Profiles in Courage Study Guide

Profiles in Courage by John F. Kennedy

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Introduction

Throughout his youth, John F. Kennedy suffered numerous ailments. When he endured two near-fatal spine operations in 1954, he decided to put his recovery period to good use. He and his aides (he was a U.S. Senator at the time) began a book profiling American politicians he admired for their courage and individualism in the face of party and constituent pressures. Kennedy was particularly struck by how these nine men were willing to risk their political careers to maintain the integrity of their personal value systems and their love of country. This book, of course, became *Profiles in Courage*, which was published in 1956.

The book won the 1957 Pulitzer Prize for biography, in addition to the American Library Association Notable Book Award and the Christopher Book Award, both in 1956. In 1989, Kennedy's brother, Senator Edward Kennedy, established an annual Profile in Courage award based on the principles set forth in the book. It is given every year on John F. Kennedy's birthday to an elected official (past or present) whose career represents courage and integrity in the face of political pressure. The prize includes $25,000 and a silver lantern. The prize is intended to keep the spirit of *Profiles in Courage* alive.

Author Biography

John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the author of *Profiles in Courage*, was born on May 29, 1917, in Brookline, Massachusetts. He was the second of nine children born to Joseph and Rose Kennedy, who pushed their children to strive to accomplish great things. Joseph was an ambitious man who pinned his political hopes on his oldest son, Joe. When Joe died in 1944, however, Joseph's attention turned to John. Although John had been sickly as a child, he was accepted into the Navy during World War II. After a 1943 incident at sea, John was declared a war hero. Kennedy's military service, family name, and excellent education (London School of Economics, Harvard, and Stanford Business School) gave him a strong start in politics. He had not planned on a political career, but he felt a sense of responsibility toward his family now that he was the oldest. Once he entered public service, he found it a rewarding path.

In 1946, Kennedy won a seat in Congress as a representative of Massachusetts, and in 1952, he became a U.S. senator. Because Republicans won most of the 1952 elections, Kennedy's victory earned him the respect of the Democratic Party. His career was developing quickly, and, in 1960, he won his party's presidential nomination. Kennedy's battle cry was a call for action and national greatness.

The 1960 election was the first in which television played a strong role in winning votes. While most commentators found that the candidates' views were not radically different, they agreed that Kennedy's poise and good looks created the perception among many voters that he was more qualified for the position. Still, his victory over Richard Nixon came by a narrow margin of only 12,000 votes.

Kennedy proved to be a dynamic and eloquent public speaker, and the American people were responsive and optimistic. In addition, Kennedy had a stylish wife and an all-American family, which contributed to his public image. In spite of all this, his presidency was a difficult one, marked by crises abroad and civil rights struggles at home. Kennedy was credited with creating a renewed sense of patriotism but was also criticized for thriving on conflict. When he was assassinated in Dallas by Lee Harvey Oswald on November 22, 1963, the nation mourned. Although historians debate the realities of Kennedy's "Camelot" years, Kennedy continues to be among Americans' favorite presidents.

Plot Summary

Preface and Part One

In the preface to *Profiles in Courage*, Kennedy discusses his interest in the "problems of political courage in the face of constituent pressures, and the light shed on those problems by the lives of past statesmen." He describes the three types of pressure faced by senators: pressure to be liked, pressure to be re-elected, and pressure of the constituency and interest groups.

Kennedy provides a brief history of the U.S. Senate and moves on to his discussion of John Quincy Adams. In office, Adams supported measures he thought were best for the country, with little regard for his party's stances on various issues. Further, he would not back away from legislation such as Jefferson's proposed embargo against the British in 1807 that would have negative consequences for his state of Massachusetts. It was this embargo, in fact, that ultimately led to Adams' status as an outcast in his own party and state.

Faced with certain replacement, Adams resigned his Senate seat. Years later, he would be elected President, a term he would serve as an independent, rather than as a member of the Federalist Party. After his White House years, Adams was asked to run for Congress, which he did under two conditions. First, he would not campaign, and second, he would serve as an independent, free of party and constituent pressures. He won by a landslide, and served in Congress until his death.

Part Two

The three men discussed in part two demonstrated courage during the years leading up to the Civil War. Kennedy commends the men who, despite constituent demands, protected the nation's unity.

Daniel Webster had always been an outspoken critic of slavery. In 1850, Henry Clay, a pro-slavery southerner, had a plan for a compromise that would keep the Union intact, but he needed Webster's support. Webster knew that everyone would be shocked at his support for a plan that negotiated with slave-holding states. Still, his top priority was to hold the Union together, so he agreed.

Webster was well known as an orator, and people came from everywhere to hear his speech favoring Clay's Compromise of 1850. Webster held everyone's attention for over three hours, and although many denounced his stance, enough people were persuaded to accept the compromise. This success cost Webster his dream of becoming president; his position on that day would forever keep him from garnering enough support.

Thomas Hart Benton was a U.S. senator from Missouri, a slave-holding state, yet he valued the Union above all. The people of Missouri began to feel that they should take

sides with the southern states that wanted to secede, but Benton disagreed and never slowed his efforts to preserve the Union. He also refused to acknowledge slavery as a major issue because he believed that the Missouri Compromise of 1820 (which brought Missouri into the Union) made slavery an issue of the past.

In 1851, Benton lost his place in the Senate, but he later returned to the House of Representatives as St. Louis' congressman. Realizing that this was his last opportunity to make a difference, he delivered a speech denouncing the Kansas-Nebraska Bill (which permitted slavery in the new territories of Kansas and Nebraska as a concession to the South and which was sponsored by Benton's own Democratic Party). Despite his political failures, his efforts on behalf of the Union prevented Missouri from joining other southern states seeking secession.

Sam Houston also took an unpopular stand against the Kansas-Nebraska Bill. Houston's stance came as an unpleasant surprise to his constituents. He opposed it because it reversed the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which Houston believed to be a "solemn and sacred compact between the North and South."

When Sam Houston first became a U.S. senator, he shared the beliefs and concerns of his constituents. As time passed, Houston found himself increasingly at odds with the people he represented. While he came from a slave-holding state, he believed fervently in the preservation of the Union. His criticism of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill and his opposition to secession led to the end of his Senate career. When he returned to his state, he found that the governor was encouraging secession. In 1859, Houston ran for governor of Texas and won.

As Texas' new governor, Houston found himself entrenched in the secession issue. Public sentiment grew in favor of secession, and a Secession Convention was formed. In 1860, a vote was overwhelmingly cast in favor of secession. The convention declared that Texas was part of the Confederacy and that all public officials were required to take anew oath. Houston refused and, soon after, resigned.

Part Three

Edmund G. Ross was a little-known senator who single-handedly prevented the conviction of President Andrew Johnson after Johnson was impeached. When Ross was elected to the Senate, a battle was raging between Congress and the president. The Radical Republicans (a faction of the Republican Party) planned to get rid of Johnson, but they needed a two-thirds majority to convict him after his impeachment. They never questioned Ross' intentions, but when it came time to vote, seven Republicans voted against conviction, and Ross was among them. His vote was important because the Radical Republicans had counted on it, so they lacked the number of votes needed for conviction. Ross might have enjoyed a long career in politics, but this single decision brought the end of his career in public office. Twenty years later, his reputation was restored and his act of courage was acknowledged.

Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus Lamar made quite an impression in 1874 when he addressed the U.S. House of Representatives in a moving speech lamenting the death of Charles Sumner. Lamar was from Mississippi, a state plagued by the Reconstruction efforts of Sumner. Lamar's speech demonstrated his commitment to bringing peace between the North and the South despite his own background as a passionate southerner. The speech also raised Lamar's status among his colleagues, although his constituents were divided in their reactions. Lamar was harshly criticized by the people of Mississippi when, as a U.S. senator, he became involved in the close presidential race of 1876. When an Electoral Commission, approved by Lamar, gave the election to Hayes, the South was enraged and accused Lamar of accepting political bribes in exchange for his vote. Still, Lamar stood behind the action of the Electoral Commission.

A third instance brought Lamar in conflict with the people of his state. In 1877, the "free silver" movement sought free coinage of any silver. Under the free coinage system, any citizen would have been able to take silver to the U.S. mint and exchange it for its equivalent in coins. While people saw this as a solution to money problems, Lamar saw it as an economic disaster. He refused to vote in favor of it, then launched a statewide speaking tour to explain his decision. As a result, the people of Mississippi continued to support Lamar's political career, and he ultimately became a justice on the U.S. Supreme Court.

Part Four

Kennedy discusses three instances of outstanding courage displayed by George Norris of Nebraska. First, Norris managed to secure the resignation of the powerful Speaker of the House, Joe Cannon, a move that released the House from a conservative Republican stronghold. Second, in 1917, he staged a filibuster in an effort to stop President Wilson from arming American merchant ships, which Norris believed would only increase the chances of the United States entering World War I. The filibuster proved unpopular among Norris' constituents, and he worked hard to regain their trust. The filibuster ultimately failed when Wilson discovered that he did not need congressional approval to arm the ships. Third, Norris campaigned for a presidential candidate, Al Smith, who was unpopular with the people of Nebraska. Hoover won the election by a landslide, a victory that included almost every county in Nebraska. Despite his political failures, Norris expressed satisfaction that he always stood for what he believed, which is what was most important to him.

Robert A. Taft was known for voicing his opinions, but when he made an unprompted speech criticizing the Nuremberg trials and their death sentences, he earned harsh reprimands from his party. Going into the election of 1946, the Republicans expected great success. When Taft (a Republican) delivered his speech, they feared that it would cost them valuable seats in Congress. Taft felt that the injustice done during the trials was too much to ignore, and he voiced his disapproval. Taft did not advocate any of the actions taken by the Nazis during World War II. However, he felt that the trials and their strict punishments were designed after the fact; the war criminals had no way of

knowing that they might later be charged and sentenced to death for actions taken in war.

While public sentiment turned against Taft, Republicans waited nervously. By the time the election was held, Republicans won the seats they had expected to win, and there was no long-term damage done by Taft's speech.

Kennedy concludes the book with a brief discussion of other men of political courage, emphasizing that such courage is not a thing of the past.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

This chapter explains that the book is about the author's admiration of the courage shown by elected leaders in the face of adverse factions like their electorates, popular opinion and political action committees that pull these elected men in different directions. Hemingway's definition of courage as grace under pressure is noted early in the chapter because this book is about courage and its different faces as shown in the lives of eight different United States senators.

The author quotes a reporter saying that people don't care about what the elected officials say because most of it is untrue anyway. A cabinet member suggested in the same vein that most Senators are mentally weak, unfit to be senators and vulgar demagogues. This concern for the cabinet's integrity was quoted in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, indicating a historical disregard for integrity in government and politics.

The author does not completely agree with Lippman, but he expresses concern that our nation has forgotten what courage is, and because it has forgotten what it is, does not value it or demand it in its elected officials. He also states his contention that business concerns and the competition for attention from the public has made courageous acts by politicians and government officials difficult to notice when they do occur. The social and public pressure that prevents courageous acts is not well understood by the common man.

The first of the three pressures he names is the American need to be well liked. The author contends that very few commoners understand the extent of this pressure on elected officials. In fact, the author quotes advice he was given when he first became a Congressman: "The way to get along is to go along." This pressure is alleviated by compromise.

The second pressure is the pressure an elected official feels to get re-elected. Sometimes this urge becomes a pressure when doing what is necessary to get re-elected is not what a leader would do if he did not have that pressure. The third and most compelling pressure that an elected official feels is how to make decisions that satisfy his constituency when he does not feel it is the decision that will best serve the nation as a whole.

Chapter 1 Analysis

The author is sympathetic to the plight of the elected official as he discusses the difficult landscape an elected official faces by nature of his being elected by constituents, and his often heartfelt desire to do the best job possible for his constituency and his nation

upon which his constituency is dependent, when sometimes the two require different actions.

The elected official faces regular scrutiny by his constituents and electorate who voted him into office. He is elected by his constituents and is often torn by the desire and the expectations of the constituents for the elected official's responsibility to represent their needs. They want to know where he stands on issues and how he votes, and if they don't like his views or his votes, they make their voices heard - which can be detrimental to the elected official as well as difficult personally to endure, as human emotions are frail.

Oftentimes, the electorate communicates to the elected official desires and needs that the elected official does not feel is in the best interest of his constituents. This is very much like a father and child relationship. At the risk of losing popularity with his children-or his electorate, as the case may be-the elected official either makes a courageous and often difficult decision to do what he feels is best for his constituency, even if it goes against their wants.

The author considers the levels of consideration that an elected official has that his constituency is often not aware of. While the elected official is brought to his job by the votes of constituents, he is sworn in as a state senator, by the Vice President of the United States, a member of the executive branch of government. He swears to uphold the nation's best interest to the Vice President. This immediately creates a conflict for the elected official. What is best for the state is not always best for the nation, and when asked to vote on issues that will affect his constituents and his nation, he may be putting his popularity with his own state, for which he is a senator, at risk. This situation is not for the meek. Courage comes from having to stand up and speak out for what is best when faced with obstacles like loss of popularity and fear of not being elected again. Often choices the state senator is faced with are better for the United States than for just one state, and he is torn by pressure from both factions: his constituents and his feeling of responsibility to the nation.

In addition, the elected official feels compelled to go along with his party, at times when what his party wants him to do are not what his constituents want him to do - or what he wants to do. In fact, what a state senator thinks is right for the nation may not be what his party thinks is right for the nation. These sometimes and often conflicting levels of allegiance are far more than the average voter realizes his state senator is faced with daily. In addition, if the common man realized the complexity of the job of an elected official, he would more easily be able to recognize courageous acts.

However, there is very limited contact between elected officials and their constituents once the elected officials are in office. In fact, the author is aware that his knowledge of his constituents, once he is elected, is limited to the letters he reads, the editorial in the newspaper he reads, and the few phone calls he gets. Ironically, the more work he does, the further away from his constituents the state senator may find himself. He struggles daily to find the courage to do what he thinks is right, but is often torn, and the author admires those leaders who have the courage to make decisions that may lose

them popularity and put their re-election at jeopardy in order to do what they believe is right.

