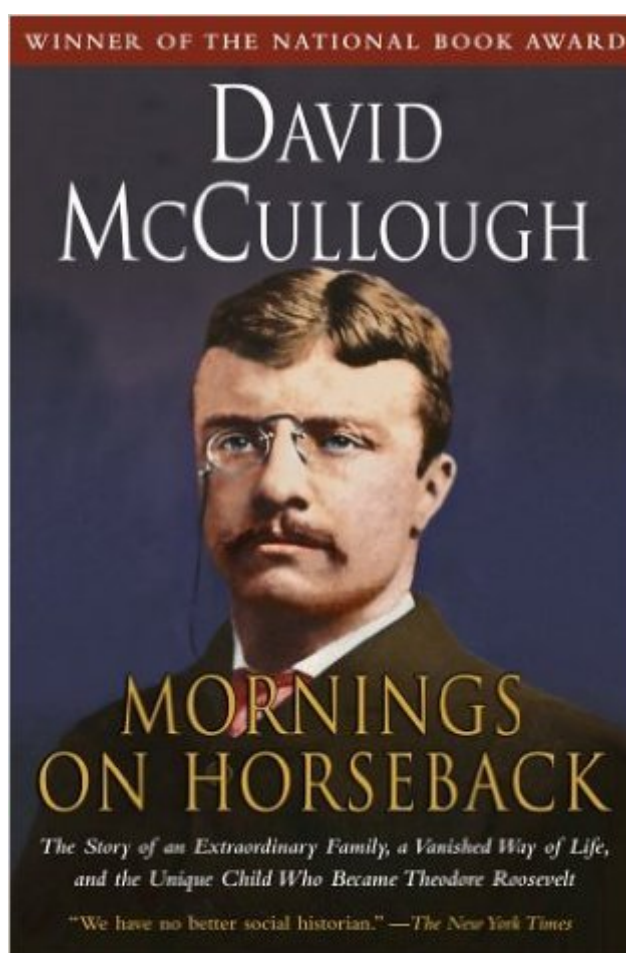


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Mornings On Horseback: The Story Of An Extraordinary Family, A Vanished Way Of Life And The Unique Child Who Became Theodore Roosevelt



Synopsis

The National Book Award-winning biography that tells the story of how young Teddy Roosevelt transformed himself from a sickly boy into the vigorous man who would become a war hero and ultimately president of the United States, told by master historian David McCullough. *Mornings on Horseback* is the brilliant biography of the young Theodore Roosevelt. Hailed as a masterpiece (John A. Gable, *Newsday*), it is the winner of the Los Angeles Times 1981 Book Prize for Biography and the National Book Award for Biography. Written by David McCullough, the author of *Truman*, this is the story of a remarkable little boy, seriously handicapped by recurrent and almost fatal asthma attacks, and his struggle to manhood: an amazing metamorphosis seen in the context of the very uncommon household in which he was raised. The father is the first Theodore Roosevelt, a figure of unbounded energy, enormously attractive and selfless, a god in the eyes of his small, frail namesake. The mother, Mittie Bulloch Roosevelt, is a Southerner and a celebrated beauty, but also considerably more, which the book makes clear as never before. There are sisters Anna and Corinne, brother Elliott (who becomes the father of Eleanor Roosevelt), and the lovely, tragic Alice Lee, TR's first love. All are brought to life to make a beautifully told story, filled with fresh detail (The New York Times Book Review). A book to be read on many levels, it is at once an enthralling story, a brilliant social history and a work of important scholarship which does away with several old myths and breaks entirely new ground. It is a book about life intensely lived, about family love and loyalty, about grief and courage, about a blessed mornings on horseback beneath the wide blue skies of the Badlands.

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Customer Reviews

I read this book after reading the Pulitzer-Prize winning "The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt", another excellent biography of TR. When I started "Mornings On Horseback", I felt that I was armed with more information about this President than I had going into "Rise"; however, once I completed "Mornings", I realized that I was armed with an entirely different type of knowledge. David McCullough gets us into the Roosevelt house and makes the people in TR's life come alive. "Nurture" is a vital component of anyone's development and in this book, one sees just how family shapes a great personality such as his. To truly understand TR from a historical perspective one must examine his roots. This book is a joy to read, very informative and well-paced.

