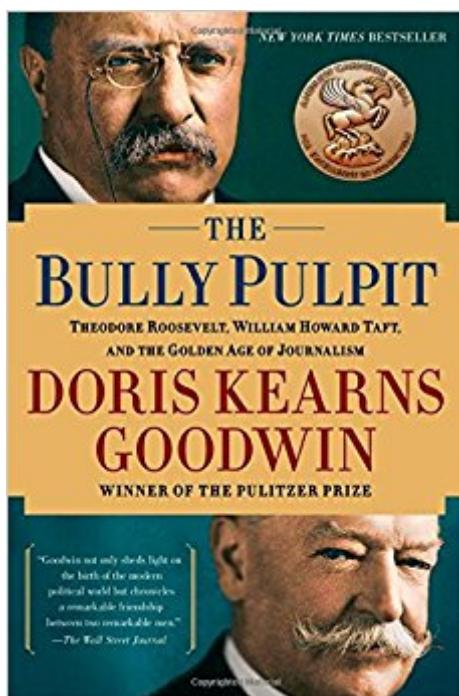


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# The Bully Pulpit: Theodore Roosevelt And The Golden Age Of Journalism



## Synopsis

One of the Best Books of the Year as chosen by The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Economist, Time, USA TODAY, Christian Science Monitor, and more. "A tale so gripping that one questions the need for fiction when real life is so plump with drama and intrigue." (Associated Press). Doris Kearns Goodwin's *The Bully Pulpit* is a dynamic history of the first decade of the Progressive era, that tumultuous time when the nation was coming unseamed and reform was in the air. The story is told through the intense friendship of Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft—a close relationship that strengthens both men before it ruptures in 1912, when they engage in a brutal fight for the presidential nomination that divides their wives, their children, and their closest friends, while crippling the progressive wing of the Republican Party, causing Democrat Woodrow Wilson to be elected, and changing the country's history. The *Bully Pulpit* is also the story of the muckraking press, which arouses the spirit of reform that helps Roosevelt push the government to shed its laissez-faire attitude toward robber barons, corrupt politicians, and corporate exploiters of our natural resources. The muckrakers are portrayed through the greatest group of journalists ever assembled at one magazine—Ida Tarbell, Ray Stannard Baker, Lincoln Steffens, and William Allen White—teamed under the mercurial genius of publisher S.S. McClure. Goodwin's narrative is founded upon a wealth of primary materials. The correspondence of more than four hundred letters between Roosevelt and Taft begins in their early thirties and ends only months before Roosevelt's death. Edith Roosevelt and Nellie Taft kept diaries. The muckrakers wrote hundreds of letters to one another, kept journals, and wrote their memoirs. The letters of Captain Archie Butt, who served as a personal aide to both Roosevelt and Taft, provide an intimate view of both men. *The Bully Pulpit*, like Goodwin's brilliant chronicles of the Civil War and World War II, exquisitely demonstrates her distinctive ability to combine scholarly rigor with accessibility. It is a major work of history—an examination of leadership in a rare moment of activism and reform that brought the country closer to its founding ideals.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

An Best Book of the Month, November 2013: In an era when cooperation between the national media and the US government seems laughable, Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Doris Kearns Goodwin's timely 100-year look backward explores the origins of the type of muckraking journalism that helped make America a better country. Focusing on the presidencies of Theodore Roosevelt and his successor, William Howard Taft--one-time colleagues and friends who later became sworn foes--Goodwin chronicles the birth of an activist press, which occurred when five of the nation's best-ever journalists converged at McClure's magazine and helped usher in the Progressive era. At times slow and overly meticulous, with a lot of backstory and historical minutiae, this is nonetheless a lush, lively, and surprisingly urgent story--a series of entwined stories, actually, with headstrong and irascible characters who had me pining for journalism's earlier days. It's a big book that cries out for a weekend in a cabin, a book to get fully lost in, to hole up with and ignore the modern world, to experience the days when newsmen and women were our heroes. --Neal Thompson --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

