



# Franklin and Winston: An Intimate Portrait of an Epic Friendship

*Jon Meacham*

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**Franklin and Winston: An Intimate Portrait of an Epic Friendship** Jon Meacham  
**NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER**

The most complete portrait ever drawn of the complex emotional connection between two of history's towering leaders

Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill were the greatest leaders of "the Greatest Generation." In *Franklin and Winston*, Jon Meacham explores the fascinating relationship between the two men who piloted the free world to victory in World War II. It was a crucial friendship, and a unique one--a president and a prime minister spending enormous amounts of time together (113 days during the war) and exchanging nearly two thousand messages. Amid cocktails, cigarettes, and cigars, they met, often secretly, in places as far-flung as Washington, Hyde Park, Casablanca, and Teheran, talking to each other of war, politics, the burden of command, their health, their wives, and their children.

Born in the nineteenth century and molders of the twentieth and twenty-first, Roosevelt and Churchill had much in common. Sons of the elite, students of history, politicians of the first rank, they savored power. In their own time both men were underestimated, dismissed as arrogant, and faced skeptics and haters in their own nations--yet both magnificently rose to the central challenges of the twentieth century. Theirs was a kind of love story, with an emotional Churchill courting an elusive Roosevelt. The British prime minister, who rallied his nation in its darkest hour, standing alone against Adolf Hitler, was always somewhat insecure about his place in FDR's affections--which was the way Roosevelt wanted it. A man of secrets, FDR liked to keep people off balance, including his wife, Eleanor, his White House aides--and Winston Churchill.

Confronting tyranny and terror, Roosevelt and Churchill built a victorious alliance amid cataclysmic events and occasionally conflicting interests. *Franklin and Winston* is also the story of their marriages and their families, two clans caught up in the most sweeping global conflict in history.

Meacham's new sources--including unpublished letters of FDR's great secret love, Lucy Mercer Rutherford, the papers of Pamela Churchill Harriman, and interviews with the few surviving people who were in FDR and Churchill's joint company--shed fresh light on the characters of both men as he engagingly chronicles the hours in which they decided the course of the struggle.

Hitler brought them together; later in the war, they drifted apart, but even in the autumn of their alliance, the pull of affection was always there. Charting the personal drama behind the discussions of strategy and statecraft, Meacham has written the definitive account of the most remarkable friendship of the modern age.

## **Franklin and Winston: An Intimate Portrait of an Epic Friendship Details**

Date : Published October 12th 2004 by Random House Trade (first published January 1st 2003)

ISBN : 9780812972825

Author : Jon Meacham

Format : Paperback 490 pages

Genre : History, Biography, Nonfiction, Politics, War, World War II, North American Hi..., American History, Presidents



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# **From Reader Review Franklin and Winston: An Intimate Portrait of an Epic Friendship for online ebook**

## **Martha says**

Both my husband and I enjoyed this book. We think we know all there is to know about an historical figure and then a book like this comes along and gives us more insight into a character. Churchill's War Rooms are calling!

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## **Aaron Million says**

Jon Meacham writes a more or less dual biography of Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill during WWII. Aside from the opening chapter which (very) briefly charts each man's rise to prominence, and also notes their first meeting in 1918 (one that FDR remembered but Churchill forgot, much to his chagrin once FDR was President). Meacham makes full use of the great treasure trove of materials available on both men to sketch lively portraits of each, and to show the twists and turns that their relationship took as it evolved.

Churchill wrote, literally, volumes of books about his experiences during both WWI and WWII. Roosevelt never wrote a book. This partly because Churchill outlived FDR by twenty years. But also partly because Churchill was, in addition to a highly successful politician, many things, and being an astute writer was one of them. Thus, one might think that, in a book about each man, the reader would hear much more of the Churchill version of the story. Not so. Meacham mines contemporary letters, memos, memoirs from other big players, and some personal interviews to create a balanced picture of each man, neither fawning nor overly critical to either. While Meacham makes good use of Churchill's writing, he does not do so at FDR's expense. Fortunately, FDR wrote so many letters that a biographer has no shortage of material to work with. And, adding in his wife Eleanor and her correspondence, FDR is not slighted at all in this book.

