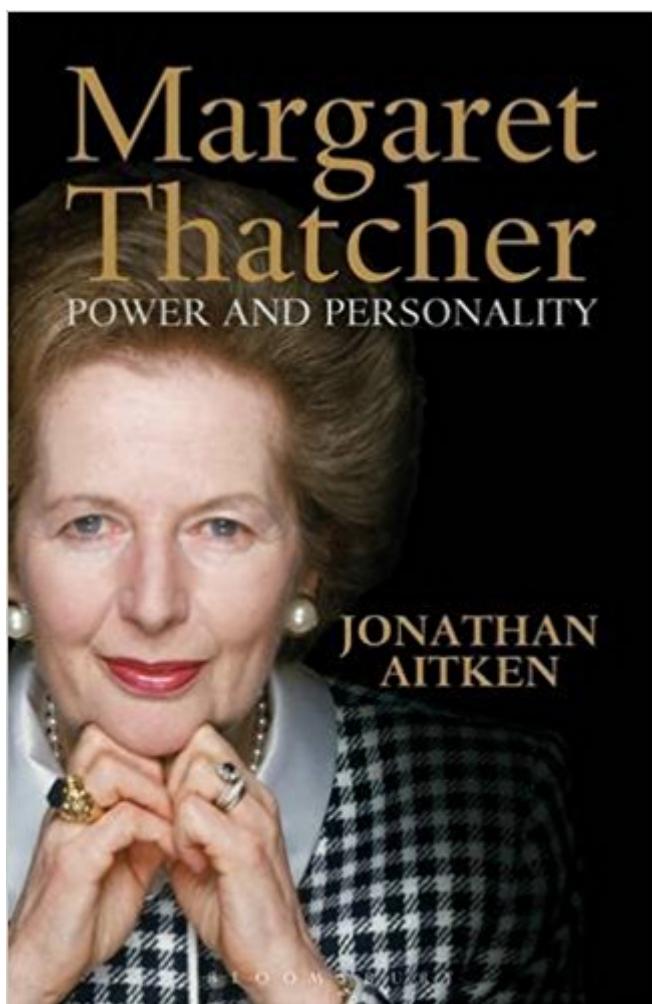


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Margaret Thatcher: Power And Personality



Synopsis

A strong and sometimes divisive figure in British and world politics, Margaret Thatcher was the longest-serving British Prime Minister in the 20th century and the only woman to ever hold the office. Drawing from an abundance of new, previously unpublished material from the Thatcher Archive at Churchill College, Cambridge, Jonathan Aitken's fresh and original biography is a lively and perceptive exploration of the personality that dominated conservative British politics for more than 10 years and her profound and worldwide impact on the historical tapestry of her time. At once positive and critical in its assessment of her governance, Margaret Thatcher: Power and Personality is crafted from the author's longtime personal relationship with his subject, his eyewitness account of public and private episodes in her life, and more than 100 interviews with the former Prime Minister's political colleagues and close personal friends. Penetrating and insightful, it chronicles one of the most remarkable political lives of our time.

Book Information

Hardcover: 784 pages

Publisher: Bloomsbury USA; 1 edition (November 5, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1620403420

ISBN-13: 978-1620403426

Product Dimensions: 6.7 x 2.3 x 9.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.5 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 31 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #860,772 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #73 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Leaders & Notable People > Presidents & Heads of State > U.K. Prime Ministers #4254 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Leaders & Notable People > Political #9260 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Specific Groups > Women

Customer Reviews

Starred Review The fact that Thatcher's funeral procession was greeted with more cheers than protest, though the reverse was expected, attests to the mixed emotions she elicited in life. She was the only woman to serve as prime minister of Britain and the longest-serving PM in the twentieth century, such a hard-edged conservative that she was known as the Iron Lady. Aitken, a former member of Parliament, served for a time with Thatcher but also dated her daughter and knew the PM on a more personal level. That mixture of professional and personal relationships with

Thatcher affords him a close-up, long-term perspective on one of the most powerful women in recent history, with a hand in major economic and geopolitical changes. Drawing on archival material, interviews, and personal knowledge, Aitken chronicles the "metamorphosis from humble beginnings to grandeur; from humility to hubris; from a realistic courage in fighting her corner to a reckless Ride of the Valkyries." He chronicles her strict childhood, marriage, political rise, and relationships with figures including Presidents Reagan and George H. W. Bush and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. A woman of steely discipline and determination, powerful on the international stage, she eventually ran afoul of local politics in a dispute within her party. Aitken admits to a complex admiration of Thatcher, having seen her at her best and her worst, in this thoroughly insightful and compelling look at a remarkable world figure. --Vanessa Bush