When a senator has a vision of becoming a United States President, he faces an even more complicated task because reelection is crucial to his career path. The author cautions against assigning negative judgment to wanting to run for President. This can be a noble goal once a senator has achieved it. Getting there may require less than noble means. Often times, a senator may have to do what his party thinks is best for the party even when it is not best for his state, in order to gain the party's backing, so that when he does garner the power of the President, he can then exercise his authority and ideals for his country. Short-term goals and long-term goals are often seemingly incompatible.

However, once he wins the Presidency, an elected official has the opportunity to devote his life to doing what he believes is in the best interest of his nation. However, at this point, he may have to sacrifice his family life and personal life in order to do what is best for the country. In fact, once a senator is in the running for the Presidency, he's not just running himself. He's running his entire party, so that any defeat he may suffer is not just personal. It affects his entire party. The pressure on these men is enormous.

Political organizations that form letter writing campaigns, stage rallies, and basically have the ability to rally and gather constituents are an enormous pressure on the elected official. These people are often a minority, but are so articulate and organized that their voices are louder and more widespread than any larger number of voters. They are often more ardent in their views and cannot be ignored because they put pressure on the elected official to vote and act in ways that accommodate their needs and views. The author tells of one senator who always voted with special interest groups because he gambled that he would gain their allegiance that way, and by the time his re-election came around, they would support him, and influence voters who may not have normally voted for him. This awareness of finding support everywhere possible - and its flip side - the fear of not cultivating it - preoccupies elected officials who may otherwise be spending their energy speaking honestly and freely to govern, rather than court special interest groups that may help them achieve their goals of re-election.

Compromise, one of the author's keys to success as an elected official, is also a complicated art and can be seen as a downfall of any politician with pure motives. Compromise gives the illusion of appeasing groups with whom the elected official may not agree, but needs their support. Deciding with whom to compromise and what to compromise can be the linchpin in a career. Compromising while appearing not to compromise can be an artful skill, because appearances are important to being popular and getting re-elected.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

John Quincy Adams, a Federalist and a Puritan, as well as the son of former president John Adams, had many advantages in life in terms of a good education, a politically successful family and doting parents who groomed him to be, as his mother said, a public servant upholding the country's legal system. Adams had the support of a "presidential family," who believed, as John Quincy Adams is quoted in the first page of this chapter as saying: "The magistrate is the servant not...of the people but of his God."

John Quincy Adams was a Massachusetts senator. He was very sure of himself as a Federalist, and his good breeding and family gave him less cause for insecurity than did the less exclusive political backgrounds of other elected officials. He also had a very strong allegiance to God as his guide in all things - even political. This Puritanism was very much like the country from which Adams came, along the east coast, craggy, rocky, somber and strong.

However, as evidenced in a letter he sent his father at age nine, and then another at age 45, John Quincy Adams never felt that he was good enough and that his life was "a series of disappointments" despite the fact that he held office and participated in national events of import more often than any other politician in history. Adams often sought his father's counsel because of this sadness he carried. His mother, Abigail Adams, bragged to friends that her husband had steered their son into a leadership position. Adams had all the advantages an American man could have, but he felt inadequate, yet driven to continue on his quest for success. Adams worked as a Harvard professor and an American Minister to leaders in Europe as well as a senator. He went on to become Secretary of State, President and a Congressman, but felt his life was unsuccessful. He died at age 80 while in the Capitol.

John Quincy Adams had a strange relationship with Thomas Jefferson who was at odds with Adams' father, but Adams found himself siding with Jefferson's politics, much to the disappointment of Adams' own party.

Chapter 2 Analysis

John Quincy Adams was very clear about his allegiances. Many elected officials would consider that focus luck enough. Knowing which way to turn when organized constituent groups' ideas, individual voters' views, party platforms and one's own ideas of what should be done for the best interests of the nation are different can be a enormous pressure that stifles courageous acts in the strongest man. However, a man like John Quincy Adams, who grew up with a father who had been President of the United States had a confidence and a family background that afforded him confidence. The confidence he had was that God was the ultimate leader, and Adams, like everyone

else, was merely a servant of God. Whether or not he was correct is less important than the fact that he had clarity on his allegiance, and while he still suffered human emotions like hurt and disappointment when his decisions caused him to suffer in popularity or in his career, he always knew what it was that he had to do.

John Quincy Adams' strong belief in God as the ultimate ruler didn't bother anyone else - until it became his reason for making choices in his career that affected others. This staunch Puritanism did not bode well for his friendships or his political career. His fellow party members were frustrated with him, and this frustration reached a peak when Adams aligned himself with Thomas Jefferson, whose views were contrary to Adams' party's views.

In addition, Thomas Jefferson and John Quincy Adams' father had a long-standing feud based on political differences. However, John Quincy Adams put his own philosophical tenet that he must do what was right in the eyes of God, and not compromise that line of allegiance. This must be done even when it meant acting disloyal to his father who had raised him to have these beliefs by uniting with his longtime rival. The reason John Quincy Adams aligned himself with Jefferson was simple: John Quincy Adams believed in Jefferson's politics. Ironically, Adams paid the price politically for that courage to speak out and align himself and/or do what he thought was right even though it went against his party and his constituents.

He also paid an emotional price with his family because while he was taught to be courageous in politics and God-fearing in life, his teachers were only human, as was he. This was evidenced in the very mortal feud his father had with Jefferson, and John Quincy Adams suffered emotionally because while he had the courage to do what was right, not everyone else around him did. His alignment with Jefferson weighed on his relationship with his father, when an option for the elder Adams may have been to let go of any emotional feelings towards Jefferson. His son suffered the emotional consequences of displeasing his father by not taking up his side in the feud, even though he was employing his father's teachings by doing what he felt was right in the eyes of God.

The fact that John Quincy Adams was very close with his father and received his father's approval publicly, and often for his actions was part of the personal problem that Adams had. While he had the courage to make clear political decisions, he did not have the personal courage to let go of the need for his father's (and mother's) approval. While he had a strong set of role models in his father, mother and immediate family when it came to politics and God, he did not have the emotional tools to release himself from being emotionally dependent on these people.

John Adams and John Quincy Adams were the only two presidents of the United States who were not elected to a second term in the fifty years during the time that they were both elected. This one-term election was considered by this author to be due to their failure to get along, play the political game and compromise. Therefore, while they had the courage that the author of this book seeks to profile, in political decisions, they did

not have the foresight to compromise their own lofty and God-fearing philosophies in the more mundane human processes of winning re-election.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

The first line of this chapter quotes Daniel Webster as describing himself "...not as a Massachusetts man but as an American." Daniel Webster was a great orator and very popular for his ability to convince in his speeches. His deep voice and slow delivery of the words in his speeches - to say nothing of his ability to articulate and convince in a riveting manner-made a positive impact on everyone who heard him.

Daniel Webster was known as the greatest orator of his day and a leader of the North because of his strong views against slavery. In addition to being a leader of the North when the South and the North were at odds, Webster was a proponent of keeping the Union united, and he believed that it was more important to support the Union when he felt that Civil War threatened to destroy it. He believed it was more important to preserve the Union by compromising on slavery than it was to back his Northern anti-slavery constituents.

The author, however, states that Webster was flawed morally. The author states as example of Webster's moral imperfection, that Webster would accept gifts without concern that they may be misconstrued as bribes or being given to him only because of his power. In 1836, Webster attempted resignation as a senator because he was losing money in his private law practice, but the businessmen who supported Webster's politics because they helped their business interests banded together and personally paid off any debts or costs Webster had incurred in his law practice. This way, he would not resign from the Senate where he was doing so much for these businessmen. Webster had no moral problems with accepting the money from these businessmen to keep him in office.

The state of the Union was in jeopardy because there were Northern abolitionists who did not feel that being part of a union with states that allowed slavery was a feasible option any more, and there were Southern states who wanted the South to secede in order to practice a lifestyle that included slavery.

With this political background, Webster was enlisted by Henry Clay to support the Great Compromise of 1850. Clay took a huge chance at failure when he asked Webster for help because Webster had been extremely vocal on the record about his abolitionist ideas. The ideas behind the 1850 Compromise went against much that Webster had spoken out in favor of. Two of the five parts of this Compromise of 1850 called for a stricter Fugitive Slave Law that returned runaway slaves to their owners and it admitted New Mexico and Utah as territories that did not have any slavery legislation.

Webster, however, heard Clay's pitch and began to speak to Southerners. He drew the conclusion that unless there was a compromise, such as this Compromise of 1850, the union would be destroyed because a civil war was a certain result of the brewing

opposition, but that slavery might even be strengthened as a result of no compromise. It was with this thinking that Webster went against his record and became a proponent of the Compromise of 1850.

He delivered a speech on March 7, 1850, despite ill health, that went on for over three hours, during which time he rarely consulted his notes. The speech was very strong, and became known as the Seventh of March speech, the only speech ever named after the date on which it was delivered. The speech was riveting, and helped stave off the Civil War for ten years, but Webster suffered the wrath of his constituents who felt betrayed by his advocating compromise on the issue of slavery in order to hold the Union together.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Daniel Webster, the Massachusetts senator in 1850, was handsome, charming and riveting as an orator, the greatest orator of his day, and had the ability to garner popularity and hammer home his messages, a huge asset for a politician. His appearance was "half the secret to his power," the author writes, looking for the reasons politicians succeed or fail. In this book, the author profiles men who have courage and the power to have courage in the face of obstacles. He finds in Webster that good looks, an articulate, convincing and riveting ability to speak publicly and conviction to have courage are assets that are rare in elected leaders, but not in Webster.

Webster's morality was not an issue for him. He was non-moral. He didn't feel guilt at accepting gifts; in fact, he almost expected gifts. This personal fact made it easier for him to do what he thought was right at the expense of his constituents. The author assigns a negative value to Webster's lack of moral conviction when it came to gift giving, but the flip side to that lack of morality, oddly, is a courage Webster displayed to accept and even expect "God given" gifts from God and from voters or constituents who Webster believed were created in God's image.

Webster's power and popularity brought with it a built-in target as well as an asset. Everybody wanted him for his power. In fact, Henry Clay had the courage to approach Webster even though they were had basically different views on slavery - a major issue of the day at the time. Webster was not only sought after by his own party members, but also by party members from opposite parties and political views. While Daniel Webster's enormous popularity may appear on the surface as a strength, it carried with it a liability in that he had the innate ability to disappoint twice as many people as an elected official who only had his own party members pressuring him for his vote and voice. Anyone who had Daniel Webster "on his side" had powerful artillery against an opponent. This fact made Webster both a prize and a target because he was sought after by many different people - not in friendship, but for political use. Webster became not just a man of convictions and courage, but a tool.

Henry Clay knew Webster was powerful, and even though Webster was not a traditional ally of Clay's and each man was from a different part of the country, North and South,

representing slave-holding interests and abolitionist interests, Clay focused on Webster's power in spite of their opposite political affiliations. Clay cleverly enlisted Webster's support for his Great Compromise of 1850, a five-point plan that would compromise Webster's feelings that slavery was evil, morally and politically, by providing a much stricter fugitive slave law which basically returned runaway slaves to their owners, something Webster had been vocally against.

However, Clay was able to convince Webster that if he did not compromise his staunch convictions on abolition - compromise being one of the author's noted tools for any elected official's success - the nation's fate as a whole would be at risk. Clay was successful in convincing Webster to take up the Compromise of 1850, and Webster was courageous and open-minded. He could see beyond his own convictions that slavery was wrong to see that a short-term solution that allowed slavery might lead to a longer-term solution that kept the union together, minimized slavery and eventually saw its abolition. For, although Webster hated slavery, he saw how divided the country was and how close to secession the south was, and how ripe for division the union was. It was this national climate in which he decided to support compromise.

Whether or not the reader or the author agrees with Webster's views - or Clay's views for that matter - the important tool here is the ability that Webster had to compromise and be flexible in his voice, vote and open-mindedness on what was in the nation's best interests. In addition, Clay was brilliant for his creativity. He did not stay within his party to get help. He went to one of the opposing side's most powerful orators for help, and although not known as a great orator himself, he was able to, in Webster's living room, convince Webster of the importance of Clay's plan to enlist Webster as a leader in speaking out for the Compromise of 1850.

Clearly, Webster was not making a popular or a simple decision when he changed his stance from stringent abolitionist views, to one of compromise, and he was not making a simple decision that many people could understand in the short term - if at all. Many of his former proponents felt betrayed by Webster. Many of them denounced his decision to support the Compromise of 1850 and spoke out against Webster.

While Webster did believe that slavery was wrong - even evil -- he felt more strongly that a disassociated nation was wrong. By limiting slavery, but allowing it, he could save the nation from a Civil War that may separate the nation into a north and a south, with the south not only allowing slavery, but also creating an atmosphere where it could flourish. Therefore, with his previous strict abolitionist voting and speaking record, Webster had the courage to change his mind - or at least that is how his opponents saw his change.

Webster definitely won fans for his courageous outspoken unique thinking. However, he ran the risk of being used - and perceived as being used -- by Clay as a puppet of the Southerners. Many people wondered whose side he was really on. He ran the risk of losing popularity with his own party and supporters. He also ran the risk of losing credibility with both his supporters and opponents who might wonder which side he would support next. It is also believed by some that Webster did not so much stop

secession for about a decade -that secession was inevitable with or without Webster's speech.

There is a school of thought that Webster did not so much believe in what he spoke for, when he spoke for Clay and the Compromise of 1850, but that he did so merely as a means to try and rally support for himself to run for President. The author does not believe in this theory. The opposite theory to counter the one that says that Webster rallied support for the Compromise of 1850 only as a means of furthering his political career, is that anyone who has vision for the entire nation, the way Webster did, is well suited for the job of President of the United States.

Webster's own constituents missed something very important when they denounced him for his speech of March Seventh. They overlooked his empathy for those people with different views than himself. They overlooked his ability to stand up for the rights of people with different views than his own. Without believing in slavery, he stood up for the Southerner's rights.