FDR was an incredibly complex - and devious - man. Churchill painfully found this out during their time in power, and Meacham takes us through the snubs that he had to endure. We also see FDR making an effort to see Churchill's position and understand how to deal with him. In many respects, their relationship was based on the military and economic positions that the United States and Great Britain occupied. Prior to Pearl Harbor, Churchill was desperate for American involvement as it was basically Britain against Germany and Italy. He knew that they could not hold out forever, thus he kept trying to convince FDR to lead America into the fray. While he did meet with some success (Lend-Lease) he had to wait until Pearl Harbor for U.S. involvement. Once the U.S. did enter the war, Britain was still the stronger of the two militarily (bigger Navy, experienced fighting men, better Air Force). Thus FDR paid much more attention to Churchill's suggestions than he did later on when the U.S. became the dominant Ally and Britain was forced to rely on the U.S. for machinery and to pick up the slack in the ground forces. As the war turned in favor of the Allies, FDR was less and less inclined to heed ground to Churchill.

Their personal relations ran hot and cold, more so because of Roosevelt's deviousness and attempts to form a close bond with Stalin, who he foresaw as being the main post-war concern due to Russia's size and opposing ideology. FDR was, at times, cruel towards Churchill, ganging up on him with Stalin at Teheran and Yalta. He also tried to schedule a meeting with only Stalin, without informing Churchill of the attempt. At times he would be elusive and not respond to some of Churchill's cables. For his part, Churchill tried to mask over this following FDR's death, painting a picture of relationship that was closer in remembrances

than it was at the time. Churchill also could be difficult and would pout when he wouldn't get his way, which irritated Roosevelt.

Meacham could have dug more deeply into certain areas, such as the turbulent tenure of Joseph Kennedy as U.S. Ambassador to Great Britain. Kennedy caused some major issues with appeasement talk and anti-Semitic rhetoric, but Meacham does not really mention any of this or how it may have impact the early war relationship between FDR and Churchill. Also, he talked about how dangerous it would be for Churchill to cross the Atlantic to visit Washington D.C. following Pearl Harbor. But then, suddenly, Churchill has arrived and nothing was said about his crossing. This is a really good book, very fair, and highly entertaining to read. Recommended for anyone interested in WWII, FDR, Churchill, or wartime diplomacy.

Grade: A

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### **Kristopher says**

The focus is on the friendship between Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill which was at times difficult and strained. I already knew a lot more about Churchill than I did Roosevelt, and saw Churchill as a greater figure than Roosevelt. I know that FDR did great things for my own country, and that he was a great figure of the 20th century, but Churchill was just a much more likable character. The book helped me understand that Churchill had a deep-seated need to be liked due to his upbringing by parents that were cold and distant. Roosevelt on the other hand was a master at being manipulative and keeping secrets. Eleanor didn't realize until after he was dead that FDR had been seeing an old flame that he had promised Eleanor that he would never see again. FDR also mistreated Churchill on several occasions for political gain when the big three - Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin would meet. FDR and Stalin would "gang-up" on poor Churchill. These episodes were all quickly forgiven and the two were good friends right up to the end of FDR's life. However, it did give me the impression that FDR was often kind of a jerk when he wanted to be.

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### **Brian Eshleman says**

I was fascinated by the degree to which the ups and downs in a relationship between two unusual people have impacted the world they left to their heirs. As rendered by the author, neither FDR nor Churchill is flawless, or even easy to get along with, but they are both compelling in their own way.

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### **Cathy says**

I had to give up on this book. I have been reading it for 2 1/2 weeks and haven't been able to navigate through 100 pages yet. I hate to give up, but there are too many other books out there that I know will hold my interest for me to waste any more time on this one.

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### **Bou says**

Fully deserving it's 4 stars! What a charming book, describing the friendship (some would say the bromance)

between Churchill and Roosevelt. It's a tale of two friends, starting with Churchill's courtship to get the United States into war, where Roosevelt reluctantly tries to get the isolationists of his back. After Pearl Harbour the romance starts, but suddenly a new friend gets onto the stage in the person of Stalin, desperately trying to drive a wedge between the two friends. In the end one friend stays behind, reminiscing of the good old times. The writing style of the author is fantastic and never becomes boring.

