

BOOK CLUB SYNOPSIS

Leadership in Turbulent Times
Doris Kearns Goodwin

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LEADERSHIP IN TURBULENT TIMES CHRONOLOGY

ABRAHAM LINCOLN [1809-1865]

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- Chapter Four – 1908-1938
- Chapter Eight – 1941-1960
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About the Author

Doris Kearns Goodwin is a gifted historian and unparalleled storyteller whose work brings history's most respected and successful leaders to life. The Pulitzer Prize-winning author of several best-selling books, Goodwin also consulted on *Lincoln*, Steven Spielberg's award-winning film based on her work, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*. In addition, she is the recipient of the Carnegie Medal for *The Bully Pulpit*, which chronicles the friendship of Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft. Goodwin has taught at Harvard University and worked as an assistant to President Lyndon Johnson during his last year in the White House.

FOREWORD

In *Leadership in Turbulent Times*, Doris Kearns Goodwin examines the lives and political careers of Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson, each of whom held office during a moment in American history that was fraught with upheaval and uncertainty. Throughout the book, she explores the following questions:

- Are leaders born or made?
- Where does ambition come from?
- How does adversity affect the growth of leadership?

The book has a three-part structure; each part devotes a chapter to each president's story. Part I deals with the early life of each president and describes how they entered the public sphere. Goodwin notes that, while all four shared a driving ambition and the desire to succeed, they came from different backgrounds and had different innate strengths, which they developed in order to become exceptional leaders.

Part II illustrates “how each of the four men suffered through dramatic reversals that shattered their private and public lives.” While the particular circumstances varied, each crucible was instrumental in molding the singular leader who emerged.

Finally, Part III unpacks the question of whether a leader is shaped by the time in which he or she lives or vice versa. “One leader's skills, strengths, and style may be suited for the times; those of another less so,” writes Goodwin, citing James Buchanan, William McKinley, Herbert Hoover and John F. Kennedy as leaders who were less equipped to deal with the challenges of their day than were their successors.

Goodwin acknowledges that one of her four subjects is not like the others. Lincoln led the country through the Civil War. Theodore Roosevelt navigated the challenges of the Industrial Age, and Franklin Roosevelt maintained the nation's hope through the

Depression and World War II; yet Johnson has a more problematic place in history. As Goodwin maintains, his story merits inclusion in the lineage of great leaders. She writes, “While his conduct of the Vietnam War continues to divide and threaten his legacy, the passing years make it clear that his leadership in civil rights and his domestic vision in the Great Society stand the test of time.”

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AMBITION AND THE RECOGNITION OF LEADERSHIP

CHAPTER ONE

ABRAHAM

Abraham Lincoln was 23 years old in 1832 when he first ran for office, a common way for young men to make their mark at the time. Goodwin asserts that his ambition was not only about his drive to succeed but also his deep desire to serve his fellow man. His own beginnings could hardly have been humbler: His mother died of an illness when he was only 9 years old. Afterward, his father—a poor, illiterate subsistence farmer—abandoned Abraham and his 12-year-old sister Sarah in their drafty, floorless cabin for seven months while he went looking for a new wife. Goodwin poses the question: After such a tumultuous childhood, how was Lincoln able to “develop and sustain a grand, near visionary ambition, a belief that he was meant for higher and better things?”

YOUNG LINCOLN’S LEADERSHIP TRAITS

As a boy, Lincoln exhibited several qualities—some innate and others that developed over time—that contributed to his perception as a leader:

- A keen intellect, a deep desire to understand the world around him and the ability to engrave things into his memory by writing and rewriting them.
- The “motivation and willpower to develop every talent he possessed to the fullest”—which Goodwin calls “a keystone attribute essential to success in any field.”
- A talent for storytelling, which he used to entertain his friends by mimicking the bombastic sermons of Baptist preachers or

recounting the details of local court cases.

- **Profound empathy:** Young Abe rebuked his friends for mistreating turtles, rescued a drunk man from freezing to death in a ditch and saved a pig stuck in a mud pit.
- **Impressive stature, athleticism and robust health**—which, unfortunately, meant that he spent a great deal of time working in the fields with his father, who considered reading a lazy pursuit.
- A “life-affirming humor that allowed him to perceive what was funny or ludicrous in life, lightening his despair and fortifying his will.”

FIRST FORAYS INTO PUBLIC LIFE

When Lincoln reached 21 years of age, he left his father’s home and walked 100 miles to New Salem, Illinois, where he took a job as a clerk in the general store. Tall and gawky, with long arms and legs, he was thought odd at first, but he quickly won over the New Salem locals with his generosity and good nature. The townspeople he chatted with in the general store became his friends and benefactors, loaning him books and encouraging his education. He studied grammar and began constructing the simple, straightforward writing and speaking style for which he would become known.

In the handbill announcing his candidacy for the state legislature as a representative of the Whig Party, Lincoln outlined the issues he stood for, among them public education and infrastructure improvements to the state’s rivers and roads, which he saw as critical to the economic development of the area. He also pledged to “acknowledge errors and learn from his mistakes.” This willingness to do so would last throughout his lifetime; as he often said, “I’d like to believe I am smarter today than I was yesterday.”

Lincoln served three months in the Illinois militia during the Black Hawk War. When he returned, he spent four weeks campaigning—traveling on horseback across the county, speaking at auctions and in town squares, and meeting with men and women from all walks of life. He ended up losing the election but was encouraged by

winning 277 out of the 300 total votes cast in his town of New Salem. In 1834, he ran again, and this time he won handily.

LINCOLN FINDS HIS VOICE

During his first legislative session, Lincoln remained in the background, quietly observing and learning. “A finely developed sense of timing—knowing when to wait and when to act—would remain in Lincoln’s repertoire of leadership skills the rest of his life,” writes Goodwin. He began to educate himself on the law, borrowing law books and reading them at night after work. When his second session began, his colleagues witnessed a remarkable transformation in the previously silent young man, who now revealed himself as a master communicator. The Whig caucus elected him their minority leader, recognizing not only his skill in rhetoric but also “his ability to intuit the feelings and intentions of his fellow Whigs and the opposing Democrats.” He was able to predict the political maneuvers of the opposition and recommend a clear course of action better than any of his fellow legislators.

Goodwin closes the chapter with two examples from Lincoln’s early political career that demonstrate the strength of the very moral convictions that have come to define his legacy. First, he doubled down on his commitment to improving infrastructure, even as his projects came under fire for being too expensive during a prolonged recession. Second, he risked losing support among the large southern population of Illinois by publicly speaking out in opposition to slavery and condemning recent acts of violence against abolitionists. He warned that, in a mob-like environment such as the one he saw developing in the U.S., a despot could attempt to seize power, prizing ambition above the best interests of the people. Lincoln believed the best defense against a potential dictator was to educate every citizen on the history and principles of the American Revolution and the Constitution, in addition to teaching them to “appreciate the value of our free institutions.”

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AMBITION AND THE RECOGNITION OF LEADERSHIP

CHAPTER TWO

THEODORE

Fifty years after Lincoln first ran for office in rural Illinois, 23-year-old Theodore Roosevelt entered the public sphere in a very different way. Whereas Lincoln, a virtually unknown candidate, nominated himself by putting out a 2,000-word position statement, Roosevelt was nominated by the local Republican boss Joe Murray, who picked Roosevelt as the most electable candidate based on his wealth and his family name. Roosevelt's father had been a prominent philanthropist in Manhattan, where young Theodore (nicknamed "Teedie") grew up. Suffering from asthma that kept him out of public school and limited his ability to participate in physical activities, "Teedie became a ferocious reader, transporting himself into the lives of the adventurous heroes he most admired."

Unlike young Lincoln, who was blessed with physical prowess but had to scrounge for his own education, Roosevelt had access to books galore—along with private taxidermy lessons and immersive tours of Europe, the Middle East and Africa—but he had to overcome his bodily frailty through rigorous exercise, weight training and boxing lessons. At Harvard, he excelled academically, participated in several sports and clubs, and developed confidence in his relationships with his peers. Yet tragedy struck in his sophomore year, when the father he idolized fell ill and died of colon cancer. As the community mourned, Roosevelt wrote in his diary: "Oh, how little worthy I am of such a father... How I wish I could ever do something to keep up his name."

ROOSEVELT BROADENS HIS HORIZONS

While still at Harvard, Roosevelt met and married Alice Hathaway Lee, and he went on several expeditions into the Maine wilderness with Bill Sewell, who became a lifelong friend. While on these trips, he took great pleasure in mingling with woodsmen and listening to the stories of their lives, which differed greatly from his sheltered and privileged upbringing. He then enrolled at Columbia Law School and began spending time at Morton Hall, headquarters of the local Republican Association. Despite his dandyish appearance, he was soon accepted by the working-class men who frequented the hall and offered their support when Murray eventually nominated Roosevelt for the state legislature.

Before his death, Roosevelt's father had written to his son of his concerns about corruption in the government, "a warning that would long reverberate in young Roosevelt's mind, helping to shape his embattled style of leadership." Sure enough, no sooner was Roosevelt nominated than a local saloon-keeper told him that he expected him to lower the costs of liquor licenses, to which Roosevelt retorted that he thought the costs were too low and he intended to vote to raise them instead. In public statements leading up to the election, Roosevelt promised that he would not be coerced into making decisions, proclaiming that "he was 'owned by no man,' and ... he 'would obey no boss and serve no clique,'" including his friend Murray, the Republican boss. His integrity appealed to the voting community, and he won the seat by almost twice the typical margin.

"I ROSE LIKE A ROCKET"

In contrast to Lincoln, who remained quiet and watchful throughout his first legislative session, Roosevelt aggressively interrogated his fellow members, learning all he could about where they stood on the reform issue and whether bribes could sway their votes. Two months into the session, he rose to the assembly floor to excoriate a state judge accused of a corrupt alliance with robber baron Jay Gould. His speech made headlines. Elected to a second term and chosen as the Republican minority leader, Roosevelt had found his calling. Unfortunately, he allowed the success to go to his head, and

after these initial triumphs he was repeatedly caught “interrupting assembly business, yelling and pounding his desk with his fist.” His abrasive behavior caused his circle of supporters to abandon him, forcing him to “learn from the excesses of his egocentric behavior.”

