

BECOMING FDR

THE PERSONAL CRISIS THAT MADE A PRESIDENT

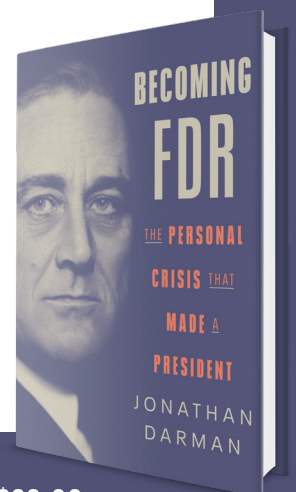
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THE NEW DEAL ON FDR

Some people are born to be leaders. Some people are even born to be presidents. Others are slowly shaped by their experiences to become the people they were meant to be. FDR was one of those people who was powerfully shaped by the extraordinary hardships of illness to become one of America's most unforgettable presidents. This story is a testament to the human spirit, to empathy, and to succeeding in spite of personal crisis. It is also a more nuanced understanding of one of the twentieth century's most consequential personalities.

New Insights and Revelations

- How, in the seven years Roosevelt spent recovering from polio, he developed key aspects of his character—like **the power of hope**—that were later associated with him as president, but were not qualities that he had before. This struggle was directly responsible for enabling him to lead America through the Depression and World War II.
- FDR developed strategic thinking and **dramatic storytelling abilities** that led to his remarkable capacity to form a bond with ordinary people.
- The pre-polio adult FDR, a figure history has largely forgotten, was a handsome, athletic, charming man who assumed he was destined from birth to rule. Drawing on a wealth of archival



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resources, this book shows how FDR's splendid exterior masked inner flaws—**vanity, lack of discipline, and the assumption that greatness should come easily to him because most things always had.**

- The story of FDR's self-reinvention is told alongside the equally remarkable story of the **self-reinvention of Eleanor Roosevelt**, as she transformed herself from an unhappy, underconfident, and betrayed wife into the most consequential American woman of her generation. The recreation of their broken marriage into a unique union is explored, a union that became rooted in a shared mission to ease the suffering of others, a shared ability to communicate with Americans, and, especially, the desire to remake themselves in midlife.
- *Becoming FDR* carefully reconstructs what the American public understood about Roosevelt's illness and disability in the 1920s and 1930s, leading to a surprising truth: **Roosevelt's illness and ongoing disability were no secret.** While Roosevelt and his inner circle engaged in efforts to camouflage the full extent of his physical condition, the story was central to Roosevelt's public image as he reemerged in politics in the late 1920s. Having been sidelined and written off politically due to polio, Roosevelt knew what it meant to be "the forgotten man," a phrase from one of his famous speeches.
- The book also shows in very moving scenes how Roosevelt **developed generosity and compassion** as he encouraged other polio patients, including in his work to establish a rehabilitative colony in Warm Springs, Georgia. Polio led him to develop essential principles for sustaining hope and encouraging progress, principles that would form the backbone of the New Deal.
- FDR's skills as a candidate after polio were at first underestimated. *Becoming FDR* tells the story of Roosevelt's **successful comeback and political rise in relation to his rivals for power in the 1920s and 1930s, especially William Randolph Hearst, Al Smith, and Herbert Hoover**, men who knew the pre-polio FDR as a gifted performer but a shallow, undisciplined, insubstantial man.