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### **Chuck says**

This book is an intimate description of a fascinating relationship between Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill and their personal and political relationship prior to and during World War II. It is intimate because much of the new material comes from diaries, correspondence and material unavailable previously. The book is almost a day to day account of their experiences during the war. It exposes both the best and worst qualities of each man including cigars, alcohol and some intimate friendships. This is far and away the best insight to the leadership of the Allies of World War II that I have read and often is so powerful that for us that view this as the only fully justified war of our time, that I often had to catch my breath to reflect on the humor or the tragedy or the possible consequences of their decisions. An excellent biography.

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### **Barbara says**

Why one more book about Winston Churchill or Franklin Delano Roosevelt? There are so many published, so many quoted and well-read. Manchester's "The Last Lion" started me on a lifetime fascination with Mr. Churchill. Amateur American historians all have read "No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor" by Doris Kearns Goodwin and delighted in Goodwin's excellent writing and lovely personal tidbits about the couple who shaped America and the world during World War Two.

So why this delightful little read (370 pages minus the index, notes, bibliography and appendix)?

I found it to be a charming companion on quiet evenings when I chose to reminisce about good Old Winston and Franklin. As Meacham adroitly handled each major event in the war, as well as each meeting between the two great men, I found myself nodding--remembering the same stories I'd read in other books. For me this was a great book for reviewing all I know about Franklin and Winston. I can honestly say there were no surprises within the cover of this book, but great fun visiting old friends.

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### **Lewis Weinstein says**

An utterly charming portrayal of the friendship (and disagreements) between the two men who (with Stalin) led the fight against Hitler. There is lots of inside information, reactions from people who knew them, as well as their own notes and communications. And of course there is an overview of the history.

Bottom line ... We are lucky to have had such leaders during a very fragile time for democracy.

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## **Joy H. says**

Added 8/3/18. (first published January 1st 2003)

Read by Grover Gardner. (Although some sources say "Narrated by: Len Cariou".)  
(It sounds like Grover Gardner to me. Gardner also read the biography of Cary Grant.)

SEE: "Unabridged" <https://www.amazon.com/Franklin-and-W...>

ALSO SEE: "Abridged: <https://mobile.audible.com/pd/Bios-Me...>

Excellent! 5 Stars! Grover Gardner is an excellent narrator!

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## **William Blair says**

Continuing my attack on recent (well, this one is 2003) books covering the events and personalities of World War II, this very entertaining book by Jon Meacham (the editor of Newsweek, whom you have no doubt seen on Charlie Rose's PBS television show) adds itself to the list of those with new and interesting information because of recently declassified (or recently disclosed personal) documents. The (obvious) angle with this book is the intense personal relationship that developed between these two leaders, despite their personal shortcomings. While it's not intended to be a World War II history, it's great as an introduction or overview from the standpoint of politics. For example, there are but three mentions of the Manhattan Project, which probably reflects the actual level of attention that (relatively speaking, of course), each of the two men gave to it. This is a very engaging work, reflecting the wonderful writing style of the author (almost like he's speaking, which is what you would expect given his day job). Because of the new material from the various libraries and diaries, this one should be on the reading list of anyone concerned with anything other than the detailed military history of World War II.

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## **Dj says**

While this book is written with the larger issues of World War II as the backdrop, it really does focus on the friendship between FDR and Churchill. While the friendship isn't presented as all roses, the author does feel that it was an actual friendship. Maybe a tad more honest on the side of Churchill than on the side of FDR, but a friendship none the less. The author doesn't pull punches and shows the best and the worst of both individuals, in a way that is rarely written about in the greater overall histories of the war.

The war and many of the individuals that normally fill the pages seems to barely make a showing on the stage of this book, since for all its epic scope and massive amount of devastation it isn't the focus of the book. The people that ran the war, managed the battles or led the troops, only appear in relation to how they affected the relationship between these two world leaders and more often in showing and commenting on the relationship from their own view. While the war isn't a primary focus the relationship between these two men had a great deal to do with the way it was conducted and their views and how they tried to convince one or the other on which route to take to victory are an important aspect of this book.

This book is well worth the reading to gain further insight into the minds and personalities of two leaders that

seemed destined for greatness in a time of the worst peril their nations had ever seen.

Well worth the read.