Having developed confidence, Roosevelt’s next challenge was to develop empathy. When a bill banning the manufacturing of cigars in tenements came to his committee, his initial impulse was to vote against it, believing the cigar operations to be within the property rights of the owners; however, after he met with a labor leader and heard about the terrible living and working conditions in the tenements, he agreed to visit one in person. What he saw there horrified him. After witnessing that adults and children were crowded into a room filled with tobacco and forced to work 16 hours a day, he became the bill’s champion.

Roosevelt was able to develop “his understanding of other peoples’ points of view by going to places that a man of his background typically neither visited nor comprehended.” In so doing, he overcame his arrogance and was able to remove the blinders typically associated with a privileged lifestyle. By the age of 25, he had softened and strengthened his people skills to the point where he could work productively with the Democrats he had once “labeled as ‘rotten,’ ... to pass civil service reform and a host of bills to benefit the city of New York.”

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AMBITION AND THE RECOGNITION OF LEADERSHIP

CHAPTER THREE

FRANKLIN

Born to wealthy parents in Hyde Park, New York, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was an average student who, upon graduation from Columbia Law School, took “an expected path for a member of the privileged class” by joining an old and conservative Wall Street law firm. When he was 28 years old, the county Democratic bosses offered him the chance to run for a seat in the state assembly—though he was chosen not for his leadership skills but for his family name: In 1910, his fifth cousin Theodore Roosevelt was in his second term as president, and the bosses thought that nominating Franklin would help the Democrats win votes from traditionally Republican areas within the district. Despite his lack of experience, young Roosevelt made a good impression on everyone with his “self-assured, congenial, optimistic temperament,” writes Goodwin.

THE YOUNG FDR

Roosevelt’s privileged upbringing as the only child of two doting parents certainly helped mold him into the man he would become, but his childhood was not without tragedy: When Franklin was 8 years old, his father suffered a heart attack from which he never fully recovered, leading to his death a decade later. Believing that anxiety would worsen the heart condition of her husband, Franklin’s mother encouraged her son to keep his father’s life as peaceful as possible. For young Roosevelt, this meant keeping his own needs hidden, which he did by spending most of his time in solitary pursuits, such as collecting stamps; however, his preferred learning

style was to engage in conversation, rather than to read or study by himself. At the age of 14, he was sent to boarding school, where he was lonely but made friends and excelled on the debate team. As a freshman at Harvard, he joined the staff of the school newspaper, *The Crimson*, and worked his way up to editor-in-chief—his first leadership position—by his senior year.

After Roosevelt's father died, his mother moved to Boston, Massachusetts, to be near her son. She was no longer the primary relationship in his life, however: He had fallen in love with his cousin Eleanor and had asked her to marry him. At the ceremony in 1905, Theodore Roosevelt, Eleanor's uncle, gave the bride away.

ENTRY INTO POLITICS

Despite having never held public office, Roosevelt had already envisioned himself becoming president of the United States someday when John Mack offered him the nomination for state assembly. He enthusiastically accepted and began traveling the area making campaign speeches—only to find out, a few weeks before the election, that the incumbent assemblyman had decided not to give up his seat. The Democratic bosses told Roosevelt that they would nominate him for state senate instead, though it was a more prestigious post that would be more difficult to win. In response, Roosevelt said, “I’ll take it, ... and I’ll win the election.”

With only five weeks to campaign, he hit on an innovative idea: Instead of a horse and carriage, he traversed the three-county district in a red Maxwell automobile. The car drew attention wherever it went, and Roosevelt “reveled in direct contact with people” as he shook hands, introduced himself and listened to their concerns. The strategy paid off: He beat his opponent by a larger margin than any other state Democratic candidate.

“No sooner had Franklin entered the state senate than he charged into battle against the entrenched Tammany machine that held a grip on the state Democratic Party.” Following in Theodore Roosevelt's footsteps, he initially impugned the machine politicians as corrupt and refused to compromise, but he eventually concluded

that a more moderate approach would help him “work together with different factions and strike bargains.”

Roosevelt’s crusade against the Tammany machine caught the attention of President Woodrow Wilson, who offered him the position of assistant secretary of the Navy, a post that Theodore Roosevelt had also held. In this role, he was responsible for daily administrative operations, managing procurement and supervising personnel. Not content to stop there, he also took it upon himself to initiate a transformation of the organization: “to move the entrenched bureaucracy forward, to build bigger and better equipped ships, and to reorganize the work of the civilian personnel to strengthen the navy’s readiness for battle.” His ability to successfully implement this vision was a testament to his quick intellect and problem-solving abilities. According to Goodwin, “These unique aspects of his mind were often camouflaged by his outward geniality and the easy charm of his demeanor.”

Recognizing that he needed a superlative team to help him meet his ambitious goals, Roosevelt retained Charles McCarthy, a veteran naval administrator, as his secretary and brought in journalist Louis Howe to provide a fresh perspective. Together, they cut red tape and circumvented regulations in order to stockpile supplies and prepare the Navy for war should the need arise—as it did when the U.S. entered World War II. Roosevelt’s foresight earned him the praise of President Wilson.

After Roosevelt’s tenure in the Navy came to a close, he ran unsuccessfully for vice president in 1920 on the Democratic ticket with Ohio Governor James Cox. In addition to hiring McCarthy and Howe, he hired newsmen Stephen Early and Marvin McIntyre to help with the campaign. These four men became the first members of his “Cuff-Links Club,” a loyal and admiring team that would serve and support him during his eventual presidency.

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AMBITION AND THE RECOGNITION OF LEADERSHIP

CHAPTER FOUR

LYNDON

As a young boy, Lyndon Johnson looked up to his father, Sam Johnson, who served in the state legislature and was a well-liked progressive Democrat. Sam took young Lyndon with him on the campaign trail, driving their Ford Model T to visit each farm in their South Central Texas district. Lyndon idolized his father and hoped to follow in his footsteps. His home life, however, was unstable, filled with “severe tensions that contributed to Lyndon’s excitable temperament.” His mother, Rebekah, an aspiring writer, felt stifled living in Texas and by being a wife and a mother. She transferred her ambitions onto Lyndon, the oldest of her five children, and “withdrew her love and affection” whenever he failed to perform to her standards.

Johnson loved escaping to the home of his grandfather, who would tell him stories from his days as a cowboy driving cattle up the Chisholm Trail. As much as Theodore Roosevelt was fascinated by woodsmen and hunters, Johnson idealized the heroic image of the cowboy. He was a bright boy but a poor student, “too restless to sit still or concentrate in class.”

Attending San Marcos State Teachers College, Johnson was plagued both by feelings of academic deficiency and “self-aggrandizing and self-serving ambition.” Seeking the opportunity to talk politics with Cecil Evans, the college president, Johnson took a job as a janitor in the administration building. Evans enjoyed their conversations so much that he hired Johnson as an office messenger. Not long after

that, the position expanded into much more, allowing him to take on a number of the president's responsibilities, such as drafting correspondence and reports for state agencies. These duties earned Johnson the respect of Evans and the other college administrators, but the contempt of his peers, who saw him as a ruthless sycophant.

LEADING WITH A PURPOSE

Johnson took a break from college to work as a principal of an elementary school in the border town of Cotulla, Texas. In this position, he finally harnessed his energy, verve and powers of persuasion to serve a cause: improving the lives of his impoverished students.

In 1930, Johnson delivered his first political speech at the annual picnic in Henly, Texas, after volunteering on-the-spot to speak on behalf of former Governor Pat Neff, who had missed the picnic. In his impromptu speech, Johnson introduced himself as a "prairie dog lawyer," which "let the picnickers know that while he was not an experienced politician, he intended to throw himself into the task of representing the missing Pat Neff." His enthusiastic speech caught the attention of state senate candidate Welly Hopkins, who invited him to lead his campaign. Johnson organized an exhaustive speaking tour of the area, resulting in a win for Hopkins.

Though Johnson was ready to enter politics, there were few government jobs available during the Depression, so he continued his career in education, teaching high school debate and public speaking. He taught his students to use a conversational storytelling style in their debates, and under his leadership, the team won a district championship and received widespread press attention.

JOHNSON IN WASHINGTON

Johnson finally received his first government appointment when Hopkins recommended him for a job working for U.S. Congressman Richard Kleberg. After moving to Washington, D.C., Johnson immediately began scouting out those with the power and influence to help him make it to the next level. Tasked with managing

Kleberg's staff, Johnson hired his star debate team members and rode them ruthlessly to make the office as efficient as possible. Before long, he "had become the congressman in all but name."

Goodwin notes that, unlike Lincoln and the two Roosevelts, Johnson was never able to relax and lose himself in leisurely pursuits. Instead, he always worked at a "compulsive pace, as if victory and success might somehow reclaim the steady love and affection he had been denied as a child." He brought the same dogged enthusiasm that he showed in his work to his courtship of Claudia Taylor, nicknamed "Lady Bird." He proposed marriage on their second date, and they wed just two months later. Lady Bird proved to be the perfect hostess, helping further her husband's political ambitions by entertaining guests at their home. One such guest was Sam Rayburn, U.S. congressman and later speaker of the House, who became Johnson's mentor.

In 1935, President Franklin Roosevelt created the National Youth Administration (NYA) to provide jobs for teenagers and young adults. In response, Johnson immediately approached Rayburn to request the directorship of the Texas NYA. Rayburn lobbied so convincingly for Johnson's appointment that he was given the post—even though someone else had already been named for the role. Johnson quickly proved he was up to the challenge, beginning with an ambitious state parks project that provided thousands of jobs to young people. His staff, however, felt bullied and humiliated by his frequent outbursts of temper. Why did they continue to work for him? Goodwin attributes their loyalty to several factors:

- Johnson led by example; he never asked his staff to work longer hours than he himself did.
- The work was intellectually challenging, and the staffers felt they were acquiring important new skills each day.
- They found the work meaningful and were united in their mission to help young people by "providing them with jobs, keeping them in school, teaching them marketable skills" and ultimately "renewing their faith in the future."

