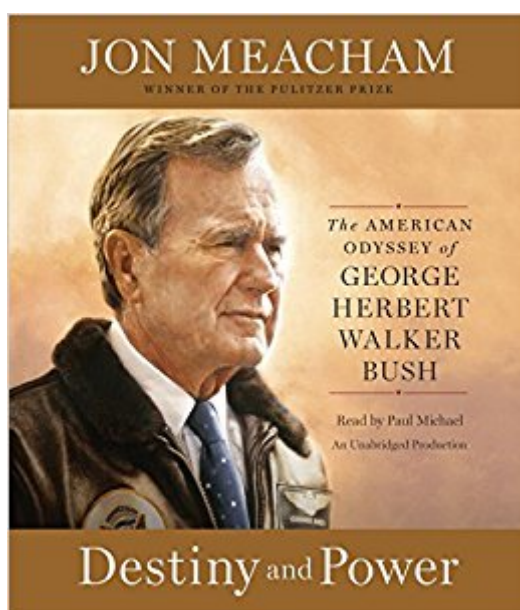


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# Destiny And Power: The American Odyssey Of George Herbert Walker Bush



## Synopsis

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER • NAMED ONE OF THE TEN BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY THE WASHINGTON POST AND ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY The New York Times Book Review | Time | NPR | St. Louis Post-Dispatch

In this brilliant biography, Jon Meacham, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author, chronicles the life of George Herbert Walker Bush. Drawing on President Bush's personal diaries, on the diaries of his wife, Barbara, and on extraordinary access to the forty-first president and his family, Meacham paints an intimate and surprising portrait of an intensely private man who led the nation through tumultuous times. From the Oval Office to Camp David, from his study in the private quarters of the White House to Air Force One, from the fall of the Berlin Wall to the first Gulf War to the end of Communism, *Destiny and Power* charts the thoughts, decisions, and emotions of a modern president who may have been the last of his kind. This is the human story of a man who was, like the nation he led, at once noble and flawed. His was one of the great American lives. Born into a loving, privileged, and competitive family, Bush joined the navy on his eighteenth birthday and at age twenty was shot down on a combat mission over the Pacific. He married young, started a family, and resisted pressure to go to Wall Street, striking out for the adventurous world of Texas oil. Over the course of three decades, Bush would rise from the chairmanship of his county Republican Party to serve as congressman, ambassador to the United Nations, head of the Republican National Committee, envoy to China, director of Central Intelligence, vice president under Ronald Reagan, and, finally, president of the United States. In retirement he became the first president since John Adams to see his son win the ultimate prize in American politics. With access not only to the Bush diaries but, through extensive interviews, to the former president himself, Meacham presents Bush's candid assessments of many of the critical figures of the age, ranging from Richard Nixon to Nancy Reagan; Mao to Mikhail Gorbachev; Dick Cheney to Donald Rumsfeld; Henry Kissinger to Bill Clinton. Here is high politics as it really is but as we rarely see it. From the Pacific to the presidency, *Destiny and Power* charts the vicissitudes of the life of this quietly compelling American original. Meacham sheds new light on the rise of the right wing in the Republican Party, a shift that signaled the beginning of the end of the center in American politics. *Destiny and Power* is an affecting portrait of a man who, driven by destiny and by duty, forever sought, ultimately, to put the country first.

Praise for *Destiny and Power*

“Should be required reading if not for every presidential candidate, then for every president-elect.”

•The Washington Post

“Reflects the qualities of both subject and biographer: judicious, balanced, deliberative, with a deep appreciation of history and the personalities who shape it.”

•The New York

Times Book Review ["A fascinating biography of the forty-first president."](#)  
[The Dallas Morning News](#) ["When we rank, reconsider, laud, or denounce past Presidents, living or dead, we are taking stock of our own times. In that sense, the vindication of George H. W. Bush is a reflection of what we know we've lost. Jon Meacham's new biography of Bush, \*Destiny and Power\*, makes that plain from its very first pages."](#)  
[The New Yorker](#) ["The story of the forty-first man to hold the office sheds light not only on the country we were, but the one we've become."](#)  
[Los Angeles Times](#) From the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