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### **Charlie says**

This was an informative and compelling drama about the relationship between two of the most important men in the twentieth century. Meacham explains how close the world was to Nazi domination if not for the courage of Winston Churchill and the English people and at the same time showed how Franklin Roosevelt pulled the reluctant American public from isolationism to the most powerful democracy in the world. These two men are painted as visionaries, but visionaries with human souls and faults.

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### **Doreen Petersen says**

Excellent book!! Loved reading about the friendship between Franklin and Winston. Would definitely recommend this one!!

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### **Erin Rogers says**

A really unique book! Jon Meacham brings to life the friendship between two of the greatest men of their time: Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Winston Churchill. While Meacham stresses that his book is not a history book but rather a look at the relationship between the President and Prime Minister, one can't help but absorb the historical events surrounding the letters and meetings of these two men. Such a tumultuous time in history required the leadership of larger-than-life personalities, and these two definitely fit the bill! What began as a union of necessity against the Nazi regime gradually grew into a relationship of respect and deep fondness. Through their letters, and the letters and quotes of their intimate friends and family members, the reader discovers both the strengths and flaws of each man.

The writing is just okay for me. Unfortunately, not all transitions are seamless, and there were times when I was reading what I thought was an anecdote about FDR and had to backtrack when I realized it was really about Churchill, and vice versa. The information also is at times redundant. Overall, however, I really enjoyed this book and would recommend it for both history buffs and casual observers alike.

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### **CV Rick says**

I know a lot of people liked this book, but I found it lacking in many areas. For one the narrative is repetitious to the point of tedium. Over and over again we are told, rather than shown, that these two men, Franklin and Churchill admire and respect each other but that every element of this partnership is tinged with self-interest, or in their case the interest of their respective nations.

The books starts by jumping around through time and the author seems to be taking clippings from various



sources and throwing them together to support preconception after preconception. There was definitely a thesis to the work, and the author never strays from thesis to discovery. Maybe it's just that I've read and studied too much about these two men previously to find anything new in this volume, but there isn't any new revelations or original arguments.

I just want the time back.

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## Jeffrey Keeten says

**"There are memorials to Roosevelt and Churchill just inside the West Door of Westminster Abbey. The first, a gray tablet that hangs far below a window depicting Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the twelve tribes of Israel, reads: TO THE HONORED MEMORY OF FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT, A FAITHFUL FRIEND OF FREEDOM AND OF BRITAIN. Nearby, a large, dark green marble slab lies on the floor of the great nave, its inscription simple but profound: REMEMBER WINSTON CHURCHILL. On sunny days in London, light slips in the gloom of the ancient church, both through the stained glass and from the open doors--light from a world Roosevelt and Churchill together delivered from evil."**

It is hard not to admire these two men. They were great orators in a time when the world needed words of encouragement. They were fiercely patriotic and were able to convey that passion to nations that were being asked to sacrifice everything. It is hard to imagine anyone else having the ability to convince a nation to the hold the line, when their allies have capitulated and their capital is being bombed into dust, than Winston S. Churchill. As he was trying to hold his nation together he was looking across the water towards the Americans, hoping the nation of Immigrants would lend their resources and their optimism once again to save Europe.

## FDR

Franklin D. Roosevelt was certainly no wallflower. He played the elusive, flirtatious coquette with Churchill while trying to appease the thunderous clamour from the isolationist Republicans on the right. Roosevelt was worried about reelection, and certainly any whisper that he was intending to launch his country into another European War would have sent him home to Hyde Park. He was a charming man, but distant with family and friends, always friendly, but once he began to feel uncomfortable a veneer of coldness would appear. Churchill, on the other hand was like a puppy, once he decided he liked someone he was intensely loyal and would almost smother that person with affection. You might see how these conflicting personalities might...well...conflict. Regardless, they had a lot in common, and not to sound too dramatic the future of the world was at their feet.

*They loved tobacco, strong drink, history, the sea, battleships, hymns, pageantry, patriotic poetry, high office, and hearing themselves talk. 'Being with them was like sitting between two lions roaring at the same time,' said Mary Soames."*

We probably owe a debt of gratitude to the Japanese for attacking Pearl Harbor. **Yesterday, December 7th, 1941 -- a date which will live in infamy -- the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately**

**attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.** It is unclear when or if the United States of America would have entered the conflict. Churchill was determined not to sue for peace and it is highly likely that Hitler would have made the decision to invade England. We will never know what the US would have done under those circumstances. I would certainly like to think we would have done our best to save England, but fortunately, for the world, the decision was made for us.