In 1937, U.S. Congressman James Buchanan died, leading to a special election in which Johnson, at age 29, triumphed over eight other, more experienced politicians to fill the empty House seat. Buoyed by a \$10,000 investment from Lady Bird's father, he was the first of the field to announce his candidacy and his strong support for President Franklin Roosevelt's policies. As he had done when campaigning for his father and for Hopkins, he ranged far and wide, talking to each and every individual he could find. Two days before the election, he came down with acute appendicitis; he learned of his victory while in the hospital for emergency surgery.

President Roosevelt became the latest in a line of mentors and father figures to Johnson, whose own father passed away the summer after he joined the House. Johnson used his formidable storytelling skills to convince the president to help him fulfill his campaign promise of bringing electricity to the Texas Hill Country region. Impressed by the young dynamo, Roosevelt accepted Johnson into the inner circle of his administration, and even predicted that "this boy could well be the first Southern president."

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ADVERSITY AND GROWTH

CHAPTER FIVE

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

In Part I, we learned about the early leadership qualities exhibited by Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson, and how each man discovered his calling and entered the public sphere. In Part II, Goodwin examines the dramatic adversity that each of these four men experienced, and asserts that their “ability to transcend” those setbacks was what most shaped them into the leaders they would become. She writes: “Scholars who have studied the development of leaders have situated resilience, the ability to sustain ambition in the face of frustration, at the heart of potential leadership growth.”

In Lincoln’s case, at the age of 32, he fell into a depression so severe that his friends “confiscated all knives, razors and scissors from his room,” fearing he would commit suicide. The infrastructure improvements that he had promised during his campaign had been forced to halt because of a three-year recession, and the debt incurred by the projects had ruined the state’s credit and crippled its housing and land markets. Lincoln accepted full responsibility for the catastrophe and, feeling he had let his constituents down and compromised his reputation, announced he was retiring from the legislature.

On a personal front, Lincoln was also distraught after ending his engagement to his fiancée Mary Todd, for whom he questioned the strength of his feelings. He felt deeply ashamed at breaking his word, guilty for hurting Mary and worried that he was so poor he

would never be able to support a family. On top of everything, his close friend and roommate Joshua Speed, whom Lincoln loved more than anyone in the world, had announced he was leaving Illinois to care for his mother in Kentucky. Lincoln became so despondent that his friends and doctors feared he was losing his mind. “When Speed warned Lincoln that he must somehow revive his spirits or he would assuredly die, Lincoln replied that he was more than willing to die, but that he had ‘done nothing to make any human being remember that he had lived.’”

It was this drive to leave his mark on history, Goodwin asserts, that ultimately pulled Lincoln back from the brink and set him on a decade-long course to repair his life. He began by partnering with Stephen Logan, a successful lawyer who admired his work ethic and became his mentor. Once his law practice became successful and he was financially stable, Lincoln renewed his engagement and married Mary Todd, an act which enabled him to “restore his sense of honor” by proving he could keep his commitments.

LINCOLN IN CONGRESS

In 1846, Lincoln was nominated by the Whig Party for a U.S. congressional seat. The Whigs had a rotation arrangement whereby candidates agreed to serve only a single term, a setup that proved counterproductive to Lincoln’s success. Knowing he had only a short time to gain recognition, he rashly introduced an unpopular resolution alleging that President James Polk had deliberately provoked the Mexican-American War. Two years later, he had better success stumping for Whig candidate Zachary Taylor’s presidential campaign, impressing audiences with his personal, humorous storytelling style of speaking and, ultimately, helping Taylor win the election. While on the campaign trail for Taylor, Lincoln concluded that slavery urgently needed to be addressed. Returning to Congress, he put forth a compromise that called for the gradual emancipation of slaves within Washington, D.C. The proposal failed to gain support from either the North or the South and was withdrawn. “Historians generally consider Lincoln’s single term in Congress a failure, an assessment with which Lincoln himself would likely concur,” writes Goodwin.

After his term ended, Lincoln was passed over for a commissionership in President Taylor's administration; the Whig who was appointed had kept silent on the Mexican-American War's origin when Lincoln had spoken out against it. Devastated by this failure, Lincoln retired from public life for the next five years, dedicating himself to his law practice and an extensive course of study that included "philosophy, astronomy, science, political economy, history, literature, poetry and drama." This self-guided curriculum was "anything but random. It was directed toward understanding the role and the purpose of leadership." As part of his law practice, Lincoln joined "the circuit" for eight weeks each spring and fall, a "traveling bar" of "judges, lawyers, witnesses and bailiffs ... holding court and trying cases in dozens of sparsely settled villages and towns." His roommates on the tour recalled that he stayed up later and rose earlier than anyone else, reading and studying for hours by candlelight. He tried many successful cases, his reputation blossomed and he became a mentor to young lawyers and clerks of the court.

SPEAKING OUT AGAINST SLAVERY

During this time, Lincoln delivered two eulogies, one for President Taylor and one for Kentucky statesman Henry Clay, which revealed his "evolving thoughts on leadership." In particular, he praised Clay for his eloquence, keen judgment and ability to forge compromise. Clay was the architect of two key agreements that kept the Union intact in the face of deep-seated divisions over slavery in newly acquired territories: the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which lasted 30 years, and the Compromise of 1850, which lasted only four. In 1854, Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which would allow those two new territories to join the Union as slave-holding states, rather than abide by the Missouri Compromise mandate that all states north of the East-West dividing line be free states. Lincoln knew immediately that this new law meant slavery was alive and well, not on its way to extinction as he had hoped. He began feverishly working to distill his argument against slavery into its most basic components.

In Peoria, Illinois, in the fall of 1854, Lincoln faced off with Stephen Douglas, the designer of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, in a widely publicized debate. Douglas spoke first, for three full hours. Lincoln then invited the crowd to take a break, have dinner and regroup afterward to hear his rebuttal. The fact that the crowd happily returned for the evening session, writes Goodwin, was a testament to “the high level of citizen interest and participation in politics” in that era, when public entertainments were few and such debates were considered “riveting spectator sports.” It was also helpful that Lincoln’s gift for setting a friendly, intimate tone made audiences want to hear what he had to say.

Lincoln argued that the Kansas-Nebraska Act was tantamount to making slave ownership a “sacred right.” He asserted that the founding fathers did not mention slavery in the Constitution because it was a shameful part of the nation’s history and that allowing slavery in new territories would pervert the doctrine of independence and self-rule upon which the Union was founded. After he finished speaking, the crowd cheered long and loud, impressed by his storytelling style, the historical grounding of his argument and the clarity of his conviction. It was “a turning point in his reputation as both a man and a leader.”

ROAD TO THE PRESIDENCY

Lincoln ran unsuccessfully for U.S. Senate twice, and both defeats, according to Goodwin, actually helped move him toward the presidency. In 1855, facing a deadlock and fearing that a split vote would result in a win for the “Douglas Democrat” candidate, he threw his support behind his fellow Whig nominee. In 1858, running as a member of the new Republican Party, he faced off against Stephen Douglas himself. Lincoln won the popular vote but lost the seat due to “an unfair and outdated reapportionment scheme.” This time, instead of falling into despair, he wrote letters of consolation to his supporters, assuring them that the setback was temporary. He then continued to travel around the North speaking on behalf of the Republican Party.

As his national reputation spread and friends began asking him to consider running for president, he began working quietly and diligently toward that goal. “Even as he cast a humorous and skeptical eye on suggestions that he might successfully aspire to the nomination, he had begun to visualize himself as a legitimate contender.” He did extensive research into the intent of the signers of the Constitution with regard to slavery, concluding that most of them believed slavery should be tolerated where it already existed but should not be extended into new territories. This balance between extremes became the central tenet of his campaign and clinched him the Republican nomination.

Lincoln immediately sought to unite the party by asking the other two candidates for their support and by avoiding making any statements that could be used “to inflame sectionalism for partisan purposes.” Democratic support was divided between Douglas and John Breckinridge, which made a Lincoln victory seem likely. Nonetheless, Lincoln wanted to leave nothing to chance. He published a short autobiography that included the story of “building his log cabin and splitting the rail fence that surrounded its ten acres.” Rails became his emblem and started showing up on campaign materials at gatherings and in the press. In 1860, Lincoln was elected president. He “now emanated the quiet sense of responsibility he had found in his mentor, Henry Clay, regarded by all as the ‘man for a crisis.’”

06

ADVERSITY AND GROWTH

CHAPTER SIX

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

What started out to be the happiest day of Theodore Roosevelt's life turned into one of the most tragic days imaginable. His wife gave birth to their first child, then died of acute kidney disease, only hours after Roosevelt's mother died of typhoid fever. Two days after the double funeral, Roosevelt returned to the state assembly, leaving his infant daughter in the care of his sister. Mad with grief, he threw himself into his work, "pushing one reform bill after another onto the floor, ignoring parliamentary procedure, failing to weigh criticisms of colleagues." He subsequently lost the support of said colleagues and decided he would not seek another term in the legislature.

In June 1884, at the Republican National Convention, Roosevelt supported reformer George Edmunds for president over the party bosses' choice, James Blaine. Blaine won the nomination, leading many Republican independents, calling themselves "mugwumps," to leave the party and support the Democratic nominee. Having already angered the bosses by supporting Edmunds, Roosevelt chose to stay loyal to the Republican Party, now angering the reformers, who viewed him as a traitor.