\*Starred Review\* In this hyperpartisan era, it is well to remember that a belief in an activist federal government that promoted both social and economic progress crossed party lines, as it did during the Progressive movement of the early twentieth century. Goodwin, the acclaimed historian, repeatedly emphasizes that fact in her massive and masterful study of the friendship, and then the enmity, of two presidents who played major roles in that movement. Roosevelt, unsurprisingly, is portrayed by Goodwin as egotistical, bombastic, and determined to take on powerful special interests. He saw his secretary of war, Taft, as a friend and disciple. When Taft, as president, seemed to abandon the path of reform, Roosevelt saw it as both a political and a personal betrayal. Taft, sadly remembered by many as our fattest president, receives nuanced, sympathetic, but not

particularly favorable treatment here. But this is also an examination of some of the great journalists who exposed societal ills and promoted the reforms that aimed to address them. Many of these muckrakers, including Ida Tarbell and Lincoln Steffens, worked for McClure's magazine. This is a superb re-creation of a period when many politicians, journalists, and citizens of differing political affiliations viewed government as a force for public good. **HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY:** This author's new book has been greatly anticipated; much prepublication discussion has occurred; and reader interest will be intense. --Jay Freeman --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is a long book with the collection of photographs at the end and a slew of footnotes. I listened to it in the audible format. It is a book in which I discovered that the Republicans were the progressives in that era and the Teddy Roosevelt was a leader of the progressives. That was an eye-opener for a guy who has mostly seen the Republicans as the bad guys in the later 20th century. I especially enjoyed the stories of the muckraking Journal is at the beginning of the 20th century. I had never heard of McClure's magazine and added several books from the muckraking era that I must read. And there was the assassination of President McKinley that I often forget about as well as the attempted assassination of Teddy Roosevelt who went on to the speech venue to deliver his speech with a bullet in his chest. Teddy came back to run for a third term as the candidate for the progressive Bullmoose party. Taft Ultimately served as the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court after his time as president. Taft and Roosevelt were very close colleagues in politics then split up and actually ran against each other for president in the election that Woodrow Wilson won. Tariffs and monopolies were big issues in their time but I must admit that I found the many pages about the issue of tariffs to be pretty boring. But the fact that this was a time of much progressive change made pretty interesting reading material.

Our library non-fiction book group read and discussed this book over two months. It produced a great discussion on so many topics: Roosevelt & Taft, their wives, McClure's magazine, trust-busting, elections, political parties, Ida Tarbell, reformists etc. Some comments from the group:<sup>\*</sup> although it wasn't an easy read, it was a worthwhile read and we were all glad to have read it<sup>\*</sup> most liked Taft more than Roosevelt - we were dismayed by Roosevelt's actions over Taft's presidency<sup>\*</sup> both had strong wives<sup>\*</sup> loved the role of the press<sup>\*</sup> author is great at conveying scenes - you feel you are there<sup>\*</sup> we were blessed as a nation to have both men serve in office<sup>\*</sup> Teddy was more visionary, Taft better at executing perhaps<sup>\*</sup> Taft should be more well-known and respected -

why isn't he? Because he just served one term? Wasn't as dynamic as Teddy? No wars or memorable events occurred during his Presidency?\* Loved descriptions of Teddy by others - very colorful\* Juxtaposition of two men with narrative on press created an original and interesting structure for the book\* We are dealing with many of the same issues todayThere were lots more comments as we discussed the book for four hours, but this gives you the gist of it. We had also read Goodwin's book on Lincoln and her childhood in Brooklyn. Enjoyed both of those, too.

First, one has to keep in mind that TR was brought up in NYC as one of the "elite" and attended Harvard University. He was a brilliant man who not only led a politician's life, but wrote hundreds of books and spent years on a dude ranch raising cattle. He was police commissioner of NYC; governor of the State & a secretary of the navy He learned to deal with people of all stripes and persuasions and truly liked the human race.However, when TR became president he not so much as spoke to the people himself as he spoke to the media directly, many times in the Oval Office, and they got the word out. He made friends with the reporters and they, in turn, did his bidding. He was what is termed a "man's man" - forceful and entertaining.Today, TR would be considered a through & through liberal, as he was by most of the Republican party over 100 years ago but many of his ideas hold common-sense currency: conservation; a burgeoning FDA to protect consumers from bad drugs; labor laws to protect both children & adults; the inception of the meat inspection bureaucracy, etc. etc. It took him years to achieve these ends and he expected that his successor, his long-time best friend, Wm. Howard Taft would follow in his footsteps. That didn't exactly happen and that caused a long rift to develop between them. Taft was a brilliant jurist as well as an honest and fair man but he never really wanted to be president - that was TR's dream - and he accommodated Roosevelt.Roosevelt told the people when he was directly elected to his 2nd term that he would not run for a third. That was one of the biggest mistakes he ever made for many reasons which are elucidated in the book. As things turned out, he missed politics and the presidency so much that because of his arrogance and high-self esteem that he would run again, as a third party candidate. By doing so he split the Republican party and Wilson, the Democrat won the seat.This book is well-written but overly detailed and descriptive. It could have been 200 pages shorter. By the time I finished about 80% of it, I could go no further. Bored out of my mind. But, I learned a lot and that was one of the reasons I purchased it.

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