### **Winston Churchill was credited with showing the first V sign for VICTORY**

The relationships between the Roosevelts and the Churchills was at times strained. The pressure of the war was weighing heavily on everyone, but you can imagine the frustrations that were launched at those closest to the men bearing the most pressure for success. *"Despite the psychological wear and tear of the years, in times of stress the bond of marriage tended to reassert itself for both the Churchills and the Roosevelts. Churchill could be demanding, Clementine difficult, Franklin deceptive, and Eleanor wearying, but what Mary Soames once called 'the golden thread of love' bound each couple together."* Clementine really had her hands full with Winston. She was constantly trying to keep the mind, body, and spirit of her dynamic husband from falling to pieces. Churchill was a heavy drinker, but yet never seemed to show the signs of intoxication. *"There can be little question, however, that the cumulative effect of years of drinking was at least one factor among many in Churchill's personality. Alcohol raised his sense of drama, removed inhibitions, and invested the ordinary with a dimension of the extraordinary. His highs seemed higher, his lows lower."*

The relationship between Franklin and Eleanor is particularly interesting. They were cousins, she did not even have to change her name when they married. He was handsome. She was particularly unhandsome in a Roosevelt family full of beautiful people. Despite lacking social grace and elegance Eleanor turned out to be the perfect wife for a man who wanted to be a successful politician. She was smart, insightful, and brutally honest. She was everything an ambitious man could want in a wife, but those good qualities also proved to be the qualities that Franklin found most unsatisfactory when he wanted to relax. Churchill never turned off, but Franklin at the end of the day wanted to put the cares of the day away and work on his stamp collection or enjoy a cocktail. Eleanor wrote for numerous magazines, not that Franklin didn't trust her, but he did have a real fear that she would unintentionally reveal something in her writing that would turn out to be detrimental to the nation. Because of that fear he never felt like he could totally unwind around Eleanor.

### **Lucy Mercer and we get a glimpse of what FDR found so attractive about her.**

But Lucy Mercer was a different story. She didn't have those qualities that made Eleanor the perfect political wife, but she did have all the qualities that Eleanor was lacking. *"Eleanor had hired the twenty-two-year-old Lucy Mercer as a social secretary in the winter of 1913-1914. A charming woman with a voice, Joseph Lash remarked, 'like dark velvet', 'Lucy became part of the Roosevelt household. 'She knew how to please a man, ' wrote Lash, 'to make his life easy and agreeable, to bolster instead of challenge him.' Roosevelt fell in love with her."* When Eleanor discovered the affair Lucy was sacked. Lucy then married Winthrop Rutherford, but for the rest of Franklin's life they stayed in touch. She was with him when he died at Warm Springs. She left immediately to avoid a scandal, but another woman in the household told Eleanor as soon as she arrived. Eleanor had to deal with two blows, the death of her husband and discovering his continued deception.

Franklin also had an ongoing intellectual relationship, no indication of a physical relationship, with Margaret "Daisy" Suckley a Hyde Park neighbor and a sixth cousin. She was someone he could confide in about events with much more comfort than he could with Eleanor. She was solicitous and brimming with

confidence in his greatness. She was more of a mother figure than a girlfriend. She kept a diary and notes about her conversations with Franklin that later proved to be a treasure trove for the biographer Geoffrey Ward.

I never have heard of any sexual scandal associated with Winston Churchill. He's seems to have been done looking for love when he met Clemmie. He was eccentric in his behavior and sometimes his mode of dress, but when it came to love he was like the most faithful of the animal kingdom gibbons, swans, black vultures, wolves, albatrosses, turtle doves or bald eagles. He was mated for life.