RETREAT TO THE RANCH

To escape the personal and political turmoil in which he found himself, Roosevelt relocated to the North Dakota Badlands to focus on cattle ranching. For the next two years, he hunted, rounded up

cattle and worked on the ranch with the same feverish intensity he had shown in the legislature. During this time, he also began writing a book, which would later be published as *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman*. When he emerged in 1886, he had transformed his body, gaining 30 pounds of muscle, and even deepened and strengthened his speaking voice. “For the rest of his life, countless Americans regarded him as a man of the West, a romantic figure far removed from his [upper-class] background.”

During the next decade, Roosevelt took on a seemingly “haphazard choice of career opportunities,” accepting posts as civil service commissioner, police commissioner and assistant secretary of the Navy, all relatively “low-level jobs that traced neither a clear-cut nor a reliably ascending career path,” which, Goodwin explains, makes sense in light of his heightened awareness of mortality after his wife’s death. Within his newfound philosophy, he saw each position as a test of his leadership skills, and he believed that there was no point in trying to chart a long-term career vision when each position might be his last.

THE ROUGH RIDERS

When the Spanish-American War began in 1898, Roosevelt resigned his Navy post and volunteered for the Army. The secretary of war offered him the top command post of a regiment, but Roosevelt declined due to his lack of military experience. Prioritizing the success of the regiment over his personal ambition, he accepted the role of second in command to his friend Leonard Wood. The regiment, called “the Rough Riders,” was a melting pot of educated Easterners and rugged Westerners, in which Roosevelt instilled a spirit of camaraderie and equality, with officers enduring the same hardships as the rank and file.

The Rough Riders were shipped to Cuba, where they triumphed in their first battle. Instead of staying in the rear as was customary for commanding officers, Roosevelt rode to the head of the column and led their charge up a hill, shouting for his troops to follow and ultimately forcing the Spanish army to retreat. He was hailed as a hero, and upon his return to New York, he won the Republican

Party nomination for governor. His military success had deepened his confidence in his own leadership abilities, and he campaigned on his own behalf, impressing audiences with his “electrical, magnetic” aura.

ROOSEVELT AS GOVERNOR

Once elected, Roosevelt announced he would meet weekly with Boss Thomas Platt, who ran the political machine that was a necessary part of getting anything done, despite Roosevelt’s commitment to independence and reform. Goodwin uses two examples to illustrate how Roosevelt navigated this balance and how he demonstrated his commitment to the old African proverb: “Speak softly and carry a big stick.”

- Roosevelt supported a franchise tax bill for corporations operating railways, telephone and telegraph lines, despite a decades-long “gentleman’s understanding” that the operators of these franchises would make campaign contributions to the political machine. When the stock market plunged and Platt fumed, Roosevelt agreed to hear out the enraged corporations and modify the bill, making minimal concessions to keep the peace.
- Rumors alleged illicit dealings by Platt’s right-hand man, the superintendent of insurance, with the companies he was supposed to regulate. Roosevelt investigated and declared that the superintendent would not be reappointed. He met privately with Platt and allowed him to select a replacement from a list of four candidates. By negotiating and creating a path to avert scandal, Roosevelt earned the boss’s respect.

ASCENT TO THE PRESIDENCY

Despite Roosevelt’s popularity as governor, the corporations he had levied taxes on threatened to cut off campaign contributions if he served a second term. The Republican Party decided the best course of action was to nominate him as vice president to William McKinley. At the time, the position was considered a “figurehead” and a political dead end; it had been more than 60 years since a vice president had been elected president. Not wanting to appear

ungrateful, Roosevelt accepted the post despite his misgivings. When McKinley was assassinated in 1901, Roosevelt became the youngest president in American history at the age of 42.

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ADVERSITY AND GROWTH

CHAPTER SEVEN

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

Franklin Roosevelt woke one morning in August 1921 with a backache and “a mild sensation that something was wrong.” He shook off the symptoms and spent the day sailing, jogging and swimming with his family. By evening, he was exhausted; in 48 hours, he was partially paralyzed. A specialist diagnosed him with poliomyelitis, and he was placed on strict bed rest, unable even to use the bathroom on his own. By October, some of his muscle function had returned, but he still could not stand or walk. Without the “stamina and appearance of strength which political leadership seemed to demand,” it appeared that his dreams of rising to the presidency had been derailed.

“Roosevelt’s irrepressible optimism, his tendency to expect the best outcome in any circumstance, provided the keystone strength that carried him through this traumatic experience,” writes Goodwin. He set a goal of no less than full recovery and projected a sunny confidence to his doctors and visitors. Day after day, he struggled through exercises to strengthen his upper body so that he could operate a wheelchair—pulling himself up on rings, crawling around on the floor and hoisting his body up the stairs. He celebrated each milestone, such as the day he was able to wiggle a toe for the first time and the day he was able to walk on crutches with the aid of steel leg braces. Using his powers of innovation and ingenuity, he even invented his own mechanical devices to help him gain further mobility.

THE DREAM TEAM

Forced to rely on others during his long recovery, Roosevelt found strength in his wife Eleanor and his close friends Louis Howe and Missy LeHand; meanwhile, these three individuals found that helping Roosevelt also helped them develop their own strengths and interests:

- Acting as a surrogate for her husband at public events, Eleanor honed her public speaking skills and found her own leadership voice, working to advance progressive political causes, such as labor rights for children and women.
- Howe held conferences with politicians and assembled twice-weekly briefings that kept FDR abreast of current events and political rumors, “creating in effect a newspaper designed for a reader of one.”
- LeHand stayed with Roosevelt during his convalescence in Florida and served as his “other wife,” while Eleanor ran things in New York. She became a trusted advisor, unafraid to give him constructive criticism.

The team “succeeded so well in keeping Roosevelt’s spirits up and his political name alive” that three years after his polio diagnosis, he was asked to chair Governor Al Smith’s presidential campaign. His appearance at the Democratic National Convention would be his first time walking on crutches in public. As the audience of 12,000 delegates held their collective breath, he made it to the rostrum, gripped the lectern tightly and delivered an inspiring speech that left the crowd in a rapture of admiration and celebration.

LESSONS FROM WARM SPRINGS

Roosevelt acquired a run-down hotel in Georgia with a thermal pool that he found therapeutic for his muscles, investing a large chunk of his fortune into renovations to turn it into a resort and treatment center for patients with polio and similar diseases. He oversaw every aspect of the community, from landscaping to staffing, and he personally lead his fellow patients in therapy pool exercises. The relationships he cultivated with “his fellow polios” became “a cure different and more profound than he had initially

sought.” He had not been able to envision himself leading the nation from crutches or a wheelchair, but the “deep affection and respect accorded him from the shared community he had created at Warm Springs made it clear that a polio victim who needed help to walk was fully able to exercise leadership of the highest order.”

PATH TO THE PRESIDENCY

In 1928, Roosevelt made a successful run for governor of New York at the urging of Al Smith, the Democratic presidential nominee. Smith lost his White House bid and returned to New York “determined to be the power behind the governor whose nomination he had engineered.” Roosevelt, however, was not going to be a “proxy governor.” Rather than accept Smith’s recommendations, he appointed his own team, recruiting experts whose fields of knowledge could best round out his own experience. Frances Perkins, his commissioner of industry, alerted him to a rise in unemployment ahead of the 1929 stock market crash. Roosevelt began creating small-scale initiatives to provide job relief, but as the Depression spread, it became clear that federal action was needed. When President Herbert Hoover failed to act, Roosevelt convened the New York state legislature and proposed a system of comprehensive, state-sponsored unemployment insurance. The Republican assembly balked at first but finally agreed to his bill. The relief program in New York became a model that other states emulated, and Roosevelt became the Democrats’ leading progressive spokesman.

Roosevelt ran for president in 1932 on his progressive platform, edging out his more conservative opponents to win his party’s nomination. He campaigned as the voice of the people, pointing to his experience with adversity—his father’s death and his own paralysis—as evidence that he had the mentality and adaptability to lead the country through the Depression. Facing off against his incumbent, President Hoover, whose lifetime of success made him out of touch and over-optimistic about the future, Roosevelt won the election in a landslide.

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ADVERSITY AND GROWTH

CHAPTER EIGHT

LYNDON JOHNSON

In April 1941, Johnson ran for U.S. Senate in a special election, occasioned by the death of the senior senator from Texas. Up until this point in his life, Johnson had “operated under the philosophy that if he got up earlier, worked harder, and stayed up later than anyone else, victory would be his.” He approached his Senate campaign with similar gusto, presenting himself as FDR’s protégé and drawing on huge campaign contributions from wealthy—and corrupt—Texas corporations. Unfortunately, his speaking style, so natural and compelling in small groups, was severely hampered when he had to address a large audience from a stage. When early polls showed him trailing, he changed the format of his political rallies from long speeches to festivals incorporating music, dance and raffles, and his popularity surged.

Now confident that he would win, Johnson disclosed the “bought” South Texas precincts, where local bosses controlled the vote, counting them as part of his overall margin. This move let his top opponent, Governor W. Lee O’Daniel, know exactly the number of votes he needed to win. O’Daniel’s East Texas bosses delivered enough votes for him to defeat Johnson. Johnson was crushed by the loss, feeling “he had disappointed, even embarrassed, President Roosevelt, who had gone out of his way to support his candidacy.”

REELING FROM LOSS

Unlike Abraham Lincoln, who was buoyed by the support he had received in his first loss, Johnson took his defeat as a personal failure. It became “a catalyst for a crucible event” on a par with Lincoln’s depression, Theodore Roosevelt’s widowerhood or Franklin Roosevelt’s polio. While the other three men were able to find solace in their leisurely pursuits and ground themselves in an identity outside of politics, Johnson had no personal life or hobbies that were not connected to his work life. Returning to Congress, he was silent, sullen and prone to angry outbursts with his staff. He began to focus his attention on amassing his fortune instead of promoting liberal causes on the House floor. The death of his mentor, Franklin Roosevelt, was another blow to the “sense of purpose that had accompanied his drive for power. He had lost the doubleness of ambition so central to genuine leadership.”

