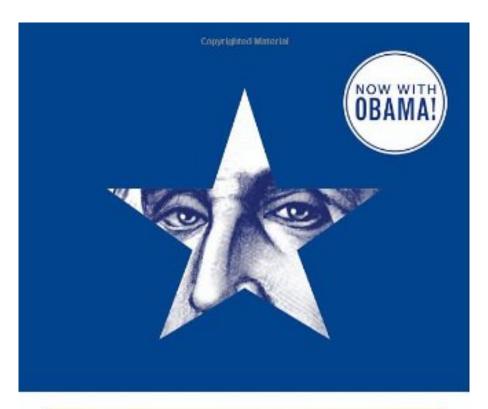


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WHAT YOUR TEACHERS NEVER TOLD YOU ABOUT THE MEN OF THE WHITE HOUSE

BY CORMAC O'BRIEN

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Cormac O'Brien is also the author of Secret Lives of the First Ladies and Secret Lives of the Civil War. He lives in New Jersey.

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- George Washington spent a whopping 7% of his salary on booze
- John Quincy Adams loved to skinny-dip in the Potomac River
- Gerald Ford once worked as a Cosmopolitan magazine cover model
- Warren G. Harding gambled with White House china when he ran low on cash
- Jimmy Carter reported a UFO sighting in Georgia
- And Richard Nixon . . . sheesh, don't get us started on Nixon!

With chapters on everyone from George Washington to Barack Obama, Secret Lives of the U.S. Presidents tackles all the tough questions that other history books are afraid to ask: How many of these guys were cheating on their wives? Are there really secret tunnels underneath the White House? And what was Nancy Reagan thinking when she appeared on Diff'rent Strokes? American history was never this much fun in school!

• Sales Rank: #148452 in Books

• Brand: O'Brien, Cormac/ Suteski, Monika (ILT)

Published on: 2009-01-01Released on: 2009-01-01Original language: English

• Number of items: 1

• Dimensions: 8.00" h x .80" w x 5.20" l, .85 pounds

• Binding: Paperback

• 296 pages

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Most helpful customer reviews

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

One of the best of many. Great light analysis, fun anecdotes, quality illustrations. Must have for historical trivia buffs.

By Jeff & Wendy S

4.5 stars.

This is, seriously, the 4th book like this I've read in the last year. They were all good, and interesting, but I think I may rate this one the best of the lot. The always-great Uncle John's series comes in second with its book on the presidency.

They are all light, easy reading, great for reading in short spurts. Full of anecdotes and interesting facts about the presidents (and a few related side-topics, like the White House).

I think this one stands out in a couple of ways: First it has wonderful (gray scale) illustrations for every president. The artists has done a great job capturing a light-hearted view of these serious guys. Second - this author gives a 1-3 page overview of each president's presidency before jumping into the lighter anecdotal stories. He has obviously done his research and is very good at providing these well-structured, concise, analytical overviews. This is step above the other similar books. I especially liked his analysis of President Obama and his, as of yesterday, successor. Very interesting and insightful.

I don't know if there was much I learned from the anecdotes that weren't in the other books, but it was both educational and entertaining to read. I'd easily recommend this one if you are interested in such things. I'd also recommend the Uncle John's book which probably has a bit more total content, covers a bit broader range of topics, but stops at 'W', and does not have the same level of individual analysis as this one, nor any illustrations.

Some folks may be mad at me for saying it, but this is really minor,: each chapter starts with a chart of common statistics about the president covered in that chapter. Why it presents their astrological sign is beyond me, it seems out of place with the rest of the content of the book.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Presidents Under the Microscope

By Old Sailor

This light hearted and amusing book gives us a lot of previously unknown details about the Presidents, some of it quite surprising. Did you know that outdoorsman Theodore Roosevelt would eat 12 eggs for breakfast, washed down with huge mugs of coffee, or that another President would retire with a bowl of rum punch beside the bed?

Author Cormac O'Brien is very fair in his assessments though, pointing out that although Lyndon Johnson was very coarse and was damaged by the Vietnam war, he is now seen as having done more for Civil Rights than other Presidents. And although Richard Nixon resigned in disgrace, his visit to and recognition of China laid the groundwork for today's good relations between the two countries.

The vital statistics of all the Presidents are interesting. Many have been tall men, both Washington and Jefferson being 6'2" and Lincoln 6'4" and Lyndon Johnson 6'3". But President Madison, at only 5'4" was the shortest of all! The very largest President was William H. Taft who weighed in at 325 lbs and got stuck in the White House bathtub!

But Taft was probably the most distinguished public servant of any President. Before his election he was Solicitor General of the United States, then Governor General of the Phillipines. After his one term as President he was a law professor at Yale University and then in 1921 came his crowning achievement, his appointment as Chief Justice of the United States!

The most prolific President was John Tyler, who in two marriages fathered 15 children, the last being when he was 70. John Tyler was born in 1790, and his youngest daughter, born 1860, was still alive in 1948 when Truman was President!

After his Presidency, Millard Fillmore visited Great Britain and met Queen Victoria, who later said "He is the handsomest man I ever met!" We also learn that 15 Presidents have been Freemasons, the last being Gerald Ford. And that President Hayes (1877-81) wife Lucy banned alcohol from the White House. She was

known as 'Lemonade Lucy'

The book contans amusing cartoons of each President; John Kennedy being surrounded by young women!

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

A useful guide in the personal lives of our presidents, will help you getting to know the lesser known ones. By raul a armstrong

This book gives insight into the personal lives and the personalities of the selected few who have been elected president of our nation. It contributes very little to the information available in the classic biographies of the better known presidents, but is very valuable uncovering information of the lesser known presidents. However, it lacks depth in some cases, where the information given is rather superficial. Overall, I enjoyed it and will recommend it to those interested in the history of our nation as a valuable addition to thier personal libraries. Raul A. Armstrong, MD

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