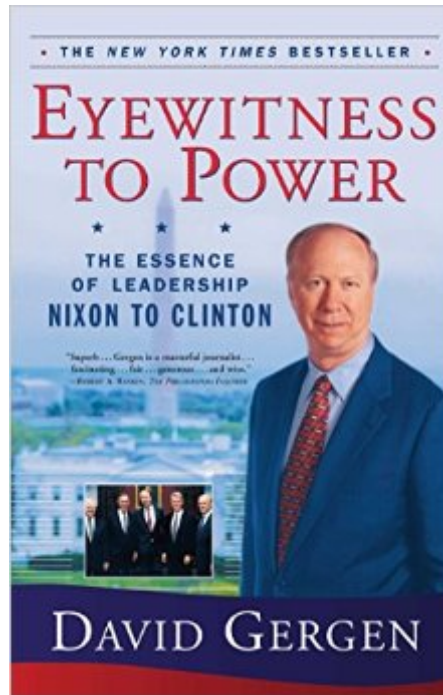


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Eyewitness To Power: The Essence Of Leadership Nixon To Clinton



Synopsis

Leadership: The Ultimate Guide Few Americans have observed the ups and downs of presidential leadership more closely over the past thirty years -- from Nixon to Clinton and Watergate to Whitewater -- than David Gergen. A White House adviser to four presidents, both Republican and Democrat, he offers a vivid, behind-the-scenes account of their struggles to exercise power and draws from them key lessons for leaders of the future. Taking us inside the administrations of Nixon, Ford, Reagan, and Clinton, Gergen reflects on everything from why Nixon was the best global strategist among recent presidents to how the Bill-and-Hillary seesaw rocked the White House during Clinton's tenure as president. Gergen argues that, as the twenty-first century begins, our success as a country will depend heavily upon the success of a new generation in power. Drawing upon his many experiences in the White House, he offers seven vital elements for future leaders. What they must have, he says, are inner mastery; a central, compelling purpose rooted in moral values; a capacity to persuade; skills in working within the system; a fast start; a strong, effective team; and a passion that inspires others to keep the flame alive.

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Customer Reviews

EYEWITNESS TO POWER is an excellent book on several levels. One, David Gergen is obviously a pro who has, "been there, done that," and has some truly fascinating insights into the daily workings of the White House under Nixon, Ford, Reagan and Clinton. I was most taken with his fair treatment of all of these leaders. He tells many tales of the men - warts and all. Gergen offers praise that might

surprise you at times and gets tough at times on presidents he clearly admired. Two, Gergen does a remarkable job of describing the Nixon White House - before, during and after Watergate. He has plenty bad to say about the demons that haunted Nixon and the hurt it did our country. However, he also looks at Nixon in a balanced perspective that stresses the intellect of the former president and his truly amazing abilities in the international arena. It is during Gergen's look at the Nixon presidency that we see the highs and lows all equally presented and Gergen telling it as he saw it. It is clear he had a great respect for Nixon's strategic mind. At the same time, he gives us an intriguing look at Nixon's personality that foretold his downfall. Three, This is a book about leadership. EYEWITNESS TO POWER should be read by all of those in positions of leadership - whether in the public sector, private enterprise or running a local organization. He focuses on the leadership abilities of all four of these men and has some very astute observations that will benefit men and women to become better and more effective leaders. Four, Gergen comes from the communications field. This brings a superb look at these presidents from the perspective of a speechwriter and offers much help to those starting out in public relations and/or journalism.

David Gergen has written a very worthwhile book even if his conclusions are not very original (in the introduction, Gergen admits this himself). The New Republic has called Gergen the guardian of Washington's conventional wisdom (and they meant it as a compliment). Eyewitness to Power is in keeping with this fine tradition, and doesn't stray much beyond it. Essentially, Gergen offers his inside assessment of the four Presidents he has served -- Nixon, Ford, Reagan and Clinton. His account of the Nixon years is very balanced, but the most distant of all: as a mid-level staffer in an Administration that limited access to the Oval Office, Gergen could only get so close. Nonetheless, his informed speculation about both the grandiose aspirations and the dark side of Richard Nixon is enlightening and poignant. How could a man who accomplished so much feel so insecure as to pursue that catastrophic a course of action against his political opponents? We will never know, but Gergen lays out the evidence nicely. The Reagan section is really the only place where Gergen can be faulted for not including more reflections on his day-to-day experiences. As a former top aide in the Reagan White House, one would expect more in the way of such recollections. For the most part, though, Gergen spends his time synthesizing others' accounts of Reagan, and fortunately, he does an excellent job of it. Though perhaps not his primary purpose in this book, Gergen proves his worth as an historian. Only during the Clinton years do we get any sort of "kiss-and-tell" accounts.

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