ALL OR NOTHING

In 1948, Johnson again ran for Senate. “This time there was no safety net of a special election. It was all or nothing; a loss would forfeit his congressional seat with its decade of accrued seniority and lock him out of official Washington for the first time since his twenties.” Working 20 hours a day, Johnson suffered from symptoms of physical illness brought on by stress. In a precedent-breaking move, he traveled the campaign trail in a helicopter, which drew crowds and thrilled voters wherever it landed. Learning from the mistake of his previous loss, Johnson didn’t reveal his “bought” votes early but instead waited until the official count was in. This time, he was declared the winner—by a mere 87 votes.

The Senate proved a better fit for Johnson’s temperament and leadership style than did the House. Rather than addressing large audiences in a grandiose manner, he was able to leverage his colloquial speaking style with small groups. He sought out the mentorship of senior Senator Richard Russell, and with Russell’s support, gained the leadership post of the party whip. Two years later, he moved up to the position of party leader.

LEARNING HOW TO LIVE

The stress of trying to make his mark as party leader—magnified in 1955 when the Democrats became the Senate majority—took its toll on Johnson, who began angrily lashing out at staff and during press conferences. On his way to his friend's country estate for the July Fourth weekend, he suffered a massive heart attack. His doctors mandated a months-long sabbatical from work, which threw him into a despondent, nearly catatonic state. Thousands of concerned letters came pouring in from his constituents, and reading their words of love and admiration “invigorated him as would life-giving transfusions.” Revitalized, he amended his unhealthy diet, cut back on his drinking and smoking and spent more time with his family. Part of this transformation was staged for the benefit of the press, for whom he penned an article titled “My Heart Attack Taught Me How to Live.” As Goodwin writes, “beneath this contrived projection a bona fide metamorphosis was taking place.” After his near-death experience, Johnson once again connected with the purpose he had discovered as a principal in Cotulla, Texas; he was now ready to use his power to make positive change.

CIVIL RIGHTS AND VICE PRESIDENCY

Returning to the Senate, Johnson kicked off an ambitious and progressive agenda for the upcoming session, demanding reforms to social security, immigration, education and taxes. He also committed to passing a civil rights bill. For the past 82 years, every attempt at civil rights legislation had been killed by the Senate's Southern bloc, led by none other than Johnson's mentor Russell.

Johnson convinced Russell that, in the wake of *Brown v. Board of Education* and the momentum of the civil rights movement, the South was better off accepting a bill and ensuring it continued to prosper. Next, he sought to create a coalition of support for the bill from Western senators. Finally, he persuaded the Northern Democrats to accept a weaker version of the bill, limited to voting rights instead of the entire spectrum of civil rights, in order to ensure that some form of legislation would pass. His plan worked; in 1957, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act. Three years later, Democratic presidential candidate John F. Kennedy named

Johnson as his running mate. Johnson hoped to expand the responsibilities of the vice presidency, as he had done in previous positions—but then Kennedy's assassination thrust him into a very different type of leadership.

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HOW THEY LED: THE MAN AND THE TIMES

CHAPTER NINE

TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP

When Lincoln took office in 1861, the country was more divided than it had ever been. Seven Confederate states had seceded from the Union and elected Jefferson Davis their president. Knowing that he needed the best advisors around him, “Lincoln pieced together the most unusual cabinet in American history, representing every faction of the new Republican Party ... a combination of conservatives, moderates and radicals, of hardliners and conciliators.” Unlike his predecessor, who had chosen faithful supporters and men who thought like him, Lincoln valued diverse opinions and experiences and was confident in his ability to unite this motley crew into a loyal and productive team.

In July 1862, Lincoln convened his cabinet to unveil his first draft of the Emancipation Proclamation. He invited them to give feedback but made it clear that the question itself was not up for debate. How did he know the time was right for this “bold action,” and how “did he succeed in persuading his fractious cabinet, the army and his divided countrymen in the North to go along with him?” asks Goodwin. She devotes the rest of the chapter to illustrating how Lincoln’s experience embodies these universal lessons for transformative leadership:

- **Acknowledge when failed policies demand a change in direction.** After a series of crushing defeats that left nearly 16,000 Union soldiers dead, wounded or captured, “Northern morale was at its nadir.” Lincoln recognized a change of tactics was in order.

- **Gather firsthand information and ask questions.** Lincoln paid an unexpected personal visit to the troops that not only boosted the soldiers' morale but also allowed him to ask questions to deepen his understanding of the war. Upon learning how much the Confederates depended on slave labor to bolster their war efforts, Lincoln realized that liberating the slaves would provide a military advantage to the Union forces.
- **Find time and space in which to think.** Lincoln's sanctuary was the Soldiers' Home, a 300-acre compound where, away from the pressure and demands of the White House, he "was able to come to the decision that would define both his presidency and his place in history"—reversing his policy of noninterference with slavery in the Southern states.
- **Exhaust all possibility of compromise before imposing unilateral executive power.** Four months earlier, Lincoln had appealed to the representatives of the border states, offering them federal aid in return for gradually emancipating their slaves. They refused, believing that abolishing slavery "would fan the spirit of secession in the loyal border states and would further consolidate the spirit of rebellion in the seceded states, lengthening, not shortening the war." Lincoln thus drafted the Emancipation Proclamation, an executive order giving the Confederate states a six-month deadline to end the war and return to the Union before permanently giving up their slaves.
- **Anticipate contending viewpoints.** When Lincoln read the proclamation to his cabinet, he did so with a full understanding of the objections each man was likely to raise—all but one: the issue of timing. His secretary of state argued that the proclamation would be more effective after a military victory; if issued immediately, it would be seen as "our last shriek, on the retreat." Lincoln agreed to hold off on issuing the order until the military tide had turned. When the Confederate army was forced to retreat after the bloody Battle of Antietam, during which both sides suffered massive losses, Lincoln knew the time had come.

- **Assume full responsibility for a pivotal decision.** Lincoln reconvened his cabinet and presented a revised draft of the proclamation. During the two months since their review of the first draft, he had met with each member individually, and he assured them he would “take the full weight of responsibility for the decision.” He thus gained the allegiance of each member; even the postmaster general, who forcefully disagreed with the order and who was approved by Lincoln to file his dissent, never actually did so.
- **Understand the emotional needs of each member of the team.** According to Goodwin, Lincoln had what we would call today a strong emotional intelligence quotient. His interactions with his team were always imbued with his “empathy, humility, consistency, self-awareness, self-discipline, and generosity of spirit.” For instance, he relied heavily on the advice of Secretary of State William Seward but was sensitive to the appearance of favoritism and the jealousy that could arise. He made time for one-on-one conversations with each cabinet member and wrote them notes of thanks for their individual contributions.
- **Refuse to let past resentments fester and transcend personal vendettas.** Never one to hold a grudge, Lincoln appointed Edwin Stanton to the position of secretary of war, despite the fact that Stanton had rudely dismissed him the first time they met. The two men’s opposite natures complemented one another, and they formed a strong partnership.
- **Set a standard of mutual respect and dignity, and control anger.** When he was angry, Lincoln would write “hot” letters, meaning that he would write down all of his furious thoughts, “never sent and never signed.” He would then wait for his anger to subside before making his next move. He was also quick to forgive public criticism of himself.
- **Shield colleagues from blame.** When Secretary of War Stanton was accused of causing the massive defeat of General George McClellan’s offensive in the Virginia Peninsula by failing to send sufficient troops, Lincoln defended Stanton, assuring McClellan that every possible reinforcement had been sent, and placing the blame on himself for the failure.

- **Maintain perspective in the face of both accolades and abuse.** The Emancipation Proclamation was published September 22, 1862. In the following hundred days, Lincoln faced widespread discontent and criticism. General McClellan even refused to move the Union army forward. The public blamed Lincoln for the stalled war effort, and the midterm elections went to the Democrats. But, having expected a negative reaction, Lincoln maintained his aplomb and his sense of humor.
- **Find ways to cope with pressure, maintain balance and replenish energy.** After McClellan's near-insubordination, Lincoln removed him from command and replaced him with General Ambrose Burnside, who then led the army to a disastrous defeat at the Battle of Fredericksburg, resulting in 13,000 Union casualties. Public recrimination was so strong that it was rumored Lincoln would resign. To combat his deep depression, Lincoln often went to the theater. Watching plays—or reading them aloud when he could not sleep—helped him gain perspective and feel connected to humanity.
- **Keep your word.** While the public wondered whether Lincoln would follow through on the Emancipation Proclamation's activation date of January 1, 1863, those who knew him best never doubted it. Even at the moment of signing the proclamation, he demonstrated an awareness of his place in history: His arm was tired from shaking hands, so he rested for a moment until he could sign firmly with no tremor, not wanting future reviewers of the document to think he had been hesitant. New England hailed the proclamation, but reaction across the rest of the country was mixed; there were even reports of army desertions. Despite ominous warnings from his friends, Lincoln held firm, knowing that emancipation was both right and inevitable at this point in the war.
- **Know when to hold back and when to move forward.** As Lincoln later said, "It is my conviction that, had the proclamation been issued even six months earlier than it was, public sentiment would not have sustained it." Goodwin credits Lincoln's shrewd listening skills for his ability to gauge when there would be enough support for emancipation to take hold.

