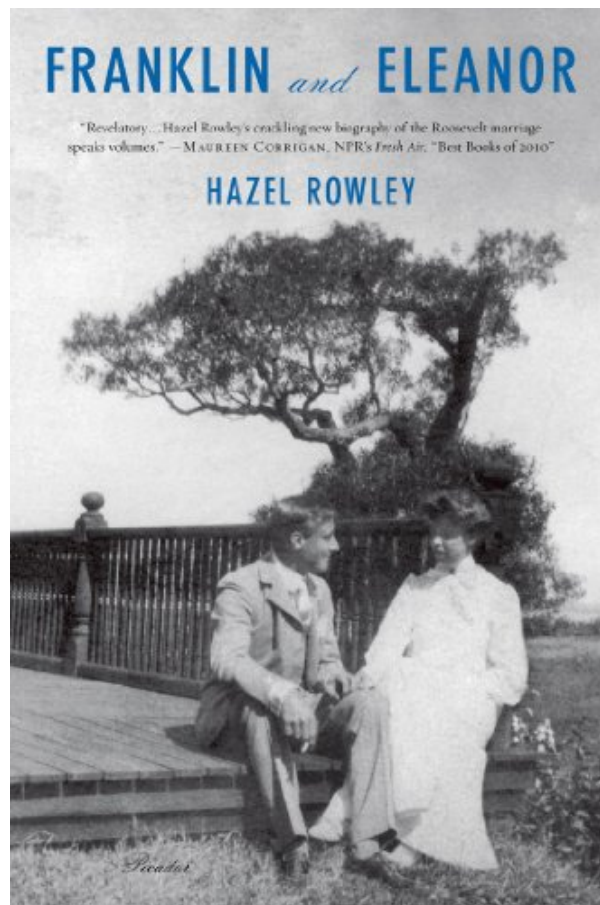


FRANKLIN AND ELEANOR: AN EXTRAORDINARY MARRIAGE BY HAZEL ROWLEY



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FRANKLIN *and* ELEANOR

"Revelatory... Hazel Rowley's crackling new biography of the Roosevelt marriage speaks volumes." — MAUREEN CORRIGAN, NPR's *Fresh Air*; "Best Books of 2010"

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From Publishers Weekly

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A Los Angeles Times Bestseller

In this groundbreaking account of the marriage, critically acclaimed biographer Hazel Rowley describes the remarkable courage and lack of convention---private and public---that kept FDR and Eleanor together. She reveals a partnership that was both supportive and daring. Most of all, she depicts an extraordinary evolution---from conventional Victorian marriage to the bold and radical partnership that has made Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt go down in history as one of the most inspiring and fascinating couples of all time.

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From Publishers Weekly

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Most helpful customer reviews

95 of 97 people found the following review helpful.

A Dazzling Dissection of an Unconventional Marriage

By Ellen Reibel

I confess I approached *Franklin and Eleanor: An Extraordinary Marriage* with trepidation. Not another book about the Roosevelts, I thought. But Rowley’s perfectly paced one volume account of two larger-than-life figures stunningly demonstrates that not only is there room for another book, there is a need for this book.

Rowley’s triumph is her impartiality. Most Roosevelt biographies deal with either FDR or ER, but even those which limn both lives tend to champion one and demonize the other. Rowley’s account is perhaps the first that is truly evenhanded. She celebrates the strengths and achievements of both partners in the greatest political marriage of modern times, perhaps of all times, and brings sympathy and understanding to the faults and weaknesses of each.

Rowley, the author of *Tete-a-Tete*, the acclaimed dual biography of Simone de Beauvoir and Jean Paul-Sarte, is a gifted observer of relationships. In fact, *Franklin and Eleanor* is not so much a dual biography as a dazzling dissection of an unconventional marriage. That is the real originality of the book.