McCullough has done another outstanding job with this book. I first read McCullough's Pulitzer winning bio on Truman. The only flaw with this view on Teddy is that I WISH IT WERE AS LONG AS THE ONE ON TRUMAN!!! He's done an excellent job as a story-teller, yet from the bibliography, you can see that he has done the necessary research to make this a first rate study on Roosevelt's early life. Following this, I've read "The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt", by Edmund Morris. Yes, he is the same gentleman who recently penned "Dutch: A memoir of Ronald Reagan". While "Rise" was given a Pulitzer, like McCullough's bio of Truman, I must say that it didn't "set" as well with me as this one. While both stop roughly mid-life for Teddy (early life to pre-Presidency), I judge "Mornings" to be the superior work. The level of detail in "Mornings", and the overall readability of the prose struck me as superior. As an aside, I have just currently read "TR: The Last Romantic" and while this is an engaging book and not as hero-worshipping as either Morris or McCullough, the book's reliance on almost all TR quotes, or a slight few that are related to TR, becomes jarring. All told, if you have a young son or daughter who has great potential and you'd like to set before them a shining example of a fine American; physically, mentally, and spiritually, then there is not a finer book I could recommend than McCullough's "Mornings on Horseback".

David McCullough is a master at revealing history as it truly took place, and people as they truly were. His account of Teddy Roosevelt's remarkably innocent childhood debunks the myths that have long clouded Roosevelt biographies. While TR would grow to be a fearless Rough Rider and a President who took on corporate monopolies, he began his life as a pathetically weak, asthmatic boy clammering for his parents' attention. It was through the love, rather demanding at times, of

Roosevelt's wonderfully demonstrative father that Teddy grew into his tough adult self. Mornings on Horseback challenges the notion that yesterday was more idyllic than today. Though Roosevelt had a close family, they did not remain unscathed by the Civil War, nor by illnesses that have since fled the earth. Throughout it all, it was their sense of family, as well as their great self-motivation to improve the lot of the world, that pushed them beyond misfortune. McCullough is a patient historian. He does not abide by myths, or falsehoods. His prying beneath the historical record is done with sound tools of investigation. Throughout it all, his voice is so entrancing, and his capture of detail so intricate, that we come to feel that we truly understand his subjects. When they are tossed about by fate, we regard their misfortunes with empathy. McCullough knows how to make history as readable as fiction.

Any biography of a national leader will dwell on the achievements and/or blunders of his/her career. David McCullough, one of our premiere biographers, has taken a different and intriguing tack in his book, "Mornings on Horseback: The Story of an Extraordinary Family, a Vanished Way of Life and the Unique Child Who Became Theodore Roosevelt". This is a biography of Theodore Roosevelt before he reached any high office, before becoming New York's Chief of Police, before becoming Vice President, before becoming President. But what's more fascinating is that it is also the story of the Roosevelt family and its closest friends. The characteristics of these people and how they shaped a lot of Roosevelt's personality and outlook are drawn out exquisitely by McCullough. I had never known how much his parents had influenced him, and how hard he took their sudden deaths, as well as the untimely death of his young wife. Surrounded by wealth and advantage, Theodore Roosevelt could not seem escape the ever-present aura of death. His own delicate health--asthma, digestive disorders, etc.--was also a reminder of the sudden end that could come to us all. What this did, remarkably as McCullough points out, was fill young Teddy Roosevelt with a hunger for life, nature, and knowledge--and this hunger would shape his adulthood. While the book SEEMS to end abruptly, in reality McCullough had given us what his title had promised, a story of the "Unique Child" who became one of America's greatest presidents. "Mornings on Horseback" is a fabulous biography from one of our best writers. I highly recommend it. Rocco Dormarunno, author of The Five Points

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