- **Combine transactional and transformational leadership.** Transactional leadership—based on “quid pro quos, bargains, trades and rewards”—is much more common than transformational leadership. “Transformational leaders inspire followers to identify with something larger than themselves—the organization, the community, the region, or the country—and finally, to the more abstract identification with the ideals of that country” or organization. Lincoln used transactional strategies as a foundation for his transformational leadership, first outlining practical benefits and then shifting to a moral message to inspire his purpose in others.
- **Be accessible and easy to approach.** So successful was Lincoln’s ability to transform attitudes that the majority of the soldiers who initially fought to preserve the Union ended up viewing emancipation as inexorably linked to their primary purpose. Goodwin credits this shift to the “deep trust and loyalty Lincoln had sown among the rank and file soldiers from the very beginning of the war” by visiting their camps, sharing meals with them and inviting them to come to his office with complaints or concerns. When emancipated black soldiers, who had enlisted en masse, learned that they would not be paid as much as white soldiers, recruiter Frederick Douglass visited Lincoln, who agreed the policy was wrong and promised equal pay. The result was the recruitment of nearly 200,000 black troops who fought gallantly for the Union and helped turn the tide against the Confederacy.
- **Put ambition for the collective interest above self-interest.** By 1864, the country was so depleted by the long and bloody war that it sought “peace at any cost,” and Lincoln’s prospects for re-election looked slim. Anxious to finish the job he had begun, Lincoln nonetheless refused to take the issue of slavery off the table for peace talks, saying he would rather lose the election than abandon the emancipation effort. In September, the fall of Atlanta helped boost morale in the North, and Lincoln won a second term, bolstered by a strong turnout among soldiers, who “voted not for their own safety but for the man who had come to represent the cause they fought for together.”

LINCOLN'S LEGACY

Upon his re-election, Lincoln sought to formally and permanently abolish slavery through an amendment to the Constitution. Though he died before it was ratified in December 1865, he told his old friend Joshua Speed that he believed his “fondest hopes”—to be of service to humanity—would be realized. Humble to the end, when called “The Great Emancipator,” he replied that he was only “an instrument” and gave the credit to the people and soldiers. But it was “through the language of his leadership,” writes Goodwin, “that a moral purpose and meaning was imprinted upon the protracted misery of the Civil War.” He effected a transformation so profound that “we look back at the United States before Abraham Lincoln and after him.”

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HOW THEY LED: THE MAN AND THE TIMES

CHAPTER TEN

CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Thrust into the presidency by President William McKinley's assassination, Theodore Roosevelt nonetheless was determined to act as though he had been elected to the office, pursuing his own path rather than McKinley's pro-business agenda. Goodwin examines the coal strike of 1902 as a case study for how to lead during a crisis by adhering to Roosevelt's principles of leadership:

- **Calculate the risks of getting involved.** In May 1902, 147,000 miners, led by union leader John Mitchell, walked off the job to protest unsafe labor conditions, long hours and low wages. Roosevelt was advised not to interfere, as the government had no legal power to stop the strike and the Republican Party needed to preserve the support of the business community. Roosevelt, however, was concerned that if a coal shortage hurt the public, he “would be held accountable whether or not he had the legal authority to act,” and so he began to seek inroads to intervene in the situation.
- **Secure a reliable understanding of the facts, causes and conditions of the situation.** Roosevelt's initial step to prepare for potential executive action was to instruct his labor commissioner to investigate the strike and prepare a report on its causes and conditions. The commissioner's report included recommendations for improving conditions, such as reducing shifts from 10 to nine hours a day and having a review committee for grievances.

- **Remain uncommitted in the early stages.** At the advice of his attorney general, Roosevelt chose not to publish the report and instead to maintain a neutral position for the time being.
- **Use history to provide perspective.** That summer, as coal supplies ran short and prices soared, Roosevelt studied the history of the labor problem and the relationship between owners and miners. He also read a biography of Abraham Lincoln that helped him identify the kind of “good-natured and forbearing” leader that he wanted to be.
- **Be ready to grapple with reversals and abrupt intrusions that can unravel all plans.** Workers who refused to strike tried to cross a picket line in July to go into work, resulting in an eruption of violence. “Roosevelt knew from his study of history that the arrival of federal troops would be construed as a coercive action,” so he chose to watch and wait. Union leader Mitchell went to the region instead, imploring the miners to refrain from further violence and temporarily stabilizing the strike.
- **Re-evaluate options and be ready to adapt as a situation escalates.** As the public grew increasingly anxious over the coal shortage, Roosevelt revisited his labor commissioner’s report and, this time, decided to release it to the press.
- **Be visible and cultivate public support among those most directly affected by the crisis.** A late summer speaking tour gave Roosevelt a platform from which to promote his “square deal for every man” and listen to concerns. The dialogue helped stoke public sentiment and prepare the people for executive action.
- **Clear the deck to focus on the crisis.** In Roosevelt’s case, he didn’t have to put aside other business to focus on the coal strike: A carriage accident that injured his leg and laid him up for two weeks “cleared the deck for him.” During his convalescence, he received alarming reports of the fuel crisis that finally cemented his decision to intervene in the strike.
- **Assemble a crisis management team.** Roosevelt brought together seven men, each of whom he knew could speak from a different vantage point of the strike, and this team directly

influenced his plan of action: inviting the presidents of the coal companies and the union president to Washington to talk.

- **Frame the narrative.** When the group convened, union president Mitchell tried to seize control of the narrative by aggressively proposing terms. The mine owners retorted that “Mitchell and his goons” were keeping workers from returning to the mines, and even attacked Roosevelt for asking them to speak with “a set of outlaws.”
- **Keep your temper in check.** Despite the provoking language of the mine owners, Roosevelt and Mitchell managed to control their tempers during the talks. No agreement was reached, however, and the meeting abruptly ended.
- **Document proceedings each step of the way.** Roosevelt had received permission for his stenographer to record the meeting, and his staff quickly produced a transcript from the notes, which was promptly printed up and delivered to the press.
- **Control the message in the press.** The narrative of the meeting swung public sentiment strongly toward the miners’ position. Roosevelt was seen as dignified and wise, while the coal barons were largely considered greedy and insolent. Everyone now waited to see what the president would do.
- **Find ways to relieve stress.** As much as Lincoln had always found solace in attending and reading plays, Roosevelt’s love of reading provided him with a diversion and allowed him to temporarily retreat into different worlds during this stressful period.
- **Be ready with multiple strategies and prepare contingent moves.** Roosevelt began hearing rumors of a “general sympathetic strike,” which would have brought the nation to a complete standstill. The time for drastic action seemed at hand, but first he tried two less extreme tactics: working with Pennsylvania’s governor to send state troops to the mines to protect miners from union violence and creating a Blue Ribbon Commission that could make recommendations about how to resolve the strike action.

- **Don't hit unless you have to, but when you hit, hit hard.** Deploying the state troops proved ineffective, since very few miners attempted to cross the picket lines, and the Blue Ribbon Commission findings wouldn't be ready for weeks. As the strike continued into October, Roosevelt knew that time had run out for the coal supply to be restocked. Acting as commander in chief, he arranged for a military invasion to take over the operation of the coal mines. While some believe the plan was merely a bluff, Goodwin asserts, "Everything we know about Roosevelt's temperament suggests he was not bluffing."
- **Find ways to save face.** Threatened with the military takeover, the mine owners, led by J.P. Morgan, reluctantly agreed to arbitration. They would not, however, agree to a "labor man" on the commission. Roosevelt realized that it was the title—not the person—they were really objecting to, and thus the labor leader was appointed under the title of "eminent sociologist." The six-month strike was peacefully concluded, and the miners returned to work.
- **Share credit for the successful resolution.** Roosevelt publicly thanked Morgan and each member of his crisis management team; he kept criticism of the mine operators private.
- **Leave a record behind for the future.** His unprecedented intervention in the strike was seen by some as a despotic power grab. To work against this perception, he wrote a letter the day after the strike ended, explaining exactly why he made each decision that he did. He also made sure to stress the unique nature of the event, affecting as it did "a product necessary to the life and health of the people." Nonetheless, the crisis proved a battle call for his administration "to restrain the rampant consolidation of corporate wealth that had developed in the wake of the Industrial Revolution." The relationship between workers, owners and government needed to evolve in order to ensure his "Square Deal."

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HOW THEY LED: THE MAN AND THE TIMES

CHAPTER ELEVEN

TURNAROUND LEADERSHIP

Franklin Roosevelt entered the White House in 1933, at a time when the economic system of the United States was in a state of collapse analogous to the final stage of a terminal illness. “He was prepared to administer a sustained, reanimating jolt of new leadership to his paralyzed and despondent nation.” Three critical tasks lay before him:

1. Calm the nation’s panic, and reverse its feelings of powerlessness and despair.
2. Immediately “stop the bleeding” by stemming the bank crisis and countering financial collapse.
3. Over the longer term, reform the social and economic structure of the nation.

What lessons can leaders faced with turning around a crisis situation learn from the steps Roosevelt took during his first days, weeks and months in office?

- **Draw an immediate and sharp line of demarcation between what has gone wrong before and what is about to begin.** Roosevelt’s precedent breaking began on Inauguration Day, when he repeated each phrase of his swearing-in—instead of just saying “I do.” This simple act conveyed his personal commitment and readiness, even before he delivered his inaugural address.

- **Restore confidence to the spirit and morale of the people.** Strike the right balance of realism and optimism. In his inaugural address, Roosevelt made his famous assertion: “the only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” Assuring the people that the economic crisis did not mean that they had failed, nor was it a punishment from God, he placed the blame for the current situation on a simple lack of leadership.
- **Infuse a sense of shared purpose and direction.** Roosevelt asked the people for unity, to continue on “as a trained and loyal army willing to sacrifice” in order to benefit the common good. In return, he made specific promises to create jobs, solidify the dollar and prevent property foreclosures.
- **Tell people what they can expect and what is expected of them.** In another precedent-breaking move, Roosevelt gathered the 10 members of his cabinet at the White House to be sworn in at the same time. He gave them the charter of finding a constitutional way to first close all the banks, and then reopen them once they demonstrated their solvency.
- **Lead by example.** Having asked the people to remain calm and have confidence in America’s future, Roosevelt himself conveyed an upbeat, soothing demeanor in all of his words and actions. He consistently worked hard, prepared thoroughly and assumed “responsibility with a smile.”
- **Forge a team aligned with action and change.** Most of Roosevelt’s cabinet appointees were his longtime friends—people he knew he could count on, rather than people with vast political experience who represented the old order. In a groundbreaking move, he appointed Frances Perkins as his labor secretary, making her the first-ever female cabinet member.
- **Create a gathering pause, a window of time.** After his attorney general found a constitutional precedent for “the president to investigate and regulate hoarding of currency,” Roosevelt issued a presidential proclamation that temporarily closed the banks, allowing the administration some breathing room in which to create a plan to reopen them in an orderly fashion.