Their union broke rules. Each led an independent life. From the very beginning, these two distant cousins were temperamentally incompatible and politically and publicly attuned. Alone, each of them would have been effective. Together they were glorious. More than that, as Rowley makes clear, without each other they would not have become the Franklin and Eleanor who transformed and dominated the twentieth century. Without Franklin, Eleanor might have lived out her life as a dutiful wife and mother rather than a force for justice and equality. Without Eleanor, FDR would have been a successful politician rather than a great statesman. But each of them pushed the other to new heights.

They disagreed on many issues. They could not have been more dissimilar personally. But each loved and respected the other. Rowley understands this dynamic. More to the point, she plumbs it with subtlety and compassion, and in doing so, she reveals that the marriage was anything but the sham modern cynics have made it out to be.

Eleanor and Franklin is exhaustively researched history and stunningly insightful biography. If you think you know Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, as so many of us do, this book will surprise you, not with new information, but with profound and empathetic understanding. Rowley's sure pacing will keep you turning pages. Her astute and humane portrait of the two individuals behind the public figures will bring you as close as you are ever likely to get to the marriage that shaped the twentieth century.

36 of 36 people found the following review helpful.

Insight!

By James Hiller

Am I embarrassed to admit that I saw this book as a local bookstore on the table, and passed it up originally? Yes! I'm an unofficial scholar of our 32nd president and his wife, and admire their work and lives almost as I do this president: Lincoln, Life-Size.

The Roosevelts have a lure over me that I can't quite explain. Perhaps their persistent progressivism, that is so missing in our country today, refreshes. Whatever the case, when I saw the cover of the book on the table, I went over and leafed through a couple of pages ... and then walked on. Why? I thought, "Who needs to read another book on the Roosevelt marriage? Hasn't that been written about before?". The answer is yes, and no. Hazel Rowley's new book is a fresh look at this great couple, and a read that was well-worth my time.

First let me say that this book doesn't uncover any major new revelations. What Crowley has brilliant done is nuanced the current knowledge of the Roosevelts and added much dynamics and commentary to what we already know. For example, any Roosevelt reader knows about the infamous Mercer affair. Covered in this book, Mercer strives to paint a picture of Eleanor after the affair as not distant or unkind, but still caring of her husband. Crowley publishes excerpts of letters between the two that suggest just as much. In fact, when FDR contracts polio, it is Eleanor that nurses her husband, and even sleeps in the window bed beside him.

Crowley also strives to dismantle the common conception of the battle between Sara Roosevelt and Eleanor. While certainly conflicts existed between the two, they were mutually fond of each other. Crowley also presents some letters of fondness between the two women that show their affection. Was it perfect? No. The lives of two strong women are bound to come in conflict, and it did not diminish the feelings between the two. Tour FDR's house in Hyde Park, and a ranger will tell you just as much.

In fact, I ended up purchasing this book on my Kindle for that very purpose. Just prior to Thanksgiving, I had the honor of visiting his house And because I read this interesting book that focused not so much on history, but on love, the Roosevelts came alive for me ever more in that house. It's quite a read for quite a couple, and I cannot recommend it highly enough. This would must a great Christmas present for a Roosevelt fan in your family, or anyone wanting to read about an amazingly complicated marriage.

48 of 50 people found the following review helpful.

a fresh and novelistic view of the Roosevelt marriage

By Dr. Wayne S. Swift

Wow! As a Roosevelt scholar, I kept saying to myself, "I didn't know that!" Hazel Rowley is a gifted, generous yet economical writer. In only 302 novelistic pages she vividly depicts the forty year Roosevelt marriage and the whole community of friends, advisors, and lovers they created around them. As you zip through the years in a narrative that never bogs down, you will be amazed by the depth of her research.

Missy LeHand, Lucy Mercer Rutherford, Daisy Suckley, Earl Miller, Lorena Hickock, and Louis Howe are fully realized here and placed securely in the context of a loving Roosevelt partnership. Cutting through myths and unfair characterizations, she confidently portrays a much stronger and more flexible marriage than previous biographers had dared to see. I love and admire the authority and courage with which she guides us through this complex and fascinating world.

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