Webster's three-hour speech for the Compromise of 1850 was not a huge success for Webster, but it was a huge success for its cause. He spoke so powerfully, that his speech was remembered for the date on which it was delivered, March 7, and the moniker for his speech has become the "Seventh of March" speech. However great and powerful the speech was, Webster lost popularity with his constituents and his party after he rallied a compromise at the expense of fighting slavery and "breaking down the North." The author lauds Webster for his courage to go against the tide of popular opinion, speak out and act for a cause - especially one that did not benefit him. As a result of his work for the Compromise of 1850, the Civil War was averted for ten years. However, the author feels that Webster sacrificed his potential presidential run by sacrificing his popularity when he gave that memorable speech on March 7, 1850.

At the age of 70, Webster spent his final years touring the nation, orating to support and explain his position on the Compromise. He never regained popularity enough to win the Presidential nomination, but his Seventh of March speech was famous. He died in 1852, soon after, disappointed, but clear that the union was more important than any faction that threatens to splinter it.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Benton, originally from Tennessee, moved to Missouri where he became the senior senator from Missouri in 1850, (the first senator to ever serve thirty years in the Senate and the first senator from Missouri), and was known as a fighter and a bit of a thug who actually killed a United States District Attorney in a duel.

His constituency loved him because he did not bow to political pressures and did what he thought was right. He did not share the same popularity with other politicians in his own party because he didn't tolerate corruption or graft, and he advocated for state's issues that were often not popular issues. He did not go out of his way to "network" with younger politicians and elected officials, and for all these reasons his nickname became "Old Bullion" due to his advocacy of "hard money," but also because he acted like a bull in a china shop, to the delight of his voters and the concern of his fellow party members. Many voters related to him because he was not always deft at politics, but he was outspoken and "for the people." He used to say of himself, "Benton and Democracy are one and the same..."

He served thirty years in the Senate, all of them consecutive years, and was the first senator to ever do that. Benton was known as a huge proponent of the West. He supported communications methods such as the telegraph, the Pony Express and roadways that ran into the country.

Benton began to lose popularity over the issue of slavery because Missouri was a slave state and its voters felt allied with the South rather than the North, but Benton was a proponent of the Union and not any individual state. He began to lose favor with his voters over this issue and his stance on it. In fact, he believed in his support of the Union more so than he did of his support to his state, Missouri, this region, the South or his party, the Democrats. In fact, at the 1844 Democratic National Convention, Benton allegedly, according to his opponents, said he would rather "see the Democratic party sink 50 fathoms deep into the middle of hell fire before I will give one inch with Mr. Van Buren."

In 1844, Benton spoke against a treaty for the annexation of Texas because of his commitment to the Union. This view went against his party's views cost him popularity. He changed his mind on the expansion of Oregon and went against his party's stance because he felt compromise was necessary for the Union's benefit.

On slavery, Benton kept slaves, but did not support secession of the South. This opinion, again, cost him popularity and support of constituents and all parties. In 1851, Benton lost the election and left Washington. He then ran and he was elected as the representative from St. Louis. He lost the next re-election in 1854. He ran again in 1855 and again for Governor in 1856. He was seventy-four at that time. He lost.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Thomas Hart Benton had a huge ego and the soul and demeanor of a fighter. If he didn't have a weapon or his fists to use in a fight, he had his wit and his sarcasm. His early years on the Tennessee range were his proving ground for survival and rough living. At times Benton was sarcastic, rude, outspoken, unafraid of insulting anyone, and thick-skinned. He flung angry words quickly back to his enemies, and he was never afraid of a physical fight. He shot and killed a lawyer and at one point during a political fight, Senator Henry Foote pulled a gun on Benton, whose response was to open his coat to show he was unarmed and call Foote an assassin for attempting to shoot an unarmed man. Foote withdrew his pistol, and Benton seemed to have won that fight. Benton did not just love to fight - he appeared to be fearless. When his constituents loved him, this is what they loved about him.

One of the most valuable tools any fighter can have against an opponent is the wild side of a personality that is often characterized as "crazy." In fact, Benton was so "crazy" he would do anything - even if it meant killing someone or not winning. The beauty of this characteristic is that his opponents did not know what he would do next, and it was harder to manipulate him than it would be another elected official. His constituents appreciated this inability of his proponents to manipulate him and they often felt that he was "one of them" who would not hesitate to say enough is enough, rather than to acquiesce with pressure from political factions.

On the other hand, the problem with this characteristic in a personality is inconsistency, and when his constituency was not amused by his stance, as so happened when he opposed the annexation of Texas, they decided he was not just a traitor, but that he could be a traitor again. His inconsistency was no longer an asset to his popularity. It was seen to them as a deficit.

This "craziness" or ability to do whatever he thought was right - even if meant killing someone or going against his party - can be characterized as courageousness because Benton had the courage to risk his popularity and chances of re-election in order to do what he felt was right.

This fire and drive that Benton embodied was responsible for much of Benton's success in politics and his downfall. His constituents loved being on the same side as Benton with him as their leader, saying what they didn't have the nerve to, and he was very popular. Many times leaders - whether political, entertainment or social in nature - have the ability to give their "groups" or popular fan bases themselves as role models. Many voters who felt manipulated by government and out of control because of secession issues, abolition issues and other such issues of the day that could easily change their lives and the lives of their families were happy to have a role model in Benton who said, in a sense, enough is enough.

However, when his opinions became supportive of the nation over the interests of the state, he lost his popularity - but not his fighting nature. Benton continued to become even more outspoken and peppery in his verbal assaults, and when he lost an election,

he would just run again. When he won, it was most likely due to his popularity and his personality, but when Benton changed his mind on the Oregon issue, his constituents labeled him a traitor. His spunky nature was no longer novelty and he began to get a reputation as a troublemaker. In fact, Benton left Tennessee earlier in his life because he had a long-standing combative relationship - physically and politically - with Andrew Jackson. Benton is said to have left Tennessee because he could not conquer Jackson - even after shooting him - and found a more fertile fodder for his subsequent successes in Missouri. While to some, this behavior of leaving Tennessee may look like he was quitting and packing up to leave, to others it may have been a sign of sanity and conformity.

It is hard to know if Benton had been able to win success more conventionally, if his peppery character would have been diluted with success and he would have calmed down. Perhaps his defeats caused him to become even more spunky - and difficult - and contributed to his political downfall.

There is evidence in his actions that Benton's personality may have been all about fighting for fighting's sake rather than winning when after speaking out for years for expansion of the West, he then opposed the Oregon expansion that his own state wanted. Perhaps it was not winning that motivated Benton, but the fight itself. A fight he eventually did get - one that he could not win.

In contrast to his fiery public persona, Benton's gentle love for his imperfect family made his public life an interesting contrast. Benton was known to be patient and respectful of his wife after she became mentally ill, and he would not embarrass her or denigrate her when she showed up half-clothed at a political meeting. Even in this instance, Benton did not seem to suffer any uncertainty, on how to behave in what might be for others an anxious social situation. Benton also personally suffered when his two sons died very young in their lives. His family life was always very warm and loving, and perhaps Benton took some of his anger and frustration at the disappointment he may have felt over the deaths of his sons and the long mental illness of his wife out into the world where he fought his daily battles.

Benton was mostly a ruffian, but it is important to remember that he was also educated. Although he only spent a single year as a student at the University of North Carolina, he was said to have "carried the entire Congressional Library in his head." He often was quick to remember quotes from philosophers, parts of laws or speeches and other such minutiae like names and dates that other Senators forgot.

Benton's commitment to the Union became problematic when slavery and expansion were brought to the forefront of politics. Although he came from a slave holding state, and owned slaves himself, he strongly felt that holding the Union together and expansion were more important than the issue of slavery and that compromises on the issue of slavery must be made to hold the Union together. Ironically, he was uncompromising in his views on this compromise he imposed on others. The South was not amused that Benton essentially ignored the issue of slavery, feeling that any mention of it took away from his more valuable time spent on expansionism and

unionism, and because of that, Benton lost his popularity -- but not his fighting nature or his convictions.

Among Benton's achievements that were clearly functions of his commitment to connecting the states in the union were his communications accomplishments including the Pony Express, the telegraph line and roads and rails into the middle of the country.

The author is clear that Benton's courage to stand up to a crowd and to clearly voice his convictions and fight tirelessly for them, is admirable in an elected political leader.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Sam Houston, the Democratic senator from Texas, and former Tennessee governor at age 35, was known as a strong leader and a bit of a loose cannon. Houston was the first senator from Texas. He was also a military hero because he had been Commander in Chief of the volunteer Texas soldiers who fought for Texas' independence in the battle of San Jacinto against the Mexican army. The Texans had been underdogs in this battle, and had won splendidly, making them heroes. Houston, their leader, became a household name because of it.

Houston had supported the Missouri Compromise in 1820 and the Compromise of 1850. In 1854, the Kansas-Nebraska bill sought to repeal much of those compromises by calling for an allowance for states to decide their own slavery laws across a territory that swept Iowa to the Rockies. Southerners were very much for this bill because it allowed the issue of slavery to be revisited, even after it had been legislated in 1820 and 1850. Against popular Southern Democrat opinion, Houston voted against the Kansas-Nebraska bill because it sought to undue the Missouri Compromise. His vote earned him the name of traitor in the press and he was accused of being pro-Abolitionist because of his vote on this bill.

Houston voted against this bill despite his party's supporting it, and he was consequently dismissed from the legislature by his party. Houston returned to Texas and ran as an independent for governor. He won and declared himself a leader of the people and not any party.

It was not just this vote that cost him his popularity, but also this vote on top of his previous denunciation of Calhoun on the Oregon issue and Calhoun's "hands-off" slavery resolutions, claiming Calhoun was no friend of the Union. This was an unpopular view. It didn't serve Houston politically, especially after Calhoun's resolutions were voted into adoption despite Houston's outspokenness against them and Calhoun.

Against Houston's campaigns and protestations, during which time he was labeled a traitor, Texas voted to secede from the Union and join the Southern Confederacy, at the same time stating that all officers of the state had to re-vow their allegiance. Houston refused and thus ended his political career. Houston was relieved of his position in the Texas Legislature on November 10, 1857.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Sam Houston was a colorful man who stood over six feet tall and held his convictions that the states must stay unionized and not allow the South to secede, over his constituents desires even when they ran contrary to Houston's. He was known to get into a physical scuffle over his principles and his strong feelings of right and wrong were

demonstrated by his devastation when he learned that his first wife married him not because of her feelings of love, but because she was pressured by her father to marry him. Houston's feeling of betrayal and being wronged was so great that he reacted emotionally and resigned from office as Governor of Tennessee and had a breakdown that included his running off to live with the Indians, where he drank heavily. When he did recover and return, he took up where he'd left off, but it is important to note that Houston was driven by desires to live in a world that was right - his kind of right. In fact, as a child, he ran away from home to first live with the Indians who adopted him and gave him a Cherokee name. Few children have the drive to undertake such a journey, and Houston was, from his childhood until his death, an individual. This individualism was a cause for respect by many people who lacked his courage to take such steps and instead, unhappily, went along with the crowd. In Houston, they saw a model for living that they would want for themselves. However, this individualism was what drove Houston from popularity when he went against popular bills and politicians like Calhoun, Southern Democrats and the Kansas-Nebraska bill.

Houston was known for his voting against the Kansas-Nebraska bill knowing that his vote would lose him popularity and cause him great strife with his party and his constituents.

That Houston cast his vote against the Kansas-Nebraska bill with a clear idea of the consequences shows his courage to do what he felt was right, knowingly risking his popularity and re-election possibilities as well as being liked. His words that he "knew neither North nor South; I know only the Union" may have been bold, courageous and even wise, but they were not strong enough to keep him in favor.

Houston was a bundle of contradictions. This fact may have led to his political downfall, for while the contradictions made for an interesting person and a thoughtful leader, they are often not a recipe for career success. Although Houston owned slaves, he defended every Northerner's right to speak out against slave holding. He was a heavy drinker who vowed temperance. He was adopted by Cherokee Indians after he ran away from home as a boy, but then he fought Indians and won honors from the military for doing so.

What would often appear to be open-minded behavior when he defended Northerners' rights to abolition while owning slaves of his own, or drinking heavily while supporting temperance may have been nothing more than his confusion at his core. This seemingly open-minded behavior runs contrary to his refusing to re-vow to the Southern Confederacy, along with all other legislative leaders, once Texas seceded and became a member in an overwhelming vote of 109 to 2. Houston's feelings of commitment to the Union did not include a union that only included the Southern states.

A great individual and a courageous fighter under Andrew Jackson, Houston ultimately was not a team player and had difficulty finding his way under duress of conflicting principles. However, his independent spirit served him well. Even after being dismissed from the Senate in 1857 in a cloud of great unpopularity, Houston ran as an independent candidate for Governor in 1859 because he was disgusted at the idea that his state was going to be led into secession, and so, against great odds, he ran and

won. He continued to be both an individual and a fighter when he set a precedent by choosing to deliver his inaugural address on the Capitol steps in a symbolic measure that showed he was addressing the people, instead of in a Legislature session among other politicians. This was meant as an insult to his former Democratic Party, which he contended was not a part of the people. In fact, he contended that he would rather not be a part of a Southern faction if being part of the Southern faction caused a detriment to the Union. In his attempt to preserve the Union against secession, he alienated much of the South.

He eventually lost his ability to help rein in secession. When secession was voted for, it was by a strong margin of 109 to 2, and on Houston's birthday, March 2, Texas was declared by a special convention to have seceded and Houston lost his battle. In another episode of individual fortitude, Houston refused to recognize the Convention that called for Texas' secession, and therefore refused to attend the special convention declaring the secession formal.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Edmund Ross of Kansas came to the Senate in 1866 from Tennessee when his predecessor, Jim Lane, committed suicide under the stress of vilification for voting to uphold President Johnson's veto of the Civil Rights Bill of 1866. The congress was covertly trying to lodge a two-thirds majority of congressmen who would vote to impeach Johnson. They felt that in Ross, they had one of their two-thirds majority votes. However, when the impeachment proceedings began, Ross was the last of the seven dissenting Republicans to make clear that he would not vote for impeachment proceedings. His vote of not guilty was the vote that saved President Johnson's term. Ross was ostracized politically and socially and he and all of the seven Republicans who voted against the impeachment were never elected again. Ross fell into poverty.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Ross was an individualist in a distorted congressional environment at a time when the Republicans were more interested in gaining power than they were in the methods that they employed to do so or in the cost of so doing. In fact, the man who Ross replaced as Senator, Jim Lane, had caved to the terrible pressure of unpopular voting by committing suicide. Ross had his work cut out for him. His fellow congressmen and constituents were brutal in their force of pressure. However, they were quite pleased because they knew that Ross was against Johnson and were quite certain that they would vote with them when they finally brought an impeachment trial against Johnson.