- **Bring all stakeholders aboard.** Roosevelt brought in bipartisan congressional leaders to agree to his plan to convene a special session of Congress; he also brought in professional bankers to help draft an emergency banking bill and recruited state governors to pledge their support for the legislation. With this layered support structure in place, he was ready to “appeal, appease and encourage the most important stakeholders of all—the American people.”
- **Set a deadline and drive full-bore to meet it.** The nation’s banks closed on Monday, March 6, two days after Roosevelt’s inauguration, and were scheduled to reopen just a week later. Roosevelt saw a draft of the bill on Wednesday and composed an introduction for it less than an hour before Congress convened at noon on Thursday. In less than nine hours, the bill passed in both the House and the Senate and was signed into law. Roosevelt now had three days to ready the message that would be needed to restore confidence in the banks.
- **Set forth and maintain clear-cut ground rules with the press.** Roosevelt sought to invent a new type of press conference, eschewing written questions in favor of genuine, nonconfrontational dialogue, but with firm ground rules regarding attributions and confidentiality. As a former journalist, he understood and respected the role of the press and the importance of a civil exchange of information. Meanwhile, Eleanor created an innovative rule for her own weekly press conferences: “only female reporters could attend,” meaning that “all over the country conservative publishers had to hire their first female reporters.”
- **Tell the story simply and directly to the people.** The morning before the banks reopened, Roosevelt delivered a radio address, the first of his soon-to-be-famous “fireside chats.” He addressed the American people as “my friends” and spoke to them in simple, one-syllable words, translating the jargon of the bankers into language the average person could understand. By explaining exactly what had caused the banks to collapse and why there was no longer any need to fear placing money in them, he was able to reassure the American people, and bank deposits soon surged.

- **Address systemic problems to launch lasting reforms.** In order not to lose the momentum created from the banking bill's passage, Roosevelt asked Congress to remain in session, in what became known as the "hundred days." During this time, they laid the groundwork for sweeping reform: passing 15 pieces of legislation, appropriating billions of dollars toward massive public works projects and giving shape to the "vast safety net of protection and regulation that would eventually become the New Deal."
- **Be open to experimentation and design flexible agencies to deal with new problems.** With little precedent to guide him, Roosevelt had to experiment and try new things in order to create the New Deal. He knew that the existing agencies would be bound to old ways of thinking, so he created 20 agencies to enact his new policies. The Civilian Conservation Corps, a program that put young men to work cleaning up forests, would require food, housing and transportation for some 250,000 workers. Roosevelt set a target date of mid-July, put a union leader in charge and delegated the operational details to his team. The project was a great success and became one of the most popular New Deal programs.
- **Stimulate competition and debate. Encourage creativity.** Roosevelt "surrounded himself with strong personalities" and then "deliberately contrived situations that challenged them to defend their opposing positions and finally, to reconcile." Harold Ickes and Harry Hopkins, who respectively led the Public Works Administration and the Civil Works Administration, were longtime antagonists with overlapping responsibilities for the nation's public works projects. Roosevelt invited them both on a month-long speaking tour and cruise, on which they bonded over martinis and game fishing, and finally put their feud to rest.
- **Open channels of unfiltered information to supplement and challenge official sources.** Roosevelt cautioned his aides not to confuse conversations in Washington with the sentiment of the general public. In order to gauge the success of his new programs, it was necessary to get out in the field and hear directly from those affected. To do this, Eleanor traveled

around the country for months at a time, getting “the unvarnished truth” and reporting back to her husband.

- **Adapt. Be ready to change course quickly when necessary.** “Do the very best you can in making up your mind, but once your mind is made up go ahead,” said Roosevelt. He advocated swift action, followed by the flexibility to change course as needed based on the success or failure of any project’s first iteration, as well as responding to shifting external circumstances. For instance, many New Deal programs were no longer needed once the nation started mobilizing for war.
- On day 99 out of 100, a banking regulation bill was finally passed. Roosevelt believed that the banking crisis happened because banks had “used depositors’ funds to speculate in the overheated stock market,” leaving them with insufficient cash on hand to meet withdrawal needs. The new legislation made banks choose between investment banking and commercial activities instead of engaging in both. Roosevelt had at first opposed including deposit guarantees in the bill, but eventually realized it was a necessary element for people to feel secure about putting their money in the banks again.
- When Congress adjourned on day 100, Roosevelt expressed his gratitude for the “‘spirit of teamwork’ that had ‘transcended party lines.’” His intimate and transparent fireside chats, which helped the people heal from the Depression, also helped him galvanize the nation as it entered the fray of World War II. “Roosevelt’s gift of communication proved the vital instrument of his success in developing a common mission, clarifying problems, mobilizing action” and earning the trust of the people.

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HOW THEY LED: THE MAN AND
THE TIMES

CHAPTER TWELVE

VISIONARY LEADERSHIP

On November 22, 1963, President John F. Kennedy was shot dead as his motorcade passed through Dallas, Texas. During the next four days, as the nation reeled from the shock of what had happened and watched the aftermath unfold in the news, Johnson sought to assure the American people that there was strong leadership in the government. When looking back on those days, he later said, “Any hesitation or wavering, any false step, any sign of self-doubt, could have been disastrous.”

Johnson began by approaching each member of Kennedy’s cabinet and staff, asking for their support and assistance. He knew that the impression of continuity would be important, and also that, with the next election less than a year away, he had no time to put together his own team. “Checking his storied arrogance, softening his tone, he conveyed a deep humility” that helped convince many key figures to stay on during the transition.

The night after the assassination, Johnson stayed awake with three close aides, talking about his plans and goals for pushing through stalled legislation on taxes, civil rights and health insurance. The vision he sketched out at 3 a.m., based on the “concept that government should use its power to better the lives of others” was the foundation of what would become known as his “Great Society.” He employed the following leadership principles in the course of bringing that vision into reality:

- **Make a dramatic start.** In each of his leadership positions, Johnson had sought “an attention-fastening moment.” Now, in the wake of Kennedy’s death, he decided to address the nation, knowing this would be the most important speech of his career.
- **Lead with your strengths.** Aware of his shortcomings when it came to speaking to large audiences, Johnson decided to deliver the address in front of Congress, where he would be surrounded by supportive colleagues. For the content of the speech, he chose to focus on Kennedy’s domestic proposals, the arena where he felt most confident, rather than foreign affairs, where he was less informed.
- **Simplify the agenda.** Having narrowed the focus to the domestic agenda, Johnson pared it even further, concentrating on “two essential items: the civil rights bill designed to end segregation in the South and the tax cut intended to stimulate the economy.” Just as his mentor Franklin Roosevelt had done, Johnson addressed a grieving nation and offered a practical road map back to hope and healing. The audience and the press responded favorably to his speech, feeling that the country was in good hands.
- **Establish the most effective order of battle.** Recognizing that the civil rights bill would be far more arduous to pass than the tax cut, Johnson decided to pursue the easier option first. He invited the tax bill’s chief opponent, Senate Finance Committee Chair Harry Byrd, to the White House for lunch, where they engaged in “mannerly haggling” over the federal budget. Johnson was able to get a verbal commitment of Byrd’s support for the tax cut if the budget was reduced to \$100 billion.
- **Honor commitments.** His marching orders in hand, Johnson began the tough work of cutting the budget. Through widespread reductions in spending—including more than \$1 billion in cuts to the defense department—he succeeded in whittling the budget down to \$97.5 billion. Senator Byrd subsequently kept his word and released the tax bill to the floor.
- **Drive, drive, drive.** Johnson urged the chief committee clerk to deliver the reports to accompany the bill in three days instead

of a week. He then used all of his available influence with individual senators to push the bill through. Three months after Kennedy's death, the bill was signed into law.

- **Master the power of narrative.** Like Lincoln before him, Johnson was a master storyteller. "Both men knew that people were 'more easily influenced' by stories ... [and] that stories were remembered far longer than facts and figures." Johnson shared stories from his household staff, relating their hardships living in the segregated South, to gain support for the civil rights bill.
- **Know for what and when to risk it all.** The civil rights movement was deeply divisive, and Johnson knew that he risked alienating his Southern friends and colleagues—and harming his chances of winning the next election—by pushing it. But, he was so committed to ending the "cruelly unjust system of segregation" that he was prepared to go all in.
- **Rally support around a strategic target.** Johnson invoked "a rarely used House procedure known as a discharge petition" to force the bill onto the floor for debate. He needed 218 signatures for the petition to pass, but rather than approach the representatives directly, he applied pressure "from the outside in," meeting "with civil rights leaders, liberal groups, union leaders, church groups and members of the Business Council," encouraging them to prod their congressmen to sign the petition. He contacted *The Washington Post*, which ran an editorial asking Congress to give the bill a fair hearing. When the petition had gained 209 signatures, the House agreed to hear the bill, and in February 1964, it was passed by a clear margin.
- **Draw a clear line of battle.** The bill now went before the Senate, where Johnson was determined not to allow any amendments that would weaken its content. Senator Russell warned the president that "you'll not only lose the election, but you'll lose the South forever." Johnson replied that he would gladly pay that price. Both men understood that there would be no compromise, only victory for one side and defeat for the other.