["\[Jon\] Meacham's book should be required reading if not for every presidential candidate, then for every president-elect."](#)  
[The Washington Post](#) ["Destiny and Power reflects the qualities of both subject and biographer: judicious, balanced, deliberative, with a deep appreciation of history and the personalities who shape it. If Meacham is sometimes polite to a fault, \*Destiny and Power\* does not suffer for it. His kinder, gentler approach succeeds in making George H. W. Bush a more sympathetic and more complex figure than if the former president had written his own doorstopper after all."](#)  
[The New York Times Book Review](#) ["Jon Meacham, who won a Pulitzer Prize for his biography of Andrew Jackson, put an enormous amount of work into this volume: nine years of interviews, full access to the diaries of George H. W. and Barbara Bush, and an open door to family members and friends. Add to this Meacham's balanced journalism](#)

and smooth writing, and you have a fascinating biography of the forty-first president. •The Dallas Morning News •“When we rank, reconsider, laud, or denounce past Presidents, living or dead, we are taking stock of our own times. In that sense, the vindication of George H. W. Bush is a reflection of what we know we’ve lost. Jon Meacham’s new biography of Bush, *Destiny and Power*, makes that plain from its very first pages. •The New Yorker •“Graceful prose, backed by diligent mining of the archives and access to an oral diary that Bush dictated throughout his presidency . . . The story of the forty-first man to hold the office sheds light not only on the country we were, but the one we’ve become. •Los Angeles Times •“Meacham is a superb historian and he weaves a compelling historical narrative, drawing heavily on Bush’s own contemporaneous diaries. The result is a fascinating behind-the-scenes glimpse into high-stakes decision making in a rapidly evolving world. •The Seattle Times •“Through one man’s long journey through politics, we see America’s changing attitudes toward power and duty. •Time •“Illuminating . . . written from Bush’s perspective but with a journalist’s rigor . . . George and Barbara Bush have provided extraordinary cooperation [for] an account of his life and presidency that has depth and value. •USA Today (4 out of 4 stars) •“A gripping new biography of the forty-first president. •The Economist •“Meticulously researched . . . a revealing biography that should serve as the starting point for future evaluations of the forty-first president. •Kirkus Reviews •“A vivid, well-written account. •Publishers Weekly •“The more time passes, the more the dust settles, the clearer it becomes that George H. W. Bush and the strengths of character he brought to his long service to this country deserve more attention and appreciation. And now comes *Destiny and Power*, Jon Meacham’s altogether fair, insightful biography of the forty-first president •a portrait made especially compelling by the author’s remarkable access to Bush’s private White House diaries. This is a timely, first-rate book! •David McCullough •“What a spectacular and moving portrait this is •not only of a remarkably classy man but of the era that shaped him! It is hard to imagine a biographer more fitted than Jon Meacham to write what will surely be the definitive work on George Herbert Walker Bush. •Doris Kearns Goodwin •“This astonishing book is both timely and timeless. Based on candid interviews and intimate letters and diaries, it provides a deep insight into the character of George H. W. Bush, flavored with colorful anecdotes depicting his relationships with people ranging from Gorbachev and Reagan to his sons George and Jeb. The

result is a fascinating and insightful portrayal of the life of an exemplary American citizen. Walter Isaacson's "Jon Meacham's timely and intimate biography of George Bush 41 is a welcome reminder of this modest president's call to service, from the cockpits of World War II to the Oval Office and the end of the Cold War. Here you'll meet a man of patrician manners, wartime heroics, Texas assimilation, party and personal loyalty, with a refined sense of power that carried him into history. Meet the George Bush you didn't know. Tom Brokaw's "This riveting biography by the incomparable Jon Meacham gives George H. W. Bush his well-deserved place in history. Destiny and Power is full of surprises, revealing 41's important role in scene after crucial historical scene of the past seven decades. President Bush used to say that he could never quite convey his "heartbeat" to Americans. Now, using a treasure of heretofore unseen diaries and other documents, as well as his own detailed interviews, Meacham takes us behind closed doors to show us what this sometimes misunderstood leader was really like. Michael Beschloss

From the Hardcover edition.

Jon Meacham received the Pulitzer Prize for his 2008 biography of Andrew Jackson, *American Lion*. He is also the author of the New York Times bestsellers *Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power*, *American Gospel*, and *Franklin and Winston*. Meacham, who teaches at Vanderbilt University and at The University of the South, is a fellow of the Society of American Historians. He lives in Nashville and in Sewanee with his wife and children.

Truly a man of all seasons and a great American. He was a patriot and you will love reading about a culture many generations removed and its influence on a humble servant of the people. He and his family have such a love and dedication for country and they gave their very best. Read about what it was like to be a true, uncompromised American hero. I certainly enjoyed the story and hope you will as well.