When the impeachment trial did begin, Ross bore tremendous pressure because his vote was needed to carry out an impeachment plan regardless of the subject matter or outcome of the trial. The author lauds Ross' courage for not bowing to the political pressure of his fellow congressmen and his constituents, and not voting with the popular interests.

Ross that the impeachment proceedings threatened the executive branch of government, and that the President needed to have freedom to rule under the constitution if the nation's government was to be fairly effective. Ross's thoughts were not that different from his opponents' in that they were principled. Ross sought to free the executive branch of government despite his feelings for the President, which happened to be negative in Johnson's case.

Ross chose not to reveal the way he would vote before the actual vote, alarming his fellow congressmen and constituents because they had been so sure that he would vote with his fellow Republicans. They felt betrayed and their plan became endangered. When Ross did vote against the impeachment, the Republicans were outraged by the

overthrow of their own power by one man - much the way the felt about the President's power.

The unanswered question is why Ross waited so long to reveal his vote of not guilty at the impeachment trial of President Johnson. All the other congressmen gave a pre-trial vote so that the congressmen knew what the outcome would probably be. Ross chose to remain silent, building a dramatic moment when all eyes were on him at the trial. Had he chosen to give a preliminary voice to what his vote would be, it can be argued that the pressure put on him because he secreted his vote might have been spread among the other six dissenting Republicans as well as Ross himself.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Mississippi-born Lamar ran for Congress as a secessionist and won. However, after the Civil War, Lamar believed the way to end the South's suffering was compromise and reconciliation with the North.

As a congressman, Lamar delivered an eloquent eulogy for Charles Sumner, a Massachusetts Democratic, as part of his plan to compromise. In 1876, Senator Lamar was asked to oversee a commission to recount the contested Hayes vs. Tilden presidential election results. Lamar's commission found that the Republican Hayes won by a single electoral vote.

In 1878, Lamar voted no against the Matthews Resolution, which encouraged inflation by the free coinage of silver, at a time when Mississippi was financially depressed. The Mississippi Legislature instructed Lamar to pass vote for the Bland Silver Bill, a bill that encouraged inflation. Lamar voted no.

Lamar toured Mississippi to explain his decisions and his constituents eventually understood and re-elected him to the Senate where he had a successful career and eventually became a Supreme Court Justice.

Chapter 7 Analysis

Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus Lamar believed in doing what was best for his constituents even when he felt that they didn't know that what he was doing was right for them. He had the courage to do what he felt was best despite opposition and vilification. Lamar believed that he was able to know better what was right for his constituents. In order to implement those changes of rule, Lamar was very clear that compromises that sacrificed short-term goals for his constituents for long-term goals that would be in the best interests of the Union were imperative.

For example, Lamar's famous eulogy for Charles Sumner may have been seen as hypocritical by his constituents because Lamar didn't like or respect Sumner, and Sumner and his friends and colleagues were no friends of the South. However, Lamar's having delivered a eulogy for Sumner, a seeming opponent, a eulogy so beautiful and seemingly heartfelt it brought tears to the eyes of those listening and was remembered long after Sumner himself was forgotten, was a political stroke of genius. As a result of that eulogy, Lamar gained respect from everyone on all sides of all issues for his generosity of spirit at Sumner's funeral and his ability to put aside any differences for the memory of a human being. Lamar's allegiance was questioned after he gave Sumner's eulogy. The Northerners and Democrats thought that perhaps they had an ally in Lamar. Keeping your opponents guessing is never a bad idea, and Lamar exploited this position. His goal was not to betray the South but to unite the nation.

However, he began to lose his popularity with the South - not because of the eulogy, but the price he paid for befriending the Northern Democrats cost him down the road with the Southerners who began to see any other action he took - regardless of his intention - that had the outcome favoring the Northern Democrats, as a betrayal. In fact his appointment to oversee the commission to recount votes in the Hayes-Tilden election, was seen by his constituents as an affront, when the commission found that the Democratic candidate won by one vote. It was not as if Lamar counted the votes, but his appointment to head the commission was twisted by the Southern Republicans who wanted to blame an unfavorable outcome on someone.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Norris, the Republican Representative from Nebraska, was best known for three incidents. He intended to limit the power of the Speaker of the House, Joe Cannon, by proposing that the entire House of Representatives be required to study and amend a resolution, rather than just allow the Speaker to appoint a committee. He planned to do the same with the Rules Committee, which was instrumental in the House agenda and was dominated by the Speaker. Norris won. Cannon resigned.

In 1917, Norris opposed President Wilson's Armed Ship Bill. Norris orchestrated a filibuster that prevented the bill from passing two days before a new Congress was to be elected. Wilson claimed he could arm ships without the bill's passage. Norris was vilified for acting against the President. Norris offered to resign in a recall election but the Governor did not authorize such a recall election.

In 1928, Norris supported Al Smith, a Catholic and a "wet" against Hoover in the presidential election. Norris was vilified by Hoover's fans. Smith lost and Hoover won by a landslide.

Chapter 8 Analysis

Norris lost his father, who passed away when Norris was only four, and Norris, as a teenager, sought to support his mother and ten sisters. He also lost his older brother to death in the Civil War. He became a representative in 1903 and worked for 40 years in Washington. His background lent him the framework for being an individualist who had to support his large family himself, without help. It is how he ran his political career, and ultimately, he took this to the extreme by not affiliating with any party.

Norris is mostly remembered for three incidents in which he particularly displayed his individualism in conflict with other politicians. The first incident was the overthrow of "Czar Cannon," the powerful Speaker of the House, in what Norris simply recalled as not personal, but an attempt to equalize the power of government by reducing that of the Speaker of the House, which had grown too large to create fairness.

The second incident is the filibuster Norris organized and successfully implemented that prevented the Armed Ship Bill to pass. Although the President later realized that he didn't need the bill in order to legally implement the policies contained in the bill, and did so, Norris was successful in using the law to effectively oppose the President and his actions. He believed it was not just a bill that was in favor of arming ships' crews, but was a bill intended to indirectly bolster the arms industry and big business by legislating the arming of ships, which in turn, he felt would promote war. Norris suffered great vilification for going against the President of the United States, but after explaining his position at great length, and even offering himself up to the constituents for a recall of

his position, a truly courageous measure, he won the respect of those who had opposed him, and ultimately gained popularity for what he did.

The third incident is Norris' support of Al Smith in the presidential election in which he opposed Herbert Hoover. Al Smith was Catholic, had questionable connections to Tammany Hall, was a Democrat, a Northerner from New York, no less and was a "wet." Norris was very opposite Smith in that Norris was a Republican, a Protestant and a "dry." Norris was against all of these things, but he did not believe in party affiliations, and felt that progressives had not choice but to vote for Smith, whose accusations of dereliction in association with Tammany Hall were no worse, in fact in many cases more innocent, than other Republican and Democratic party derelictions. Norris was clearly an individualist who did not believe in party associations at the expense of the good of the nation. While he lost popularity for his lack of consistent association with parties, he ultimately gained respect for his principled approach to politics.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

The son of a former President, Robert Taft, a Republican from Ohio, wanted to be president but never received the nomination. In 1946, Senator Taft spoke at Kenyon College at a conference on Anglo-American heritage, and used the dais as a platform to denounce the War Crimes Trials and the Nuremberg Trials because the crimes were being tried under an *ex post facto* law. Taft felt that this was unconstitutional and un-American. The background for this announcement was the Presidential election in which Taft's rival Republican Governor Dewey disassociated himself with Taft's views in order to go on and win the election.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Robert A. Taft had an interesting dilemma because he wanted to be president, and he was the son of a former president, but his views were not majority views, and he was loath to compromise on them. He also did not shy away from controversy - a cardinal rule of successful politicians - and worse, he was totally honest! For better or for worse, his candor was disarming. He did not cling to his own party with blind faith. All of these things made him difficult to nominate for election by his party. But the most difficult of these factors that Taft needed to overcome to be nominated - and never did - was the combination of conviction, outspokenness and courage, coupled with his inability to compromise on the issue of war trials.

Taft's adherence to principles coupled with his talkativeness doomed his personal goal to get the Republican Party nomination to run for President and win. Although Taft was technically correct that the *ex post facto* laws governing the convictions of Nazi war criminals were unconstitutional, his unwillingness to compromise in the face of the atrocities that motivated the trials lost him the popularity and support necessary for election. When a convicted Nazi spoke out in the media that Taft was right and he agreed with Taft, Taft was connected to the convicted Nazi. Taft's principles that meant to uphold the constitution were lost in the media feeding frenzy that followed. The Democrats were delighted by Taft's outspoken incorrectness. Although they appeared outraged at his remarks, behind closed doors they celebrated the difficulties he was creating for his own party.

The author praises Taft for speaking out for his convictions in the face of popular opinion. He equates Taft's convictions and outspokenness in the face of public opposition with courage.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

John Quincy Adams, Thomas Hart Benton, Edmund Ross, Sam Houston, George Norris and other political leaders exercised their principles at the expense of their own careers. Senator Albert Beveridge of Indiana felt that by voicing unpopular opinion, the party grew. When politicians voted against their sections, the way Senators Benton and Houston did, they would more likely find their careers ended. Senator Andrew Johnson of Tennessee spoke against his section and he was subsequently beaten. In 1795, Senator Humphrey Marshall, of Kentucky, voted for the Jay Treaty and was beaten by a mob for his vote. He then resigned.

Chapter 10 Analysis

The author lists other men from different branches of government who went against popular opinion to do what they thought was best as elected officials. Their decisions did not please everyone, and they were often vilified in political halls, public media and they were sometimes beat up. Some politicians stood by their convictions at the expense of their re-elections and often their entire careers.

Serving the public is not easy, as is maintaining a career without compromising. Ironically, many who do compromise are held accountable for not being loyal to their sections and/or their constituents. It is for this reason that politicians learn not to speak unless they have to because their words have the ability to be misconstrued, and every opinion they voice may have an effect on their goals.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

The author calls courage the "universal virtue." He notes the many layers each of the portraits in the book show about their subjects. He does not know the cause of the courage in these subjects. He laments that the men who want to run for office like Houston and Webster are accused of ego-driven campaigns. He also laments that men like Edmund Ross and John Quincy Adams who seem to have broader goals are accused of running for office on one platform, then switching their goals once in office, betraying their voters. Overall, the author feels that each subject profiled put the nation's interest above all others. He also notes that there are different ways to show courage - from resigning to not resigning. He also suggests that the real testing ground for courage is on the national issues, where sectional loyalty and principles may be compromised.

The author redefines democracy as that which puts its faith in the people. The constituents elect leaders whose course may take the voters away from what they thought would be their path, but they must tolerate and have faith in their leaders.

Chapter 11 Analysis

The author, at the end of the book, seeks to define courage, democracy, politics and their meanings and inter-connections. It is as if he had to write the book in order to define the terms, seeking their meaning in the writing.

What the author fails to look at in the book is fear as a component of courage, and while he sees courage as a kind of bravery against fear, he fails to see courage as an absence of fear. According to his definitions, fear is necessary in order to have courage. Without fear, there doesn't seem to be any courage, according to his definitions.

The author discusses the courage his subjects have when they stand up to their constituents and go against the voters wishes, despite the fact that wrath will follow. Their ability to withstand this wrath enters into the author's definition of courage. Risking re-election is also a component of the author's definition of courage. If there is no re-election to be sought, and the elected official speaks his mind even if it is going to disappoint his constituents, he would seem to be less courageous than if he risked re-election or loss of popularity. Therefore, there must be something to lose in order to gain courage, according to this definition.

Only once, on the first page of the last chapter of this book, does the author mention "psychiatry" as the authority on motivation that drives politicians, but then he quickly drops any further delving into that arena. However, that is what he has done in this book; by profiling subjects he finds courageous, he has presented a sort of "case-study"

of elected leaders - an especially motivated group in and of itself - and their encounters with courage.

This book seeks to show us the courage - and without spelling it out, the fear that is necessary to have courage - in eight men. The author mines their careers to find the times and circumstances under which they displayed the "universal virtue" he calls courage. The reader is left to wonder why the author, an elected politician like the men he writes of, is committed to the study of courage, and what tools he gained in the research and writing of such a work.

Characters

John Quincy Adams

The son of former President John Adams and his wife, Abigail, John Quincy Adams was groomed from a young age for a political career. His education was overseen by his parents, who also instilled in young Adams a Puritan morality that would inform his political decisions in adulthood. Despite the privileges of his upbringing, feelings of inadequacy and a fear of failure plagued Adams. These qualities did not impede his progress as a statesman and he served as a U.S. senator, as president, as a member of the House of Representatives, and as an ambassador abroad.

Until his father's death, Adams maintained a close relationship with the elder Adams, whose approval he constantly sought. When, while serving in the U.S. Senate for Massachusetts, Adams found himself alone because of his ideals, he took comfort in the fact that his parents never abandoned him. Their support seemed to validate Adams' determination to pursue what he believed was best for the country, regardless of party and constituent pressures.

After creating controversy in the Senate, Adams resigned before he could be ousted. Later, however, he served as president from 1825 to 1829. He had earned the respect of the people of Massachusetts, who asked that he run for a seat in the House of Representatives. He agreed to do so only under the conditions that he do no campaigning and that he serve according to his own conscience, not as an extension of a party or of his constituents. He won overwhelmingly, and served in the House until his death.

Thomas Hart Benton

A "rough and tumble fighter off and on the Senate floor," Thomas Hart Benton had a reputation as a man who would not shrink from a fight and who usually won. As Missouri's first senator, Benton served from 1821 to 1844. He was extremely popular with his constituents and never had any worries about being re-elected. When Missouri, a slave-holding state, started to lean toward joining the southern states in the plan to secede, Benton would not hear of it. Above all, he valued the Union, a stance he would hold so firmly that it would ultimately cost him his Senate seat. His position was also weakened by his refusal to debate slavery on the Senate floor because he assumed that the Missouri Compromise of 1820 (which brought Missouri into the Union) had taken care of that issue for his state.

