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Instruction Manual: The Path to Power (The Years of Lyndon Johnson, Volume 1)

By Robert A. Caro

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK

The Years of Lyndon Johnson is the political biography of our time. No president—no era of American politics—has been so intensively and sharply examined at a time when so many prime witnesses to hitherto untold or misinterpreted facets of a life, a career, and a period of history could still be persuaded to speak. *The Path to Power*, Book One, reveals in extraordinary detail the genesis of the almost superhuman drive, energy, and urge to power that set LBJ apart. Chronicling the startling early emergence of Johnson's political genius, it follows him from his Texas boyhood through the years of the Depression in the Texas hill Country to the triumph of his congressional debut in New Deal Washington, to his heartbreaking defeat in his first race for the Senate, and his attainment, nonetheless, of the national power for which he hungered.

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

We watch him, while still at college, instinctively (and ruthlessly) creating the beginnings of the political machine that was to serve him for three decades. We see him employing his extraordinary ability to mesmerize and manipulate powerful older men, to mesmerize (and sometimes almost enslave) useful subordinates. We see him carrying out, before his thirtieth year, his first great political inspiration: tapping-and becoming the political conduit for the money and influence of the new oil men and contractors who were to grow with him to immense power. We follow, close up, the radical fluctuations of his relationships with the formidable “Mr. Sam” Rayburn (who loved him like a son and whom he betrayed) and with FDR himself. And we follow the dramas of his emotional life—the intensities and complications of his relationships with his family, his contemporaries, his girls; his wooing and winning of the shy Lady Bird; his secret love affair, over many years, with the mistress of one of his most ardent and generous supporters . . .

Johnson driving his people to the point of exhausted tears, equally merciless with himself . . . Johnson bullying, cajoling, lying, yet inspiring an amazing loyalty . . . Johnson maneuvering to dethrone the unassailable old Jack Garner (then Vice President of the United States) as the New Deal's “connection” in Texas, and seize the power himself . . . Johnson raging . . . Johnson hugging . . . Johnson bringing light and,

indeed, life to the worn Hill Country farmers and their old-at-thirty wives via the district's first electric lines. We see him at once unscrupulous, admirable, treacherous, devoted. And we see the country that bred him: the harshness and "nauseating loneliness" of the rural life; the tragic panorama of the Depression; the sudden glow of hope at the dawn of the Age of Roosevelt. And always, in the foreground, on the move, LBJ. Here is Lyndon Johnson—his Texas, his Washington, his America—in a book that brings us as close as we have ever been to a true perception of political genius and the American political process.

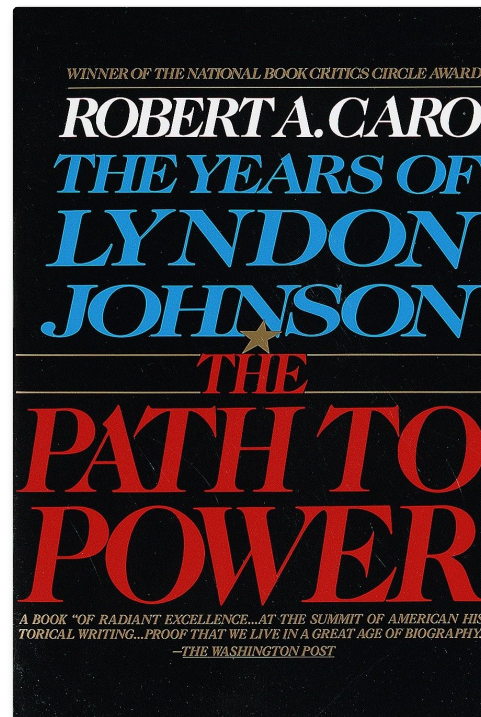


Image: The official cover of "The Path to Power," showcasing the title and author. This image represents the physical appearance of the book.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert A. Caro, the acclaimed author of "The Path to Power," has twice won the Pulitzer Prize for Biography and three times the National Book Critics Circle Award for his works on Robert Moses and Lyndon Johnson. He has also received numerous other literary honors, including the National Book Award and the Gold Medal in Biography from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In 2010, President Barack Obama awarded Caro the National Humanities Medal, acknowledging his profound impact on political thought. Caro's first book, "The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York," is considered a modern classic. His meticulous research, often involving moving to the locations he writes about, and his ability to weave compelling narratives have established him as a leading political biographer. Born and raised in New York City, Caro is a former investigative reporter and lives with his wife, Ina, also a historian and writer.

CRITICAL ACCLAIM

"The Path to Power" has garnered widespread critical praise for its depth, detail, and compelling narrative. Reviewers consistently highlight Robert A. Caro's exhaustive research and his ability to bring the complex character of Lyndon B. Johnson to life.

"Proof that we live in a great age of biography . . . [a book] of radiant excellence . . . Caro's evocation of the Texas Hill Country, his elaboration of Johnson's unsleeping ambition, his understanding of how politics actually works are—let it be said flat out—at the summit of American historical writing."

— The Washington Post

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Image: A visual representation of the quote from The Washington Post, highlighting the book's excellence.

"A monumental political saga . . . powerful and stirring."

— **Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, The New York Times**

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Image: A visual representation of the quote from The New York Times, emphasizing the book's epic scope.

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— **Henry F. Graff, Professor of History, Columbia University**

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Image: A visual representation of the quote from Henry F. Graff, highlighting the book's portrayal of Johnson.

BOOK SPECIFICATIONS

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READING THE WORK

Engaging with "The Path to Power" involves immersing oneself in a detailed historical narrative. Readers are encouraged to approach the text with an open mind, appreciating the extensive research and nuanced portrayal of Lyndon B. Johnson's early life and political development. The book's comprehensive nature allows for a deep understanding of the forces that shaped one of America's most influential political figures. While the narrative is rich with detail, its compelling storytelling ensures an absorbing experience for those interested in American history, political biography, and the dynamics of power.