### **The BIG Three: Stalin, FDR, and Churchill.**

Winston and Franklin were close, but their relationship was sorely tested when they added the last member of the big three, Joseph Stalin. Stalin was suspicious of England; and therefore, wary of Churchill, especially his oratory gifts. Stalin was a man of few words and the more Winston talked the less he listened. Roosevelt in a bit of statecraft realized that if he was going to negotiate with Stalin he needed to do it without Churchill. He had secret meetings which of course could not stay secret. Churchill was understandably hurt at being excluded. He felt that he had earned the right to be a part of any negotiations. He was the man standing up to Hitler when the other two were still playing footsy with the Germans under the table. There was in particular a painful scene, described by Meacham, where Stalin begins to pick at Churchill in bullying school boy manner and Roosevelt joins in both laughing maliciously at the expense of Winston. It may have been simply part of the plan to ingratiate himself with Stalin, but it left my stomach queasy and it was a moment that would continue to chafe Churchill clear up to the death of Roosevelt.

Meacham is a very engaging writer. I read his book about Andrew Jackson called American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White House and was impressed, in both books, by his ability to flesh out these monolithic figures from our past. Highly recommended to those who love history.

If you wish to see more of my most recent book and movie reviews, visit <http://www.jeffreykeeten.com>  
I also have a Facebook blogger page at: <https://www.facebook.com/JeffreyKeeten>

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### **Joanne says**

I have always been grateful that Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill were at the helm during World War II. No one person is without their flaws and I am sure that many critics can find fault with both characters. This novel showed both their strengths and their weaknesses. Well researched and written, I found out so much more about both men to respect and admire.

I always think of how my father liked FDR, Roosevelt was President for most of his childhood and teen years. He was so happy that he got a look and a wave at him when FDR was out campaigning in his convertible. A memory that he cherished always.

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### **Fergie says**

Meacham does a fine job dissecting the personal and political friendship of perhaps the two most important figures in the 20th century. While neither man was perfect, each must be given his due for what he

accomplished for his country as well as for the world in a time of mass upheaval and danger. Students of history should acknowledge that, as Churchill & England stood on the precipice of disaster and defeat at the hands of Hitler, America watched from the sidelines, content and happy in its isolation. It was only through FDR's progressive mind that support was finally granted to the brave, defiant Brits through such legislative measures as the Lend Lease program. Before Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt gently pulled his countrymen toward the acknowledgement of the greater world and America's undeniable connection to its fate. FDR was a savvy politician who was wise enough to understand that despite his personal desire to support England's cause against Germany at the time, he could not risk running ahead of public opinion too greatly. To have done so would be to have given the isolationists more weight to their claim -- that America had no business spilling their sons' blood in "Europe's War". Meacham deftly handles the question of Churchill's impatience with America's reluctance to jump into the fray by making it clear that it was Churchill's personal respect and relationship with FDR that persevered beyond his personal impatience with America's refusal to act between 1939 through to the end of '41.

To be sure, Churchill comes through as the better man when Meacham delves into the personal aspects of both men's characters. FDR did not appear nearly as warm personally as Churchill did. Having prior read biographies and histories of both men, this fact did not surprise me. Despite this, the reader gets the sense that both men understood the importance of what they were setting out to achieve once they did come together. Whether you agree with their policies, credit is due and must be given to what was accomplished during their years in office. As with any politician, it would be easy to criticize either man for his faults and political shortcomings. And, with any politician of the past, it is unfairly easy for us to judge and say that more could have been accomplished than what was. Two failings that jump off the present day page when reading about their decisions were the reluctance to do more for the Jewish population during the horror known as the Holocaust as well as their willingness to give Stalin and the Soviet more weight in the world than was wise (particularly FDR). But, to judge too harshly would perhaps be unjust. We should remember that these men were working without the benefit of hindsight and were products of their time and generation. These failings should be noted to show that both men were far from perfect in their judgments and perceptions, but it would be more correct to value their vast commitment to the common good of mankind in the 20th century. Without their commitment and actions, one shudders to think where the world might be had there not been a Franklin Roosevelt or Winston Churchill.

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## **John says**

I bet most of the info in this book came from Sir Gilbert. Roosevelt did not like Winston but the book changes it around blames it on Joseph Kennedy, i guess to save some face for Churchill. Nothing against Sir Gilbert since he is obligated to only write the positive things about Churchill. But this book only paints positive things & do not give you insight/details on the situations. Not impressed, but I wanted more info & details..the whys...and this book doesn't do it. We are way past WW2, the truth about the Japanese code breaking, Churchill knew, those docs are sealed for 99yrs.

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