After being replaced in the Senate, Benton returned to Congress as St. Louis' representative in the House. Even though he knew it would cost him re-election, he delivered an impassioned speech against the Kansas-Nebraska Bill (which permitted slavery in the new territories of Kansas and Nebraska as a concession to the South)

that his party supported. He was not re-elected, and his future attempts to win senatorial and gubernatorial elections failed. Despite his failed political career, he managed to accomplish the one thing that meant the most to him: Missouri did not join the secessionist states.

Ben ton had been a strong proponent of opening the West, playing a pivotal role in the development of the Pony Express, the telegraph line, and highways into major cities. He had only completed one year of college but prided himself on his ability to remember most of the books he read. When a fellow senator got confused about a name or date, Benton took great pleasure in locating the fact in a book and sending the information to his colleague. Benton also thrived on learning from people from diverse backgrounds.

Sam Houston

Sam Houston's background was colorful and adventure-filled. As a boy, he ran away from his Tennessee home and joined the Cherokee Indians, who adopted him. He later re-entered white society in Tennessee, becoming governor. He served until his sudden resignation after discovering that his new bride was in love with another man. Houston returned to the Cherokees until Andrew Jackson, Houston's commander during the War of 1812, sent him to Texas on a military mission. There Houston began a new life.

Houston was the first president of Texas when it was an independent republic, and later became Texas' first U.S. senator. Although he came from a slave-holding state, he opposed the Kansas-Nebraska Bill. This bill overturned the Missouri Compromise, which had banned slavery from the territory that became Kansas and Nebraska. To Houston, the Missouri Compromise was sacred, and he believed in preserving the Union above all. Although he was a Southerner by "birth, residence, loyalty, and philosophy," his first priority was to his country. He was a forceful, outspoken, and independent figure in the Senate; an ambitious and principled man who ultimately sacrificed his political career for his beliefs.

After losing his seat in the Senate, Houston returned to Texas and became governor. When Texas chose to secede, however, Houston could no longer be a part of Texas politics. He resigned, refusing to let Texas separate from the Union.

Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus Lamar

Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus Lamar of Mississippi was an eloquent speaker who abandoned his hatred for the North in favor of reconciliation and unity. He surprised his fellow congressmen when, in 1874, he delivered a moving speech lamenting the death of Charles Sumner, a man who had been an enemy of the South, which Lamar loved so dearly. This speech demonstrated Lamar's deep commitment to mending the relationship between the North and the South although his constituents did not all see his point of view. There were other instances of Lamar conflicting directly with the people of his state, but Lamar followed his conscience and sense of right rather than the tide of public sentiment. Ultimately, the people of Mississippi came to respect and

support him throughout a long political career. He served as a U.S. senator, as chairman of the Senate Democratic Caucus, as secretary of the Interior, and as a justice on the United States Supreme Court.

Lamar had a relatively happy childhood on a plantation although he grew up without his father, who committed suicide when Lamar was young. Lamar showed an early interest in and aptitude for studying, and his love of books stayed with him throughout his life.

George Norris

George Norris' acts of courage did not always lead to success, but he never regretted following the dictates of his own sense of morality. Not only did Norris act courageously in the face of political opposition, he also displayed courage when he made choices that conflicted with his constituency. He held a filibuster against Woodrow Wilson, who wanted to arm American merchant ships. The filibuster succeeded temporarily; then, Wilson discovered that he did not need congressional approval after all. Norris' efforts, however, caused dissent at home in Nebraska, and he addressed his public in an eloquent speech that soon won over the voters of the state. Norris also backed an unpopular presidential candidate in 1928. Although Norris seemed to be the only person in Nebraska campaigning for Al Smith, he did so tirelessly. Smith was beaten handily by Herbert Hoover.

Norris had a difficult childhood. His father died when he was young, and Norris worked to support his mother and ten sisters when he was only a teenager. As an adult, he pursued careers in teaching and law before entering the political arena. As a politician, he was idealistic, independent, and willing to fight for his beliefs. He could also be emotional and vindictive, sometimes engaging in personal attacks rather than focusing on the issues. He usually conducted himself professionally, however. He was known for his honesty, mild manners, and preference for staying home and reading instead of engaging in Washington social life.

Edmund G. Ross

Edmund G. Ross entered the U.S. Senate as an undistinguished freshman but left as an outcast. He shocked his party members by thinking for himself and voting as he saw fit. When Ross became a senator, he found that a war was being waged between the legislative and executive branches of the government. Further, the Radical Republicans (a faction of the Republican Party) had plans to get rid of President Johnson by impeaching him. They succeeded in impeaching Johnson and went on to the conviction phase of the trial, believing that they had the necessary votes to convict the president.

Although Ross had agreed with Radical Republican policies for much of his term in office, he shocked the party by voting against conviction. He did not believe that Johnson was given a fair trial, so he could not in good conscience vote for his removal from office. This was a pivotal vote because party leaders had counted on it, and

without it they lacked the number of votes needed. As a result, Johnson finished out his term, and Ross' political career came to an end with the next election.

Twenty years later, Ross' reputation was redeemed when the act under which the Radical Republicans had attempted to convict Johnson was repealed. At that time, Ross was seen as a visionary and man of justice.

Robert A. Taft

The son of President William Taft, Robert A. Taft harbored his own ambitions to become president. He was respected as a man who voiced his opinions and stuck by his principles, regardless of adversity. Kennedy notes, "Examples of his candor are endless and startling." One example was in 1946, a month before the elections. Taft's party, the Republicans, expected to win valuable seats, and they looked forward to this time with great optimism. When Taft learned about the Nuremberg trials, he became incensed. He did not believe that the Nazi war criminals were innocent of wrong doing, he believed that the trials themselves□and the strict death penalties that came with guilty verdicts□ were unjust. Taft wondered how the Nazis could have known that they would be subject to a trial by the rest of the world, a trial in which they could lose their lives. These crimes had never been formally recognized in international law. Although there was no occasion for Congress to address this matter, Taft felt he had to speak out against the trials.

For his denouncement of the trials, Taft's constituents and party members criticized him. The latter feared that this brash act would cost the Republicans in the upcoming elections. Meanwhile, the Democrats delighted in the scandal that ensued and hoped that this event would sway voters' opinions their way. Taft was disappointed in the harsh criticism he endured, but when the time came for elections, his speech seemed to have no impact on voter behavior. The Republicans swept the election after the frenzy calmed down. Even after experiencing the consequences of his decision, Taft did not regret voicing his opinion.

Daniel Webster

Daniel Webster, a leading critic of slavery, was approached by Henry Clay with his idea for a compromise between the slave-holding and free states. Both senators knew the compromise would come under attack from both sides, but they also knew it might be the last hope of preventing southern states from seceding. Despite his objections to slavery, Webster agreed to give Clay his support, and even delivered a controversial speech for what became known as the Missouri Compromise. Although his actions succeeded for a time in preventing secession, they came at great personal sacrifice. Webster had to let go of his dream of ever becoming president of the United States.

Webster was known for his speaking abilities. Kennedy writes, "A very slow speaker, hardly averaging a hundred words a minute, Webster combined the musical charm of his deep organ-like voice, a vivid imagination, an ability to crush his opponents with a

barrage of facts." While Kennedy acknowledges Webster's amazing skill as an orator, he also notes that Webster was a flawed man who saw nothing wrong with accepting money and gifts as political favors. Although his moral character may have been questionable, Webster was responsible, according to Kennedy, for temporarily holding the United States together at a time when the Union was very fragile.

Themes

Political Courage

From the very beginning, Kennedy is clear that the purpose of his book is to present examples of political courage. He draws from the history of the U.S. Senate and the men of integrity who served there in the past. The first line of chapter one is, "This is a book about the most admirable of human virtues□courage." He adds toward the end of the chapter that the stories he relates in *Profiles in Courage* are worth remembering, as are:

the stories of other senators of courage□men whose abiding loyalty to their nation triumphed over all personal and political considerations, men who showed the real meaning of courage and a real faith in democracy, men who made the Senate of the United States something more than a mere collection of robots dutifully recording the views of the constituents, or a gathering of time-servers skilled only in predicting and following the tides of public sentiment.

Kennedy follows through on his promise to the reader that he will demonstrate, through historical examples, what the meaning of political courage is. He shows how John Quincy Adams, a man plagued by a sense of inadequacy, found it in himself to stand up against his party and his people to support an embargo that would hurt his home state of Massachusetts. He did this, Kennedy writes, because his vision was for a stronger America, not just a stronger Massachusetts. In the example of Sam Houston, Kennedy provides a portrait of a man who favors the Union above all, despite the fact that he comes from a slave-holding state whose citizens push for secession. In the story of Edmund G. Ross, the reader learns about a low-profile man who, in the face of extreme political pressure, cast the deciding vote against President Johnson's conviction. In each case, the senator sacrificed his political ambitions in a single act of courage that represented his values.

Pressures on Political Figures

In the first chapter, Kennedy describes three types of pressures endured by public figures. The first is the pressure to be liked, which Kennedy states is a human desire shared by most people. He adds that for a senator, being liked often requires the ability to compromise. Compromise, he argues, is not a sign of weak morals or lack of fortitude, but rather the wise realization that in order to get anything done, it is often necessary to make compromises. The second pressure is for re-election. Senators want to develop long careers in which they have many opportunities to enact change, defend what they believe is right, and fight what they believe is wrong. In order to do so, they must always be aware of their next elections. Kennedy explains that in politics, people are expected to make great personal sacrifices for the public good, and by demonstrating their commitment to doing so, they increase their chances of re-election.

The third type of pressure is that of the constituency, the special interest groups, and all other organized groups that include the people the senator is supposed to represent. Kennedy writes that even though particular groups may comprise only a small percentage of the senator's public, they cannot be ignored or belittled.

As he relates the stories of the senators and congressmen, Kennedy subtly reminds the reader of the pressures faced by these public figures. In the case of John Quincy Adams, for example, all three types of pressure are clearly described. Kennedy remarks that Adams was a man of principle, but was not particularly likeable. The pressure to be re-elected is one that Adams makes a conscious decision to disregard when he takes positions that conflict with the attitudes of his party and the people of Massachusetts. Without party support and the admiration of the people back home, he realizes he has little chance of being re-elected, yet he makes decisions based on his own conscience. The third type of pressure is clear when Adams begins to receive hateful letters from party members back home. He realizes that he has distanced himself from the pressure of his constituents, but he feels he has no choice.

Kennedy emphasizes that these three sources of pressure must not be ignored. The author adds that it is very difficult for a politician to decide at what point he is willing to risk denying one of these pressures in order to uphold a value or principle. Such decisions are at the heart of *Profiles in Courage*.

Style

Historical Survey

In writing *Profiles in Courage*, Kennedy's intention was to make a specific case about the importance of courage, and to do so within a straightforward historical context. He does not set out to produce a piece of biased propaganda in which the stories are dramatized for effect, but rather to provide an honest look at nine individuals. His presentation of facts has the feel of a textbook, and the author makes a point of including some comments about the people's flaws as well as their virtues. As a result, the reader has a better sense of what kind of person each senator was and sees that his human frailties did not impede his courageous intentions.

Another way in which Kennedy gives his book a sense of history is through the inclusion of context for each section. At the beginning of part one, he describes the political climate of the time before introducing the story of John Quincy Adams. Similarly, at the beginning of part two, he explains the state of the country as it edged nearer to civil war over the issue of slavery. This explanation provides a necessary context for understanding the passion with which Daniel Webster, Thomas Hart Benton, and Sam Houston fought for keeping the Union intact. By presenting these historical contexts at the beginning of each section, Kennedy helps the reader understand the pressures faced by each senator and how political courage emerged under each set of circumstances.

Within each profile, Kennedy keeps his story focused, avoiding bringing in too many specific pieces of legislation. Kennedy concentrates on a few key events and bills so that the reader understands what was at stake with each one, and how some of the stories overlap. Kennedy introduces the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, for example, in the discussion of Thomas Hart Benton and again in the discussion of Sam Houston. After reading these two profiles, the reader not only understands that particular bill, but also how it affected the lives and decisions of political figures of the time. Had Kennedy piled each chapter with numerous events, bills, letters, and interactions, readers would become confused and lose sight of the basic premise of the book. Instead, the author teaches a history lesson while clearly portraying an act of courage.

Inspirational Tone

Kennedy's skill as a public speaker is reflected in *Profiles in Courage,* and the tone often becomes inspirational. His sense of timing is well suited for this book, as the narrative never becomes heavy-handed. In praising the courageous, he writes in chapter one, "And only the very courageous will be able to keep alive the spirit of individualism and dissent which gave birth to this nation, nourished it as an infant, and carried it through its severest tests upon the attainment of its maturity." Statements like this serve to pull the reader into the reality of courage, reminding him or her that

courage is not limited to those in public office. The author makes the reader feel proud to be an American, part of a country with a noble tradition. In chapter four, Kennedy describes the seeming failures of Thomas Hart Benton: "But even in death and defeat, Thomas Hart Benton was victorious. For his voice from the past on behalf of the Union was one of the deciding factors that prevented Missouri from yielding to all the desperate efforts to drive her into secession along with her sister slave states." Kennedy seems to remind the reader that what often seems like defeat is actually victory, and that victory does not always come with a grand gesture but rather in simple results.

With the example of Edmund G. Ross, Kennedy demonstrates that someone who appears to be the most susceptible to public pressures can turn out to be the most courageous individual. He writes in chapter seven, "But with no experience in political turmoil, no reputation in the Senate, no independent income and the most radical state in the Union to deal with, Ross was judged to be the most sensitive to criticism and the most certain to be swayed by expert tactics." Kennedy goes on to show that anyone, even someone in as vulnerable a position as Ross, can muster the courage to face down the most intimidating circumstances. This is an inspiring lesson from a personal point of view and from a historical point of view. The reader feels that not only can anyone display great courage when principles are on the line, but also that America is a country where all members of Congress have equal power when it comes to voting.

