detail as well as the final days of the elder Bush's occupancy of the White House.

## Language and Meaning

The book is written in straightforward English which should not be difficult for the average reader. The issues that could be problematic are the historical events that are described here. The narrator describes many of these events in detail and provides the historical background for the reader to understand them without any outside knowledge of the events or people involved.

The book has a clearly political viewpoint and much of the language used to refer to the Bush family and others is very negative. This is one of the defining features of the text

and is consistent throughout the book. The narrator makes no apologies for this clear political stance against the Bush family and often against other members of the Republican Party or the wealthy upper class of America.

## **Structure**

The book is divided into 26 chapters. Each chapter focuses on one member of the family though often contains information about other family members as well. During the early sections of the book, when Prescott Bush's life is described, the narrator compares it to how a younger Bush family member will handle the same situation.

There are several inserts of pictures and other historical documents. Each of these has a detailed caption that explains what the picture or documents is and how it relates to narrative. These inserts provide an ongoing visual documentation of the events and people that are presented in the narrative and allow the reader to connect with the text.



## Quotes

"Long before women got the vote and feminists looked like troublemakers in lace bonnets, Samuel Bush had accepted his wife as his equal." (Chapter 1, page 17)

"For all his reprehensible views on race and eugenics, D.D. Walker was surprisingly emancipated toward suffragettes, and endorsed women's right to vote. In contrast, his great-great-grandson said that admitting women to Yale in 1969 'changed the social dynamic for the worse.'" (Chapter 2, Page 30)

"Prescott continued selling rubber-tile flooring for another two years until his father-in-law pulled the golden cord that transformed an itinerant salesman into an investment banker." (Chapter 3, Page 40)

"Since the United States allowed no direct commerce with the Nazis, Bert devised a scheme for a Swiss bank, fronting for the German owners of Silesian-American, to buy the shares of the American owners and pay off the bondholders." (Chapter 4, Page 56)

"The war blurred all class lines by putting the sons of the rich shoulder to shoulder with the sons of the poor." (Chapter 5, Page 69)

"Even with the added responsibility of fatherhood, George maintained his frantic pace, entertaining constantly and traveling with the Yale baseball team for all their out-of-town games." (Chapter 6, Page 83)

"For most of his life, George remained insensitive to the imperative of racial justice and had a consistently less than admirable record on civil rights." (Chapter 8, Page 111)

"Pearson examined Prescott's voting record and determined that the senator's votes concurred with the views of his big contributors on many more than financial matters." (Chapter 10, 136)

"For the first time since Reconstruction, the Texas GOP felt emboldened to make such a demand and challenge Democrat dominance." (Chapter 12, Page 179)

"For a public school kid from Midland, Texas, who did not know his way around grammar and had never met a dictionary, Andover was academic boot camp." (Chapter 14, Page 216)

"His six-month penalty was never reported by the press, but no one realized then that he would one day be sending American forces into combat to do what he would not do: become cannon fodder." (Chapter 16, Page 249)

"Both Democrats and Republicans had objected to him as being too partial, too political, and too partisan." (Chapter 18, Page 282)



"A glimpse into the business dealings of the Bush family shows that they acquired their wealth through the intermingling of public policy and private interests." (Chapter 20, Page 329)

"She said she might convert Nancy's beauty salon into a playroom for the Bushes' eleven grandchildren, drawing another galling contrast with the Reagans, whose family was so fractured that few people recalled grandchildren ever visiting them in the White House." (Chapter 22, Page 385)

"In 1978 George's mother bankrolled his campaign with her Christmas card list, a roster of 4738 names of 'close family friends' collected during her husband's Yale years, oil years, campaign years, and UN, China, and congressional years." (Chapter 24, Page 457)

"People bask in the glow of his public image as a faithful husband and faultless father; people want to believe that he and his family has achieved their prominence in American life not because they have spun a shadowy web of oil and money and influence that they sustained through four generations with political muscle but because, as the Bushes have said so often about themselves, they cherish their children, they practice their religion, and they encourage public service." (Chapter 26, Page 473)



## Topics for Discussion

Compare and contrast the rise to power of two of the Bush presidents.

What role do the women of the Bush family play in their political success?

What role does the issue of substance abuse play in each generation of the Bush family?

How does the marriage of Jeb and Columba Bush provide both challenge and assistance to the Bush political ambitions?

How do the various war experiences of the Bush clan shape who they are as politicians?

How do the less famous members of the Bush family maintain their connection to the core of the family?

How does the image of the self-made man conflict with the financial histories of the Bush patriarchs?