- **Impose discipline in the ranks.** The battle lines were drawn; Russell prepared his senators for a filibuster to delay the bill from reaching the floor. Johnson knew the civil rights supporters had to be as ruthlessly organized as were their opponents. One frequent Southern tactic was the quorum call, which could be requested whenever “fewer than 51 senators were on the floor,” halting the day’s activity “while senators were rounded up.” Johnson retaliated by creating “a team of ten civil rights supporters responsible for mustering five or six colleagues to answer the quorum call.”
- **Identify the key to success and put ego aside.** Johnson knew that Republican support was vital to passing the bill, and that Illinois Senator Everett Dirksen was central to securing that support. He instructed floor manager Hubert Humphrey to talk with Dirksen: “You’ve got to let him have a piece of the action. He’s got to look good all the time.” Ever practical, Johnson was more than willing to let a Republican take the spotlight if it meant the bill would move forward.
- **Take the measure of the man.** Johnson knew from experience that Dirksen would want a list of quid pro quos in return for his support of the civil rights bill, but he also sensed that appealing to Dirksen’s sense of patriotism and his desire to be remembered would be more effective than promising him favors. He told Dirksen that if he supported the bill, he would be remembered as one of the two most important people to come from Illinois, along with Abraham Lincoln. Johnson and Humphrey tirelessly reached out to senators to get the necessary 67 votes to pass the bill. Johnson signed it into law on July 2, 1964, nine years after the heart attack that had “altered his outlook on power and purpose.”
- **Set forth a compelling picture of the future.** The two critical elements of Kennedy’s progressive agenda had been passed, and now it was time “for Johnson to spell out his own progressive vision for America.” Speaking at a graduation ceremony at the University of Michigan, Johnson set forth his vision of a “Great Society,” in which all Americans were free from poverty, with access to health care and abundant natural resources. He campaigned on this platform and was elected president in a landslide.

- **The readiness is all.** In the 1965 session of Congress, Johnson was able to achieve historic levels of success—due not just to fortunate circumstances, asserts Goodwin, but also to his readiness for the role. He had spent his political career observing the legislative process and found it wanting: “Government bureaucracy was ‘too preoccupied with day-to-day operations,’ too ‘dedicated to preserving the status quo.’” To help fix this problem, he created 14 agile task forces that recommended legislation via some 60 special messages to Congress over the next several months. Much like the assembly line that Henry Ford had introduced to the automotive industry, Johnson’s task force initiative made the legislative pipeline dramatically more efficient.
- **Give stakeholders a chance to shape measures from the start.** Johnson involved senators and congressmen at every stage of the new legislative process, from putting them on his task forces and providing briefings to asking for their help drafting the bills. He also cultivated goodwill and morale by inviting each of them to the White House for private dinners.
- **Know when to hold back and when to move forward.** The civil rights bill that ended legal segregation had not abolished the discriminatory tests that African-Americans were required to pass before they could register to vote in the South. Ending this practice was Johnson’s top priority in the 1965 congressional session, but he didn’t push the voting rights bill immediately, knowing that time was needed “to assimilate the vast political and social impact of the earlier bill.” In March 1965, however, on what became known as “Bloody Sunday,” civil rights activists were assaulted by state troopers during a peaceful march in Selma, Alabama. Johnson knew that it was time to move forward on voting rights to show his support for the black community. He addressed a joint session of Congress, urging the lawmakers to “overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice,” invoking the familiar words of the civil rights anthem “We Shall Overcome.” His heartfelt speech received high praise from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who called it “the most moving, eloquent and passionate plea for human rights ever made by any President of the Nation.”

- **Let celebrations honor the past and provide momentum for the future.** Johnson chose symbolically important locations to hold the signing ceremonies for each law in his Great Society agenda: the Elementary and Secondary Education Act at the one-room schoolhouse where he had attended primary school; the Medicare act in Independence, Missouri, the hometown of Harry Truman; the Voting Rights Act of 1965 in the president's room where Lincoln had signed a bill freeing fugitive slaves in the Confederate army. Each signing was an occasion "to give credit to others, to survey the past and look forward to the future."

JOHNSON'S TARNISHED LEGACY

The sweeping legislation passed by the 89th Congress had a lasting impact on many aspects of American society, including better health and longer life expectancy for seniors, educational assistance for underprivileged children, greater diversity in hiring practices and more fair immigration policies. Johnson's leadership had reached its pinnacle. Unfortunately, the vision he brought to domestic policies failed him when it came to foreign and military affairs. When advised that America needed to intervene in the war in Vietnam to stop the spread of communism, he made decisions "without a clear strategic agenda or narrative," seeking to contain the problem rather than achieve a well-planned victory. His biggest failure, writes Goodwin, was not being transparent with Congress and the American people about the true scope and cost of the war.

"As the war dragged on month after month, year after year—from 1965 to 1968, public dissatisfaction deepened," and anti-war demonstrations became more frequent and widespread. In early 1968, the extent of Johnson's deception became apparent when televised footage of the bloody Tet Offensive gave lie to his "repeated assurances that the war was going well, that there was light at the end of the tunnel." Finally, in March 1968, Johnson addressed the nation and made two announcements: that he was halting the U.S. bombing of North Vietnam and that he would not seek re-election as president. He hoped that, by doing so, he could save both the country and his legacy from the ravages of the war.

EPILOGUE

OF DEATH AND LEGACY

Goodwin spent a great deal of time with Johnson during the last four years of his life, staying at his ranch in Austin, Texas, and working with him on his memoirs. She recalls that he was averse to finishing the memoir project and frequently suggested “that history’s judgment was already stacked against him”; however, he enjoyed taking her on walks that traversed landmarks from his childhood—the house where he grew up, his school, his grandfather’s home, as well as the family cemetery where he would be laid to rest. “He found comfort and relief in moving backward in time from his tumultuous presidency to the early years of his upward climb,” she recalls.

Johnson told Goodwin that he hoped history would remember him for his work to advance civil rights. In his last public statement, at a civil rights symposium at his presidential library, he said that while “civil rights had not always been his priority, he had come to believe that ‘the essence of government’ lay in ensuring ‘the dignity and innate integrity of life for every individual.’” He continued, “I’m kind of ashamed of myself that I had six years and couldn’t do more than I did” to ensure an equal standing in society for black and white Americans. Johnson died of heart failure at age 64 in 1973.

At age 50, Theodore Roosevelt was the youngest former president in American history. He had served three and a half years after President McKinley’s assassination and had then been elected by a huge majority in 1904. After that term ended, he said he would not

seek re-election, citing “the wise custom which limits the President to two terms.” Instead, he groomed his successor, William H. Taft, and went on an African safari after leaving office. His spirit was too restless for retirement, however, and in 1912 he decided to run again, “challenging the incumbent he had once nurtured for the Republican nomination.” When he lost the convention to Taft, he opted to run as a third-party candidate instead.

Roosevelt survived an assassination attempt a few weeks before the election, when the eyeglasses case in his front pocket deflected a shot aimed at his heart. He delivered his scheduled campaign speech before agreeing to go to the hospital; the brave act earned him a surge of voter support, but not enough to beat Woodrow Wilson in the election. Defeated, he went on another exotic expedition, this time to South America, where he contracted malaria. He declined to run again for president in 1916, and Wilson, elected to a second term, denied his petition to lead a volunteer division in World War I. Roosevelt’s depression at not being able to serve in the armed forces was magnified when his four sons were sent overseas and the youngest was killed in action.

By early 1919, Roosevelt, who felt he had “one fight left,” began putting together a domestic agenda for a presidential run in 1920, despite being nearly wheelchair-bound due to his malaria and rheumatoid arthritis. His plan included unemployment insurance, jobs for returning soldiers and a national service program—reforms that “foreshadowed elements” of the New Deal that his cousin Franklin would later enact. “If Roosevelt were given another chance to lead the country, he intended to make the Republican Party once more the progressive Party of Abraham Lincoln.” He never got the chance, however, dying in his sleep from a blood clot that stopped his heart at the age of 60.

Franklin Roosevelt was diagnosed with congestive heart failure in 1944, with a few months remaining in his third term as president. His energy was so “depleted that on bad days nothing besides willpower kept him going,” and he “had already been in office for twelve years, the longest presidential service in American history.” What compelled him to run for a fourth term? As key drivers of his

decision to accept his party's nomination, Goodwin cites his sense of duty to the nation and his belief that he was the best leader to take on the "gargantuan jobs of ending the war and envisioning the peace to follow," given his long experience with the players involved.

His successful campaign against his challenger Thomas Dewey briefly reinvigorated Roosevelt, but his stamina was short-lived; he only survived 82 days into his fourth term. "Yet, in the end, Roosevelt achieved his two foremost objectives," writes Goodwin. He secured Russia's commitment to join the invasion of Japan, as well as Russia's support for the creation of a new world organization for peace. He was preparing for a trip to San Francisco, California, where representatives for the Allies would meet to lay the groundwork for the United Nations, when he died of a cerebral hemorrhage on April 12, 1945.

Abraham Lincoln's final days were days of celebration as the Civil War finally drew to its close, with Robert E. Lee's army surrendering at the Battle of Appomattox Court House. On April 14, 1865, Lincoln talked with the speaker of the House about providing jobs for returning soldiers in the West's gold and silver mines and worked with his cabinet to outline plans for the nation's reconstruction. Lincoln was focused on healing; he strongly opposed executing the rebel leaders, retaliating against the soldiers and imposing federal power on the Southern states. "Let 'em up easy; let 'em up easy," he said. That evening, he took a carriage ride with his wife and entertained friends at dinner. Afterward, he and Mary went to see a play at Ford's Theatre, where actor John Wilkes Booth shot Lincoln point-blank in the head.

As Booth escaped from the theater, he shouted, "sic semper tyrannis," meaning "thus always to tyrants." As Goodwin writes, "There was a savage, terrible irony in these words." Lincoln had long ago warned that mob rule would encourage the rise of despots, and he had worked tirelessly to battle racism, hatred and vigilante violence. He lived for nine hours after the shooting but was pronounced dead the following morning; he was 56 years old.

Lincoln always believed in the importance of education and history. “He considered history, an understanding of how we came to be, the best vehicle for understanding who we are and where we are going.” His legacy, Goodwin writes, was “the living values he passed on to us and to all succeeding generations.” His “kindness, empathy, humor, humility, passion, and ambition” combined “his desire to lead and his need to serve ... into a single indomitable force,” a force that we can harness today by reflecting on his leadership. “Such leadership offers us humanity, purpose, and wisdom, not in turbulent times alone, but in our everyday lives.”

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