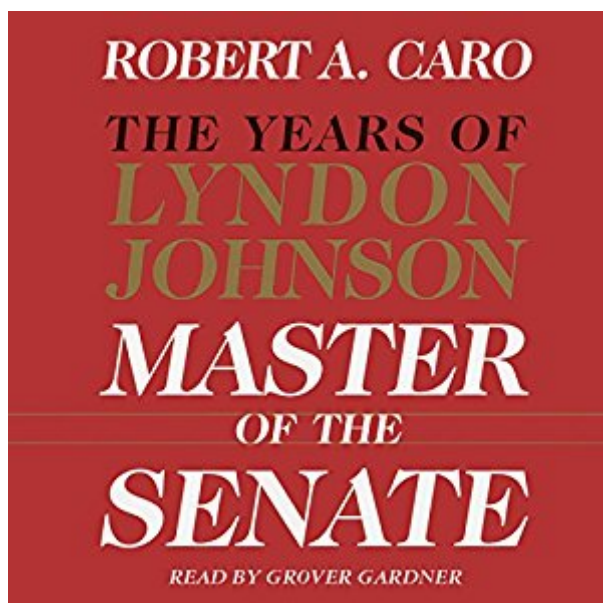


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Master Of The Senate - The Years Of Lyndon Johnson, Volume III (Part 1 Of A 3-Part Recording)



Synopsis

Book Three of Robert A. Caro's monumental work, *The Years of Lyndon Johnson*—the most admired and riveting political biography of our era—which began with the best-selling and prizewinning *The Path to Power* and *Means of Ascent*. *Master of the Senate* carries Lyndon Johnson's story through one of its most remarkable periods: his twelve years, from 1949 to 1960, in the United States Senate. At the heart of the book is its unprecedented revelation of how legislative power works in America, how the Senate works, and how Johnson, in his ascent to the presidency, mastered the Senate as no political leader before him had ever done. It was during these years that all Johnson's experience—from his Texas Hill Country boyhood to his passionate representation in Congress of his hardscrabble constituents to his tireless construction of a political machine—came to fruition. Caro introduces the story with a dramatic account of the Senate itself: how Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, and John C. Calhoun had made it the center of governmental energy, the forum in which the great issues of the country were thrashed out. And how, by the time Johnson arrived, it had dwindled into a body that merely responded to executive initiatives, all but impervious to the forces of change. Caro anatomizes the genius for political strategy and tactics by which, in an institution that had made the seniority system all-powerful for a century and more, Johnson became Majority Leader after only a single term—the youngest and greatest Senate Leader in our history; how he manipulated the Senate's hallowed rules and customs and the weaknesses and strengths of his colleagues to change the "unchangeable" Senate from a loose confederation of sovereign senators to a whirring legislative machine under his own iron-fisted control. Caro demonstrates how Johnson's political genius enabled him to reconcile the unreconcilable: to retain the support of the southerners who controlled the Senate while earning the trust—or at least the cooperation—of the liberals, led by Paul Douglas and Hubert Humphrey, without whom he could not achieve his goal of winning the presidency. He shows the dark side of Johnson's ambition: how he proved his loyalty to the great oil barons who had financed his rise to power by ruthlessly destroying the career of the New Dealer who was in charge of regulating them, Federal Power Commission Chairman Leland Olds. And we watch him achieve the impossible: convincing southerners that although he was firmly in their camp as the anointed successor to their leader, Richard Russell, it was essential that they allow him to make some progress toward civil rights. In a breathtaking tour de force, Caro details Johnson's amazing triumph in maneuvering to passage the first civil rights legislation since 1875. *Master of the Senate* is told with an abundance of rich detail that could only have come from Caro's peerless research—years immersed in the worlds of Johnson and the United States Senate, examining

thousands of documents and talking to hundreds of people, from pages and cloakroom clerks to senators and administrative aides. The result is both a galvanizing portrait of the man himself "the titan of Capitol Hill, volcanic, mesmerizing" and a definitive and revelatory study of the workings of personal and legislative power. It is a work that displays all the acuteness of understanding and narrative brilliance that led the New York Times to call Caro's *The Path to Power* a monumental political saga . . . powerful and stirring. •From the Hardcover edition. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 18 hours and 41 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Books on Tape

Audible.com Release Date: August 1, 2005

Language: English

ASIN: B000ANSO1Y

Best Sellers Rank: #119 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical & Political Figures #148 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > United States > US Presidents #150 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > History > United States & Canada

Customer Reviews

Readers who found themselves devouring David McCullough's superb biography of John Adams and Stephen Ambrose's "Undaunted Courage" may think it's a new phenomenon for works of history and biography to be as compellingly written as a novel by John Grisham or Stephen King. But Robert Caro set the standard years with his enormous biography of New York City mogul Robert Moses (which appeared in the early 1970s) and with the first volume of his monumental biography of Lyndon Johnson (which appeared in 1982). Caro knows how to tell a story like no one else. Like its two predecessors, "Master of the Senate" will keep you up long after you know you should turn off the lights and go to sleep. This is not merely lively writing; it is meticulously researched political and social history, and it is the story of a man who was larger than life, in the full sense of that cliched term. During his lifetime, no one, even his closest colleagues and family members, could have known or understood half as much about Lyndon Johnson as Robert Caro has learned in his nearly thirty years of researching Johnson's life and times. Every colorful detail recounted by Caro

fascinates, sometimes morbidly, for Johnson's many character defects tended to overshadow his real accomplishments and his place in 20th century American history. Caro does not stint on either character defects or accomplishments. I waited restlessly for ten years for this volume, wondering when -- and if -- it would appear, wondering whether Caro would have the health and strength to research and write it. His life of Johnson was originally to have been three volumes; now a fourth will be needed.

Caro's work is amazing - again. Just as with the first two volumes of the life of Lyndon Johnson, *Master of the Senate* is a page turning epic, this time focusing on the United States Senate in the 1950s. Caro's description of Johnson's meteoric rise demonstrates the subject's brilliance in, first the attainment, and then the use, of power. One also comes away with the the unavoidable impression that this use of power was, primarily, for personal purposes. Johnson is not a likeable character in any of the author's three volumes. Liar, cheater, overly sensitive, obsessed, cold, unfeeling, mean-spirited (read how he treats Lady Bird), all of these descriptions are appropriate. You might think that Caro does not like his subject and is tainted in his analysis. However, when you consider the amount of work and research that went into this offering, as well as the other volumes, it is hard to challenge the author's motivation or analysis. The three volumes taken together, to my mind, constitute the most thoroughly researched work on any political figure in American political history. Do not be put off by the massiveness of the work. Unless you have a pretty open schedule it will take you sometime to get through the more than one thousand pages, but it is thoroughly enjoyable from cover to cover. The writing is as good as the research. And it is not just Johnson. Caro's mini-biography of Senator Russell of Georgia, which continues throughout the pages, is brilliant. His history of the Senate and its great figures, including Clay, Calhoun and Webster, which puts Johnson's actions into context, might be the single best part of the book (don't skip over it). There is so much included in *Master of the Senate*, all of it worthwhile.

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