Historical Context

Cold War

After the United States ended World War II by dropping two atomic bombs on Japan, the frightening reality of atomic weaponry was undeniable. Americans believed that a strong government could only remain strong if it was backed by a strong military defense. A strong anti-communist sentiment ran through the public consciousness in the early 1950s, and the knowledge that communist nations were building up their nuclear armaments (the Soviet Union had its first successful atomic bomb test in 1949) led the United States to continue building up its own nuclear weapons stores. This effort was not only supported, but demanded, by the public, whose fear of communism was reaching hysteria. The demand for high-tech weapons was so intense, in fact, that many private companies were able to go into business making missiles and bombs. Such companies often hired retired military officers as their top executives.

As the East and the West built up their stockpiles of nuclear weapons, the "arms race" escalated. Each side, fearful of being attacked and overtaken by the other, steadily built more and more weapons of mass destruction. This created an atmosphere of dread and panic, and many Americans began building fallout shelters in which they would retreat in the event of a nuclear war.

As a result of the fear of communism in the United States, Senator Joseph McCarthy further whipped public emotions into a frenzy by making accusations that members of the United States government were communists. McCarthy's accusations led to the destruction of many innocent people's careers, not only in politics but in entertainment and virtually every other industry at the time.

At a time of emotional and political excess, it was natural for Kennedy to seek out and spotlight past leaders who had remained steady and true to their principles in similarly emotional times.

Patriotism of the 1950s

Having emerged victorious and powerful from World War II, Americans enjoyed a strong sense of patriotism in the early 1950s. The country was a dominant force in world politics, the economy was booming, and people were enjoying affluence and the amenities that came with it. The middle class was growing, and more and more families found themselves able to purchase cars, televisions, appliances, and other luxuries.

In 1952, war hero Dwight D. Eisenhower ran for president at the age of sixty-two. He became a president everyone looked to as a sort of father figure, but also as one who had helped defeat the Nazis and protect the American way of life. Eisenhower had a kind face and gentle smile, and enjoyed playing golf. His personality seemed to reflect

the pleasant lifestyle and commitment to military strength that characterized public sentiment.

The patriotism of the time, and the public's generally favorable opinion of political leaders, may have added to the popular success of Kennedy's book, which holds up political leaders as heroes.

Civil Rights

The 1950s saw the beginnings of the civil rights movement that would gain momentum and make great strides in the 1960s. The movement began with efforts at desegregation. There were inconsistencies in American society that became too obvious to ignore. For example, major league baseball teams had African-American players, yet schools were still not open to both races. As rock and roll became popular with teenagers, they realized that much of the music they enjoyed came from African-American singers and writers. Parents were uncomfortable seeing their teenagers dancing to this music, yet when white singers performed the same songs, they were at ease. African Americans refused to accept such double standards, and they began to organize their efforts to receive equal treatment.

The demand for equal rights was motivated by both social and economic factors. Not only did African Americans want to be welcome in public schools and restaurants, but they also wanted to have the same work opportunities enjoyed by white citizens. Although progress was slow, and efforts were often met with violence, the foundation laid in the 1950s paved the way for the great strides made in the next decade.

In *Profiles in Courage,* Kennedy shows readers time after time in history when Americans were sharply divided yet found ways to resolve their conflicts and come together as a nation again. More specifically, some of the men Kennedy profiles achieved greatness in the context of resolving bitter divides over slavery and racial issues.

Critical Overview

Critical reception of *Profiles in Courage* was generally favorable although a few critics expressed doubt about Kennedy's sole authorship. Critics who applauded the book found it to be a work of integrity, honoring political grace in past statesmen while acknowledging that there are contemporary statesmen who exhibit the same strength of character. They were delighted to see a high-profile politician like Kennedy (who was a United States senator at the time of publication) produce such a thought-provoking historical review of other senators. A reviewer for *Publishers Weekly* noted that the text "is a straightforward discussion of patriots" and that the content is "dry and safe" rather than being colored by overt political bias. Critics like Dean Hammer of *Journal of American Culture* noted that Kennedy's presentation of these past political figures promoted his own goals while offering a new perspective of government as something formed of individual decisions and actions rather than as a series of mundane processes.

The value of *Profiles in Courage* as a historical text has brought it into alignment with other great historical works. In a discussion of the ancient essayist Plutarch and his famous *Lives,* C. J. Gianakaris of *Twayne 's World Authors Series* noted that the assembling of "lives according to a common axis of belief, action, or role remains a valid entry into history today, as witness the great popularity of the late President John F. Kennedy's book *Profiles in Courage.*" Clearly, the members of the Board of Trustees of Columbia University, who decide on the winners of the Pulitzer Prize, were thoroughly impressed by the literary merit and the worthwhile content of Kennedy's book. They awarded the book the Pulitzer Prize for biography in 1957.

Some critics and historians expressed doubt that Kennedy had written the book alone, or even that he had written it at all. While it is true that some of Kennedy's aides assisted him in his initial drafts of the book (written while he was recovering from spinal operations in 1954), Kennedy claimed the book as his own. Charges that the book was ghostwritten led to studies, the best-known of which was conducted by Herbert Parmet, whose book *Jack: The Struggles of J. F. K.*, offered evidence that the book was actually written by a research team at George Washington University. Still, the merits of the book were not tarnished by these allegations, and Kennedy is still regarded by the public as the author of the work.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3
- Critical Essay #4
- Critical Essay #5

Critical Essay #1

Bussey holds a master's degree in interdisciplinary studies and a bachelor's degree in English literature. She is an independent writer specializing in literature. In the following essay, she offers a possible explanation for John F. Kennedy's inclusion of the men he wrote about in Profiles in Courage. By reviewing the historical and cultural context, she identifies qualities in some of the nine stories that may have had relevance for the time of the book's publication.

Although most readers associate John F. Kennedy with the 1960s, Profiles in Courage was written while he was recovering from spinal operations in 1954. At the time, Kennedy was a U.S. senator from Massachusetts, not yet aware of the political future that awaited him. While most readers can readily identify the dominant social and political forces of the latter part of Kennedy's career, many Americans have a distorted view of what life was like in the 1950s. Contrary to popular belief, it was not merely a carefree time of sock hops, meatloaf dinners, and dates at the malt shop. This is the image of the 1950s perpetuated by television and media, but there were also frightening and troubling elements of the time.

In the early 1950s, America was in the grip of the Cold War. Citizens and politicians alike feared the spread of communism, and it was common knowledge that communist countries were stockpiling nuclear weapons. Many Americans built fallout shelters, and children were taught how to take cover in the event of an attack while they were at school. The panic associated with communism fueled McCarthyism, a movement in which people in government, entertainment, and virtually every other industry were accused of having communist leanings with devastating consequences to their careers and lives.

Great strides in science were bringing both optimism and fear. While Americans wanted to stay ahead of the Soviets, they also recognized that science had created the atomic bomb. Much scientific research was focused on weapons development, but there was also hope that science would conquer polio, a crippling disease that struck children more often than adults. Polio was such a dreaded disease that a 1954 Gallup poll found that more people knew about vaccine tests than knew the name of the president. The following year, Jonas Salk's vaccine was administered on a widespread basis, paid for by the government.

Socially, America was entering a troubled time, as African Americans began to demand equal treatment and opportunity. Progress was slow in the beginning, and often violent, but the 1950s paved the way for the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

In light of these turbulent forces, why was Kennedy compelled to write *Profiles in Courage,* and why did he include the individuals he did? As a young senator, he was certainly aware of the challenges facing public officials and also of the hopes and fears of the public. Perhaps he found wisdom and comfort in the stories and hoped that by compiling them, he could offer hope to his fellow politicians and to the public as a whole.

It seems that Kennedy was drawing on the unique American tradition for insight into how to handle these concerns while at the same time looking for some assurance that America had overcome equally trying times in the past.

Each profile offers a lesson that could be applied to the tumultuous times in which Kennedy wrote the book. In the example of John Quincy Adams, the author portrays a strong man who (despite his nagging self-doubt) takes a nonpartisan stance. Adams approached his seat in the Senate with a sense of responsibility to his own morality, and even though he was new in the Senate, he did not display freshman hesitance when it came time to take a stand. He was not intimidated because his priority was pursuing the good of the country, not the good of his state or party. This example offered hope at a time when McCarthyism had shown how destructive extreme conformity could be. If more people had displayed courage against McCarthy in the initial stages of his "red scare," perhaps he would have been stopped before so many politicians were too intimidated to do anything but go along and so many people's careers were destroyed.

Daniel Webster used his ability as a stirring public speaker to support an unexpected cause, Henry Clay's Compromise of 1850. In the process, he managed to garner enough support for the compromise to see it passed, but he sacrificed his political ambition to become president along the way. His commitment was to the Union, not to his party or even to himself. Although he hated slavery, he agreed with Clay that this compromise was the only way to keep the Union intact. This idea could be applied to the civil rights struggle in which the two sides were adamant about their positions. White citizens wanted to maintain separation, while African Americans were ready to claim their rightful entrance into mainstream society. Because neither side was willing to budge, conflict became heated and violent, and the more the struggle continued, the more difficult it was for the two sides to have a meaningful dialogue about the issues. Perhaps Kennedy wished there were a Daniel Webster for his time.

The example of Thomas Hart Benton offers lessons in many areas. His political career was characterized by his refusal to give up his fight to preserve the Union. At heart, he only wanted to see America stay together through seemingly insurmountable struggles. When he lost his seat in the Senate, he returned to Congress as a representative in the House. He never tired of fighting for his beliefs, and as a result, his state of Missouri did not join the secessionist states. Benton's story reminds politicians and citizens alike of the importance of perseverance, whether in seeking a cure for polio or in fighting the spread of communism. His story also demonstrates that even when it seems that the battle has been lost, there is often a single meaningful victory to show for all the hard work.

Sam Houston's story is about a man who loved his state and his country so much that he sacrificed his reputation in an effort to keep the two united. When Texans eventually chose to secede, Houston refused to serve as the leader in a situation that broke his heart. He was not a man who sought power at any cost; he valued unity above personal glory. This lesson seems to relate to McCarthyism because if politicians had refused to take part in the bogus communist investigations, McCarthyism would have lost momentum. Instead, many people clung to their positions of power, even when it meant

getting caught up in the destructive tide of McCarthyism. The "red scare," like secession, was a deeply divisive event that damaged unity and the strength in numbers that accompanies it.

The last man profiled is Robert A. Taft, whose example represented what Kennedy seemed to think was best about the American system of government. A respected Republican, Taft was known for speaking his mind without regard for what was popular at the time. On the brink of a great election year (1946) for Republicans, Taft gave a surprising speech in which he condemned the Nuremberg trials and the death sentences they handed out. While he in no way agreed with the extreme and inhumane measures taken by the Nazis during World War II, he questioned the validity of bringing the war criminals to trial after the fact. His reasoning was that at the time they committed the acts, there was no legal standard by which they were breaking the law; much less would they have been aware that they would face a death sentence if found guilty.

Needless to say, Taft's speech was not met with praise and admiration. In his home state of Ohio, people harshly criticized him, and on Capitol Hill, his party leaders reprimanded him for endangering the upcoming elections. The Democrats were delighted because they thought this speech would enhance their chances of claiming more victories. Eventually, however, the frenzy died down and the Republicans enjoyed the victories they had expected.

Kennedy presents Taft's story as an example of courage because Taft risked his own political ambitions (he wanted to follow in his father's footsteps and become president) for the sake of voicing what he knew would be an unpopular idea. Because he felt it needed to be said and because he lived in a country where people are free to speak openly, he did so. His courage was, according to Kennedy, in taking a stand against public opinion regardless of the personal consequences. This is ultimately what each of the nine stories teaches. While it is important to align oneself with organizations that represent a set of shared beliefs and values, it is more important to think for oneself. That is the gift that America gives its people□the right to think, act, and speak independently. It is strength of character, however, that determines whether an individual will seize that right. In a time of both hope and uncertainty, Kennedy must have hoped that Americans would see in *Profiles in Courage* examples of statesmen they could not only admire but also emulate; statesmen who showed a kind of courage that was as much needed in the 1950s as it had been in history.

Source: Jennifer Bussey, Critical Essay on *Profiles in Courage,* in *Nonfiction Classics for Students,* The Gale Group, 2001.

Critical Essay #2

Hart is a published writer with a background in literature and creative writing. In the following essay, she looks at the price of courage in the lives of four of the senators portrayed in Kennedy's Profiles in Courage.

John F. Kennedy ends his Pulitzer Prize-winning book *Profiles in Courage* with his definition of courage. Or at least he tries to define it. He can't quite put his finger on a specific definition, but he does know what courage requires, what it may cost an individual, and finally what courage means to democracy. He concludes that courage—this abstract concept that he can only allude to through stories about people who have displayed it through the resolution of conflict—is the "basis of all human morality." The conflicts that the people in his stories faced, although set in the political arena, affected more than just their political careers. And maybe that was the most compelling reason to choose these particular men to use as models for his definition of courage. The conflicts they faced affected their health, their families, and their finances, in other words, every aspect of their lives.

It is through the telling of their struggles that Kennedy hopes to inspire every citizen to become "monuments of individual conscience," despite the cost, "in spite of personal consequences, in spite of obstacles, dangers and pressures." He points out that although most of the stories he has written in this book seem to end unhappily, he believes that in the long run, each one of the senators involved was a hero. And it is to the hero in each citizen that Kennedy appeals. Each person has a responsibility both to his own conscience and to the conscience of the nation of which they are a part. He reminds everyone that they are the government. "For, in a democracy, every citizen ... is in a position of responsibility ... the kind of government we get depends upon how we fulfill those responsibilities." Toward this end, toward the task of inspiring courage, Kennedy retells portions of the lives of men he admired. The conclusions of each of his stories, the points that contain the most inspiration are the details that convey the price that these courageous men had to pay.