So, this isn't a quick read, but it's a good one, thick with information, back story and really tracing family genealogy at the onset so you get a sense of who is who. Also, before you get all angry about Republican vs. Democrat, etc. Keep in mind, it's a biography, a well written one at that, which highlights some really interesting aspects of Former President Bush's life, it's relatively apolitical

and focuses on the actions of Bush. It may seem a bit formal for some, but it's actually a refreshing write, without yelling obscenities or blaming others, it's a really good reflection on Bush, his life, and attitude and approach to various events. It is interesting that the book, in the Prologue, actually starts off in the defeat of Bush in 1992. However, in the Prologue it raises some interesting observations about the changing lens of America, moving away from Presidents who actively served vs. those who did not. Overall, it's an expansive look at Bush's life, which keeps the reader moving forward with appropriate attention paid to details someone may wish to know a little bit more about, and then keeps moving forward. It's a really good biography. An element that I did enjoy was the backstory to the Bush family in general. There is no hiding the aspect that it was and has been an affluent family for quite some time and gives insight into this rise of upper class, it even takes the time to go into a bit of the backstory of Andover, discuss Bush's experiences at the school (at least from the lens of others) and moves in to Bush's time at Phillips Academy. The relationship between George and Barbara Bush is quite charming, having excerpts from early communication between the two, a relationship that began in 1941/42, prior to Bush entering the military. A random tid-bit, Bush sent a letter to his mother talking about wanting to remain a virgin prior to marriage, as he believed that was a character trait, and would be upset if his wife had had a "wife had known some other man" essentially, he wasn't a fan of a double standard. The book chronicles Bush's time during the war, followed up with his time at Yale. It is interesting to note that Bush had a family while he was attending Yale and also played baseball. It is interesting to note that there was an aversion to relying on family money post-graduation from college, hence why he did not pursue a Rhodes scholarship. Bush moved out to Texas to pursue some business options, but there is a significant focus on their child Robin who passed away at 3 and a half. The mourning is touched on by the author, in particular Bush's own recollection of the passing of his daughter, the maintaining of her photo (even in the White House), and inability to even talk about it in present day. There is an interesting aspect in which Barbara recognized her mourning over Robin was having a negative impact on George and she realized that she had to refocus her life in order to be a good mother. The book continues, I worry about just rambling on about the whole thing in this review. However, there are a lot of letters that are referenced, interviews, and diary entries that come up. There are also these moments of humanistic insight of the Bushs, such as their move to Washington and the vast number of house

guests that they would have, with Bush inviting the moving men to even spend the night the first night that they lived in the house. It's interesting to see the Bushes as individuals who are very affable and young and welcoming to others. This is also reflected in Bush's choice to see Johnson off when his presidency ended rather than being in town for Republican festivities. This courtesy also emerges again later on as Bush passes the presidency to Clinton and asks for only one element, which is to maintain an emphasis on volunteerism. If you have the Kindle version, the book is only about 55% of the actual Kindle; the rest are citations. The reading goes all the way through Bush's 43rd time in the office and after, discussing the relationship that father and son had together during this time. Prior to this point in the story it talks about Bush's relationships and more publically known presence, with additional vignettes about how he interacted with people in private, more often than not maintaining respect and courtesy. I really liked the pictures, there were a fair number I had not seen before and gave a very humanistic perspective of Bush.

This is an excellent biography. I did not fully appreciate Bush's experience and accomplishments. He had a challenging early life in Texas building his oil, and gas business. He later had an exceedingly important series of key government positions before becoming President. The book really gets into his personality and drive. Barbara also comes across as a special person. A great read

Meacham's biography of George H.W. Bush is a beautifully written portrait of a true patriot and leader. It is also a great 20th century history through the vehicle of President Bush's life. President Bush had a difficult time connecting with many voters, and often chose good policy over good politics, which ultimately led to his demise. Highly recommended regardless of political affiliation (and I typically vote Democratic). Disclaimer: the first several chapters of Bush's waspy background are somewhat hard to get through, so do not give up early!

This was quite a good book and review of the man, his family, his career and his presidency. The author certainly thought highly of President Bush but was not afraid to point out weak aspects as well. All in all it paints the picture of George H W Bush and his life long service to the country. He was an honorable man and that alone is refreshing. It also marked the end of what we used to call bipartisanship. It seemed to come with his breaking his comment, "Read my lips, no new taxes." He did so in the name of bipartisanship and the seeming good of the country over his own career. We

know how it all ended.

Although some accused Meacham of being overly flattering, I found the portrait honest. Bush 41's accomplishments and accolades from President Clinton and President Obama support the narrative. George H. W. Bush's character and devotion to our great country are inspiring. His handling of foreign affairs is a great example of emotional intelligence. I recommend this biography to anyone who looks to great people for inspiration and guidance.

I found *Destiny and Power* to require some time to work through, but worth the effort. In particular, George H.W. Bush's life and distinguished service bear important lessons for all Americans. His story maps a political process that has brought us to such divided and negative times in 2016. There is much more to this distinguished American of "The Greatest Generation" than most know, but is worth learning.

Good biography of President Bush. Like all of Meacham's books, he clearly favors the subject. But it does walk you through the details of his life and gives you a strong picture of them.

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