"[A] thoroughly insightful and compelling look at a remarkable world figure."•
Publishers Weekly (starred review)

I've read a few biographies on Margaret Thatcher to include her autobiography as well as her official biography by Charles Moore but I enjoyed and appreciated Margaret Thatcher: Power and Personality far more than those earlier reads primarily as a result of my perspective as an American not as familiar with the details of British politics and policy. Had I been a UK resident who lived through the current events and observed the media coverage I would've understood and likely better related to those other works a bit better. However I didn't find my American perspective to be as much of a barrier in reading Aitken's work. First, as the title states, he focused on Thatcher's personality and human traits something which we can all identify with and universally relate. Second, he consistently provided the background or summary of the events in question making it unnecessary to be grounded in UK current events to understand the context. Finally as an elected official I especially appreciated Aitken's view of Thatcher both as a fellow Conservative Party member and member of Parliament who knows first hand and expertly captures the pressures of elected office and its influence on one's actions and decisions. I also appreciated that he personally knew Prime Minister Thatcher to include dating the Thatchers' daughter Carol - a unique perspective that other authors cannot replicate.

Ok I admit it: I love Margaret Thatcher and always have. I am also an Anglophile and read anything readable about British power brokers like the Honorable Lady. Author Jonathan Aitkin writes well and has the advantage of having served with Lady Thatcher for years. His insight is astute and adds

a decidedly human touch to this biography of the Iron Lady that is unique and compelling. Buy it. My only negative is not about the book but about the way Brits seem to discard their greatest prime ministers like Churchill and Thatcher after these selfless public servants have guided their country though enormously difficult times. Sad. In the US we make even the most mediocre former presidents famously wealthy. Very sad.

Aitken paints a very descriptive, yet intriguing picture of Margaret Thatcher. He not only shows the strength and power of Margaret's personality, he also show the destructiveness of it as well. Aitken does not write one sided, instead he shows her human weakness and many flaws. I honestly did not want to finish the book, because of how well he portrayed her. He showed that Margaret was not only as the Iron Lady who struck fear into so many around the world but also as a fragile woman who could be hurt. This was one of the best biographies I have ever read, and I would recommend it. I have actually bought several copies for friends.

This book, by a Conservative MP, did a very good job of revealing Margaret Thatcher's personality, both on her qualities that led to her rise in Tory leadership during a time of great confusion and uncertainty in the U.K., as well as the hubris she was responsible for her downfall. Indeed, the latter truth made for sad reading, as the author documented Thatcher's fall at the hands of her Cabinet--a scenario that never should have developed if Thatcher had only paid better attention to back-room politics and basic human relations to those she led and gave responsibility to. Generally, this is an engaging and well-researched read, though it also draws on the author's personal experiences with Thatcher and many of the principals involved. My only complaint is the repetition of certain phrases like "chalk-and-cheese" or "hubris" that get repeated way more than necessary in this book.

Really enjoyed this book. I did have to stop reading and go educate myself on how British government is structured. I knew our (American) government was patterned after Britain, but was ignorant of the details. I found myself getting very lost, so I had to spend some time understanding the structure and nuances of British government before I could enjoy this book. This is an honest, sweeping, stunning portrayal of Thatcher and her life from childhood to death. It covers everything from the early childhood forces that shaped her, her constant fight to break into a man's world, her forceful personality, her political beliefs and many of the politicians who both aided and hindered her. It spares no punches so you see Mrs. Thatcher in both good and bad light. I would highly recommend this book.

This sympathetic account of Thatcher's life is successful in adding nuance to her polarizing legacy. That said, reviews of the book characterizing it as "readable" are speaking relatively. Thatcher was a complex person making complex decisions at a complex time, facing complex challenges and surrounded by complex people. Aitken successfully gestures at this complexity without ever becoming hopelessly mired in it, but the pace of the book is by no means swift, and at times his dedication to the "inside baseball" of conservative political intrigue will frustrate readers looking for a strong narrative style.

I knew very little about Margaret Thatcher before reading this book. Of course she was in the news, along with Reagan, for many years, but I had no personal impression of her and her time in office. She changed Britain and the world in several major ways, especially with privatization and as a friend of Gorbachev. She had a lot going for intellectually, but her personality was divisive. Good book, fair, admiring, but doesn't pull punches. Well written, flows.

Excellent insightful book. Mr Aitken makes it clear that this is not an Autobiography, but he still managers to give a fair and balanced view of what and how MS. Thatcher's policies affected England and the world, which in his view were largely positive. He paints a very good look of Thatcher's private and professional life. As avid reader of history and bios I highly recommend this book Dandieman

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