One of the main conflicts that several of these stories discuss is the struggle that many of the senators had to suffer in choosing between what their constituents wanted them to do and what their conscience dictated as the correct path to follow for the sake of the nation. The price that each paid for eventually following the dictates of their conscience varied for each man. For instance, Kennedy begins his book with a story about John Quincy Adams. Adams held more offices in the U.S. government and "participated in more important events than anyone in the history of our nation," states Kennedy. Among the offices he held were emissary to England, state and U.S. senator, member of the House of Representatives, secretary of State, and, like his father, he also became the president of the United States. But Adams had trouble fitting into the party system of American politics. He had, as Kennedy calls it, an "audacious disdain for narrow partisanship." Adams was the type of politician that many modern day voters might admire: an independent nonpartisan thinker.

Adams was elected as a Federalist, but he voted his conscience, no matter which party was backing a bill. And in 1807, with his constituents calling him a heretic, and his party leaders on the verge of completely denouncing him, Adams struck a fatal blow to his association with his party. The Federalist party, on the whole, believed in appeasing the British, no matter how aggressive their actions were against the Americans. The Republicans, on the other hand, believed it was time to fight back. So, Adams helped the Republicans write a resolution that pledged their support to the president in whatever steps he would take to confront the British navy. The Federalist Party, in reply to Adams actions, wrote that he should "have his head taken off."

Although the cost to Adams for his acting on what he believed to be morally correct did not include the loss of his head, he lost the support of his Federalist Party and his seat in the Senate. Adams was from Massachusetts, the major shipping port in the nation at that time. It was Massachusetts that would be hurt the most from the impending embargo of British goods that Adams helped to write and would eventually sign. When the embargo was put in place, the pressure on Massachusetts was so great that the people of New England began talking of secession from the union. In retaliation for Adams having put New England in such dire straits, the Federalist Party convened nine months prior to the expiration of Adam's Senate term and elected his successor. At this maneuver, Adams felt he had nothing left to do but resign. Although he would be later elected president and even later than that returned to Washington with a seat in the House of Representatives, Adams never again associated himself with any political party. He specifically ran for office only under the condition that he would not be required to give in to any party pressure. Because of his gift of intellect, which was much admired, Adams enjoyed a long, but interrupted political career.

"Great crises produce great men, and great deeds of courage," begins part two of Kennedy's book. He is making reference to the "fratricidal war between North and South in 1861." And one of the great deeds of courage comes from Daniel Webster, another senator from Massachusetts.

Webster's conflict revolved around the issue of slavery. Personally he was against slavery, but when he saw the potential of a civil war that might arise over the issue of slavery, he decided, for the best of the Union to back Henry Clay's Great Compromise. Webster's backing of the Compromise came as a great surprise to both Northerners and Southerners. As a matter of fact, it must have even surprised Webster himself who wrote shortly before committing himself to the Compromise: "I have regarded slavery as a great moral and political evil.... You need not fear that I shall vote for any compromise or do anything inconsistent with the past."

Fearing that the Union was about to split apart, Webster, "after months of insomnia" decided that the only way to avert civil war was to sign the Compromise. He did, but only after using his "spellbinding oratorical ability" to deliver a speech in the Senate that lasted three hours and eleven minutes. Webster's health was not good at the time, and he stimulated himself so he would have the strength to deliver the speech by taking "oxide of arsenic and other drugs." Webster was a politically ambitious man, and in giving his support to Clay by voting in favor of the Great Compromise, he committed

political suicide. Although his action helped prevent or at least forestall the imminent danger of "immediate secession and bloodshed," Webster would lose all support for his bid for the presidency□a lifelong ambition.

Another courageous spirit, a contemporary of Webster's, Thomas Hart Benton was a burly man who liked to throw his weight around. He reportedly said at the beginning of one of his speeches in the Senate: "I never quarrel, sir. But sometimes I fight, sir; and whenever I fight, sir, a funeral follows." Benton had actually once killed a man, a U.S. district attorney who unfortunately challenged Benton to a duel. So when he spoke, people were used to listening to him although they did not always like what he said. Benton was from Missouri, a state that was leaning toward the Southern states in terms of being pro-slavery. Benton leaned toward slavery, but he feared, like Webster, that the issue would split the Union. He decided to neither support the South nor the Northern Abolitionist. He refused to support Clay's Great Compromise and "steered an extraordinarily independent course." Because of his position, Benton knew that he had no chance of ever being re-elected and returning to the Senate.

Feeding upon the anger of the people who had turned against Benton, a Southern Senator by the name of Henry Foote, taunted Benton one day in the Senate by calling Benton a coward. When Benton made an aggressive move toward Foote, Foote pulled out a gun. At this, Benton threw open his coat and made his chest more available. Both Foote and Benton calmed down but not without further verbal assaults slung at one another. A footnote to this story is that Foote declared that he would write a "small book in which ... Benton would play a leading role." Benton retorted that he would write a "very large book in which he [Foote] will not figure at all!" Foote's threat never materialized. But Benton did eventually write a book, never mentioning Foote at all.

A year later, as he had feared, Benton was recalled home and replaced by another senator. He did, however, win a seat in the House of Representatives, but he quickly lost all support for his outspoken views and never was re-elected. He continued to campaign, even trying to regain his seat in the Senate at the age of seventy-four. But by this time, he was suffering from throat cancer, and despite the fact that his throat bled when he spoke, he continued to deliver his notoriously ferocious speeches. "But even in death and defeat," says Kennedy, Thomas Hart Benton was victorious. By making his true feelings about the need to save the Union known, he eventually persuaded his state of Missouri to keep from joining the South when it seceded from the Union.

Robert Taft was another senator whose lifelong political goal was the White House. He, too, like John Quincy Adams, was the son of a former president. Taft was the most likely of all Republican presidential candidates in 1946, but he failed to receive his party's nomination both in 1948 and 1952. Whether he lost the nomination because of his courage to speak his conscience is not known, however, the fact remains that he never attained his goal. Taft's popular and political downfall, his stumbling block, was the War Crimes Trials, known as the Nuremberg Trials.

In theory, the Nuremberg Trials, at which Nazis involved in World War II were being tried, had little affect on the United States. There was neither a threat of secession by

any states, nor of any civil war in America dependent on the outcome of the trials. Neither was there any political position from either the Republican or the Democratic Parties in regards to the trials. "But Senator Taft was disturbed□and when he was disturbed it was his habit to speak out." And so he did.

Taft took the opportunity of a speech he gave at a college in Ohio to tell the world what was bothering him. "The trial of the vanquished by the victors," he said in reference to the war crimes' trial, "cannot be impartial no matter how it is hedged about with the forms of justice." Because of the horrendous crimes of the Nazis, the sensitivity to these trials cannot be overstated. Emotions prevailed, and the message that Taft had meant to send was obscured and misinterpreted. He was not stating in any way that he thought the Nazis were innocent, or that they should be allowed to go free. Rather his sentiments reflected the same principles upon which be believed the American legal system was based□the principles of justice. "About this whole judgment there is the spirit of vengeance, and vengeance is seldom justice," he said.

Taft was dismayed by the reaction that followed his speech. His thoughts and his convictions were so clear to him that he was totally caught off guard by the ridicule that he experienced. Some of the most disappointing responses came from the American legal system, including the president of the American Bar Association and the chairman of its Executive Committee who "defended the trials as being in accordance with international law." Whether he knew it at the time or not, Taft's political career may have been ruined by his making known his beliefs.

Kennedy ends the chapter on Taft with a quote from Taft on his definition of liberty: "When I say liberty, I mean liberty of the individual to think his own thoughts and live his own life as he desires to think and live." This quote sums up all the sentiments of the previous chapters and possibly all the motives behind the courage as displayed by every senator's story in this book. Kennedy states in the closing pages of *Profiles in Courage* that he wrote this book to instill hope, and his hope was that these stories would provide inspiration. Then he states: "But they cannot supply courage itself. For this each man must look into his own soul." Kennedy also points out that the men in his stories were given the opportunity to make their courage apparent on a public stage. This does not diminish the role of the normal citizen, according to Kennedy, to also take advantage of every opportunity to exhibit their own courage in making hard decisions. It is the moral integrity of a nation's citizens upon which the courage of the nation flows.

Source: Joyce Hart, Critical Essay on *Profiles in Courage,* in *Nonfiction Classics for Students,* The Gale Group, 2001.

Critical Essay #3

In the following essay, Hammer and Maudsley examine Profiles in Courage *within the context of "a Roman conception of profiling and its relationship to courage and politics."*

Published in 1955 during John F. Kennedy's tenure as a senator, *Profiles in Courage* was an instant best-seller, receiving the Pulitzer prize that same year. Yet, for being such a widely acclaimed work, scholars and reviewers have been reluctant to engage the argument of the book. What has focused scholarly attention, instead, is intrigue: who really wrote the book, whose political goals were served by writing the book, and how might Kennedy have secured the Pulitzer prize? When scholars have addressed issues in the book, it is by way of synopses, a generic praise of courage, comments on style, or suggestions that Kennedy never actually lived up to these words.

Part of the difficulty with interpreting *Profiles* is that we approach the work from within a framework grounded in a twentieth-century conception of politics as a process of interest articulation and aggregation. From this perspective, *Profiles* appears as little more than a series of "anecdotes" that say nothing substantive about politics but serve to advance the political interests of Kennedy. This framework, though, is particularly unsuitable for interpreting *Profiles* precisely because the book is engaged in a challenge to this framework. We will argue that *Profiles* introduces a different conception of politics, one suggested by the two key words in the title: "profile" and "courage." Both the language and arguments in *Profiles in Courage* seem foreign to us now, but they recall a Roman conception of profiling and its relationship to courage and politics. Understanding this conception requires that we look at some examples of Roman profiling to develop a vocabulary for interpreting this relationship between courage and politics. What emerges is a notion of courage that is not only necessary for, but made possible by, the public nature of politics. The very notion of profiling, with the emphasis on the individual actor in politics and the performance of courageous deeds, appears as a fundamental departure from the prevailing, twentieth-century instrumental conception of politics as "who gets what, when, how." In making this argument, *Profiles* seeks to rehumanize the political space-to make politics a realm of human action rather than impersonal processes.

Critical Essay #4

It is one of the distinctive features of Roman thought that there are few statements of a political theory. A Roman conception of politics emerges, instead, through a cumulation of profiles. In describing the task of the Roman historian in writing of the "kinds of lives our ancestors live," Livy suggests, "in history you have a record of the infinite variety of human experience plainly set out for all to see; and in that record you can find for yourself and your country both examples and warnings; fine things to take as models, base things, rotten through and through, to avoid." The history that Livy is referring to is a history of individuals rather than of political processes and institutions. These are not biographies, in the modern sense of the term, but profiles meant to capture particular moments in a life. Though the perspectives of the likes of Cicero, Plutarch, Suetonius, and Tacitus vary widely, what they share in their emphasis on profiles is a conception of politics in which individual virtue and public life are inextricably tied to each other. Where Plutarch, for example, focuses on the character of those entering public life, Cicero makes clear how politics not only demands "great" individuals but also makes these individuals "great." The qualities of character necessary for political greatness are many, but foremost among them is courage. The reason for this is because there is an extraordinary risk that one assumes in entering a public realm that was notable, most of all, for its unpredictability. The value of profiles was that they served to recall these public deeds. Through these recollections, as Hannah Arendt suggests, courageous action was made distinctive and the actor was given glory.

Plutarch is, perhaps, the most famous of Roman profilers. Born in 40-45, Plutarch lived during the height of the Roman empire. Much of his writing, however, tells us about the men of the republic who displayed courage, wisdom, self-discipline, moderation, and a love for Rome. In his profiles, Plutarch does not lay out a formal theory of politics or principles of proper political behavior; rather, he uses exemplars to make clear the importance of having individuals of character and virtue in politics.

What is striking in reading Plutarch is that despite his moralistic tone at times, there is a complexity to the profiles he composes. There are no models of perfection, nor are there simple formulas for what counts as greatness. Certainly, Plutarch admires those who exhibit both a virtuous private and public life. But the real test of character, for Plutarch, seems to be public: in the swirl of political conflict and intrigue, "true" character is revealed in our public deeds.

Camillus, for example, is a citizen of humility and piety who was called back from exile to restore Rome. Cato the Censor, on the other hand, is portrayed as sometimes immodest, abusive, and even ungenerous in his private life. But the public life revealed a man of temperance and wisdom who displayed "gravity and severity." Cato the Censor' s greatness does not derive from a life of perfection. What seems to warrant Plutarch's accolade of greatness lies in the honor Cato received upon his retirement. A temple inscription commissioned in Cato's honor read: "In honour of Cato the Censor who, when the Roman republic was degenerating into licentiousness, by good discipline and wise institutions restored it." And of Cicero, Plutarch would write that though he

perhaps loved glory too much, he managed to maintain a philosophic temperament without "imbibing the passions that are the common consequence" of political office.

Cicero comes to us as both profiled and profiler. Like Plutarch, Cicero is interested in studies of character, especially of men in politics and public life. For example, in *On the Commonwealth,* Cicero lays out notions of the ideal statesman within the ideal state. For Cicero, an ideal statesman is one who is wise, just, self controlled, and eloquent. Moreover, a "great" politician continually strives to improve himself and "possesses at once the active courage of Marcellus and the wise hesitancy of Maximus." And "at all times he aims to be the model which his subjects may imitate, and the mirror in which they may behold the image of a perfect life and character."

To pilot the state, leaders must possess certain virtues. Cicero maintains, "we should be permitted to seek the character of a great man in excellence, activity, and energy." Moreover, this man exhibits discipline, exercises restraint, and practices moderation. What is needed most of all, though, is the virtue of "courage," which "includes the quality of high-mindedness and a lofty scorn of death and pain." This is no small issue for Cicero, who would himself be executed for his activities as a political leader, because entering politics entails "grave risks." The risk arises in two ways: first, the political leader cannot control the passionate impulses in others that may follow from words or actions; and second, the actor must ultimately bear the judgment of the citizens. Notes Cicero, in reflecting on his leadership, "Yet even if the result of all I had done to preserve my country had not met with the universal applause which it, in fact, evoked," still, continues Cicero, "I should have borne what had to be borne." The courage to enter politics, to endure the passions of the people, springs from a "love for noble actions" that is "so compelling" that individuals "overcome all the enticements of pleasure and ease." Cicero recalls at one point a letter from Brutes in which Brutes suggested that Cicero should take "courage" because, writes Cicero, "I had performed deeds which, even if I remain silent, will speak for me, and will live on after I am dead."

Cicero would see in others these same qualities of courage. Marcus Cato, for example, "serves as the model of an active and virtuous life for all of us whose interests, like his, are political." Certainly, Marcus Cato could "have enjoyed himself in quiet repose at Tusculum," but he "chose to ride the storms and tempests of public life until advanced age." Some philosophers would say Marcus Cato was a "fool"; however, Cicero believes he was a "great" man who possessed a deep "sense of public duty" and a love for Rome. So, too, Brutus showed "calmness and self effacement in the face of evil" who, through his actions, "restored legality to the government."

At first glance, such testaments to virtue seem obvious and unremarkable. But what emerges in Roman accounts is the suggestion that the political realm is, itself, both constituted by and sustaining of acts of courage. On the one hand, the political realm is sustaining of acts of courage because, for Cicero, "virtue depends entirely on its use." And, for Cicero, there is no higher use of virtue than the "government of a state," which requires the "actual performance, not the mere discussion, of those deeds which your philosophers rehearse in their secluded retreats." The "art" of politics, Cicero states, "when added to great natural abilities, produces ... a type of character extraordinary and

divine." Cicero makes clear that "there is, indeed, nothing in which human excellence can more nearly approximate the divine than in the foundation of new states or in the preservation of states already founded." Ultimately, what shines through in acts of courage is an individual's "significance" measured not by the "uses" of the work but by "how valuable he is in himself.'

On the other hand, the realm of politics is, itself, sustained by acts of courage. Cicero, for example, recalls the "distinguished men" of the past who endowed, through their actions, the commonwealth with health and vigor. He now laments, though, that "our own generation, after inheriting the commonwealth as if it were a painting, of unique excellence but fading with age, has not only failed to restore its original hues, but had not even troubled to preserve its outlines and the last vestiges of its features." This lack of distinguished men causes the civic and moral rules of living "to perish." For, concludes Cicero, "it is by our defects of character and not by accident that we long since lost the substance of the commonwealth, though we still retain its name."

Critical Essay #5

From the perspective of the Romans, Kennedy's *Profiles* begins to appear not as a series of unrelated anecdotes but as an argument about the nature of politics. The problem of contemporary politics, *Profiles* seems to suggest, is that both the citizens and political leaders have come to understand it in terms of procedure, self interest, ambition, bureaucracy, and groups. Kennedy writes:

Our political life is becoming so expensive, so mechanized and so dominated by professional politicians and public relations men that the idealist who dreams of independent statesmanship is rudely awakened by the necessities of election and accomplishment.

The danger is that what lies at the heart of politics□human action□becomes devalued, if not completely lost, in a political system that has become mechanized and institutionalized. *Profiles,* thus, appears as a response to this institutionalization, both through its "profiles," which place individuals at the center of politics, and through its celebration of "courage" as "the most admirable of human virtues." It is a quality of character that is uniquely disclosed in the public performance of words and deeds. *Profiles,* thus, is not only a "book about courage and politics"; it is a book about their inextricable relationship. For, in an age of politics as interest articulation, the demand for and "challenge of political courage looms larger than ever before."

Profiles proceeds through stories of eight senators who, through their courage, were able to leave their distinctive marks on politics, not necessarily in a set of changes in policy, but by imbuing politics with meaning and value. Like the task of the Roman historian, so *Profiles* offers exemplars so that we might also practice courage ourselves. "These stories of past courage can define that ingredient-they can teach, they can offer hope, they can provide inspiration. But they cannot supply courage itself. For this each man must look into his soul."

The political concept that emerges cannot be stated in a theoretical guise, precisely because of the variety of expressions of political courage. Of John Quincy Adams, for example, Kennedy writes that "there is a fascination and nobility in this picture of a man unbending, narrow and intractable, judging himself more severely than his most bitter enemies judged him, possessing an integrity unsurpassed among major political figures of our history, and constantly driven onward by his conscience and his deeply felt obligation to be worthy of his parents, their example and their precepts." Writing in a language much like Plutarch, Kennedy suggests that Sam Houston was a man characterized by contradictions. He was a senator in the years leading up to the Civil War, years which brought great crises and demanded political courage. "[G]reat crises produce great men, and great deeds of courage." And Sam Houston's actions were certainly courageous. His courageous act was his vote against the Kansas-Nebraska bill in favor of maintaining the Missouri Compromise.

Courage can take the form of a single act, such as Edmund G. Ross's refusal to vote for impeachment, or can appear through years of service, as with Robert A. Taft. "Whatever their differences, the American politicians whose stories are here retold shared that one heroic quality-courage." Kennedy, like Plutarch and Cicero, tells us that these men displayed certain virtues and attributes of character in the practice of politics: "Most of them, despite their differences, held much in common-the breathtaking talents of the orator, the brilliance of the scholar, the breadth of the man above party and section, and, above all, a deepseated belief in themselves, their integrity and the rightness of their cause." It is the courage to act in politics that we should esteem.

Given a twentieth-century political vocabulary of groups, process, interest, outputs, and power, we are able to understand Profiles in Courage only with great difficulty. But given a Roman vocabulary of political courage, art, exemplars of virtue, and the ennobling nature of politics, we see *Profiles in Courage* as a work of political thought, as articulating a "new" notion of politics. For both the Romans and Kennedy, individuals of courage and virtue practice and engage in politics as an art. Kennedy writes, in words similar to Cicero, that these men of courage "are simply engaged in the fine art of conciliating, balancing and interpreting the forces and factions of public opinion, an art essential to keeping our nation united and enabling our Government to function." Indeed, the courageous, distinctive acts of individuals constitute politics as it should be practiced and bring a sense of meaning and value to political life.

Profiles asserts that the political arena in the Senate provides men with tests of political courage. It is in politics that men are given the most public opportunity to act courageously, with integrity, and in accordance with their principles and consciences. Concurrently, in their courageous actions, men are able to redeem politics, giving it meaning and value, and thus preventing, or, as is the case in the twentieth century, rescuing, political life from a certain baseness, instrumentality, and meaninglessness. Ultimately, Kennedy seems to be saying that it is men of courage, in the past and in the future, who both bring a certain nobility to politics and renew our faith in the political system. He writes: "For the continued political success of those who withstood the pressures of public opinion, and the ultimate vindication of the rest, enables us to maintain our faith in the long-run judgment of the people."

This notion of the redemptive value of politics recalls the ennobling nature of politics that infuses the language of the Romans. As Cicero comments, "For praise and glory are the only rewards which merit of this calibre looks for; although, even if no such rewards materialized, merit of such a kind would rest content enough with what it had itself achieved, which could not fail, even without formal recognition, to be lodged in the memories of his grateful fellow citizens; and they would make sure it saw the light of day." In a similar vein, Kennedy notes it is only as we have men acting courageously, practicing the art of politics, that we remain a democracy, for the men of courage about which he writes are "men who showed ... a real faith in democracy." He writes: "A democracy" that has "no monument of individual conscience in a sea of popular rule-is not worthy to bear the name." For a true democracy is one which "puts its faith in the people ... faith that the people will not condemn those whose devotion to principle leads them to unpopular courses, but will reward courage, respect honor and ultimately

recognize right." These profiles are about such a democracy, a nation which values courage. Thus, *Profiles in Courage* seeks to renew our faith in democratic politics by portraying it not as a "robotic" process but as a realm defined by the courageous deeds of individuals. These are moments in which politics ceases to be merely a set of procedures, a game, and an outcome and becomes an ennobling art, a practice of individual character and distinction, and a realm that both allows for and endows greatness.

Source: Dean Hammer and Adelaide Maudsley, "The Politics of Courage: Kennedy's *Profiles* as Political Thought," in *Journal of American Culture,* Vol. 22, No. 2, Summer 1999, pp. 65-69.

Adaptations

A television series based on Kennedy's book was produced by Robert Saudek Associates in 1964. It won the 1965 Peabody Award, a prize recognizing outstanding achievement in television. The series starred Walter Matthau, Burgess Meredith, and Carroll O'Connor.

In 1989, Caedmon Audio Cassettes released an audio adaptation of *Profiles in Courage.* The narrator for this audio version was Kennedy's son, John F. Kennedy Jr.

Topics for Further Study

Kennedy obviously valued courage and was inspired by the examples of it he found in American political history. What is a quality that you especially admire and respect? After you have chosen one, focus on a particular field (such as music, art, literature, etc.) and compile a list of five people whom you feel represent the quality you have chosen. Create a draft of your own *Profiles* in_____by making an outline or by writing a few paragraphs for each person you chose. After you are finished, go back and write a one-paragraph preface, explaining why you believe this quality is so admirable.

Use the library and/or the Internet to find portraits of the men Kennedy profiled in his book. How does the art reflect the same courage, patriotism, and passion that Kennedy depicts in his book? What choices (colors, expressions, settings, etc.) did the artists make to communicate the characters of these statesmen? How do these paintings make you feel?

Research the history of the two-party system in American politics. Create brief summaries of the political views of major parties, past and present. Do you think the United States will always have a two-party system? Why or why not?

Think about political events of the past few years. Come up with a nomination for someone you think deserves to be included in *Profiles in Courage.* It must be someone who is in politics, but you may choose anyone in local, state, or federal government. Write a short essay in the style of Kennedy in which you make a case for this person's inclusion.

Compare and Contrast

1956: Political figures often draw on America's history for material in their public speeches and writing. Just as Kennedy explores examples of past courage in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, other high-ranking officials often address the American public by quoting past statesmen.

Today: Political figures continue to draw on America's past when addressing the public. This demonstrates respect for the wisdom of those who served in the past. In his first speech as President-elect, George W. Bush reminds listeners of an election in early American history and then quotes the man elected, Thomas Jefferson.

1956: Two parties, the Democrats and the Republicans, dominate the government. This two-party system is described by Kennedy at every phase of the U.S. Senate's history, starting as early as 1800, although the parties have changed.

Today: Today, the Democrats and the Republicans remain the two dominant political parties. Other parties, such as the Libertarian Party and the Green Party, are garnering more support, but they are still far from representing a real threat to either of the dominant parties.

1956: Communism is on the rise, the Cold War is in full force, and elected officials like Kennedy look to the past to find examples of political courage and integrity. It is an uncertain time in which many Americans feel threatened, and lessons from the past provide wisdom and comfort.

Today: Communism is in decline, the Cold War is over, and the United States has improved relations with countries such as Russia (formerly part of the Soviet Union) and China. Americans do not live in constant fear of nuclear attack or of an internal communist threat.

What Do I Read Next?

The classic *Democracy in America,* originally published in 1835, is the work of the French writer Alexis de Toqueville, who came to the United States in 1830 primarily to study the prison system. What he learned far exceeded his expectations, and his observations of American life and politics continue to be studied today by students of history and politics.

James N. Giglio has written more than one book about Kennedy. In *The Presidency of John F. Kennedy* (1992), he presents an unbiased view of Kennedy's term in the White House. Giglio does not shy away from the ugly sides of the presidency, nor does he deny the successes and cultural impact of President Kennedy.

Written by Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison, *The Federalist Papers* (first published in 1788) contains the arguments set forth by these early statesmen in support of the proposed Constitution. Hamilton, Jay, and Madison applaud the document as the foundation of a government that respects the inherent rights of its citizens.

Mary Beth Norton's *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women,* 1750-1800 (1996) provides an overview of the role of women in early America. It serves as a complementary text to Kennedy's review of American statesmen.

Herbert Parmet's 1983 *Jack: The Struggles of John F. Kennedy* provides an overview of the many difficulties Kennedy faced throughout his political career. The book also contains Parmet' s case that *Profiles in Courage* was ghostwritten.

Richard Reeves's *President Kennedy: Profile* in Power (1994) introduces newly released documents in a behind-the-scenes look into Kennedy' s administration. Reeves strives to portray Kennedy as he really was, complete with strengths and flaws. This book offers a thorough look at Kennedy's presidency from the well-known events to the lesser-known political and personal developments.

Further Study

Hostrop, Richard W., Leeona S. Hostrop, and John F. Kennedy, *Profiles in Courage: Simulations Based on John F. Kennedy's Pulitzer Prize Book (Etc. Simulation, No. 4),* Etc. Publications, 1995.

This book contains exercises and reenactments to help students better understand the events of Kennedy's Profiles in Courage. From the Louisiana Purchase to the New Deal, students delve into controversial decisions and issues of American history.

James, Marquis, *The Raven: A Biography of Sam Houston,* University of Texas Press, 1988.

Nobel Prize-winning author James delves into the life of Sam Houston in an effort to explore his early life and how it affected his actions as a major figure in Texas and United States history. This book won the 1930 Pulitzer Prize for biography.

Mayes, Edward, *Lucius Q. C. Lamar: His Life, Times, and Speeches, 1825-1893,* AMS Press, 1974.

In this lengthy book, Mayes provides a general overview of Lamar's background and political career, including Lamar's own words as he addressed the American public.

Nagel, Paul C., *John Quincy Adams: A Public Life, A Private Life,* Knopf, 1997.

Nagel, who has written other books on the Adams family, presents an honest look at the complex personality of John Quincy Adams. He describes Adams's difficult temperament, his political struggles, and his opposition to slavery.

Norris, George William, and Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *Fighting Liberal: The Autobiography of George W. Norris,* University of Nebraska Press, 1992.

In his own words, Norris tells the story of his life, with special emphasis on his political beliefs. This book was written with the help of Kennedy biographer Arthur Schlesinger.

Patterson, James T., *Mr. Republican: A Biography of Robert A. Taft,* Houghton Mifflin, 1972.

This lengthy volume is one of the few biographies available of Robert A. Taft. It reviews his early life, demonstrating how Taft grew into an impassioned political figure.

Remini, Robert Vincent, *Daniel Webster: The Man and His Time,* W. W. Norton & Co., 1997.

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this book for its complete and honest look at an intriguing figure in early American history.

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

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

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

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

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

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

Selection Criteria

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

How Each Entry Is Organized

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

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

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

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

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

Other Features

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

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

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

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

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

Citing Nonfiction Classics for Students

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We Welcome Your Suggestions

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

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