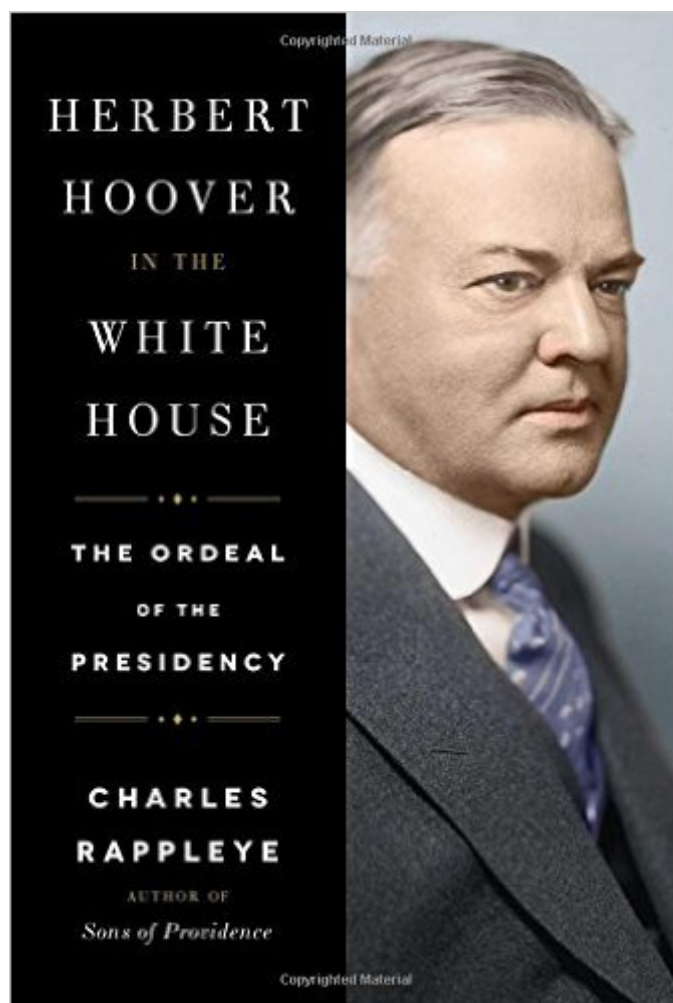


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Herbert Hoover In The White House: The Ordeal Of The Presidency



Synopsis

A deft, filled-out portrait of the thirty-first president...by far the best, most readable study of Hoover's presidency to date. Publishers Weekly Rappleye's surprising portrait of a Depression-era president Herbert Hoover reveals a very different figure than the usual Hoover, engaged and active but loathe to experiment and conscious of his inability to convey hope to the country. Herbert Clark Hoover was the thirty-first President of the United States. He served one term, from 1929 to 1933. Often considered placid, passive, unsympathetic, and even paralyzed by national events, Hoover faced an uphill battle in the face of the Great Depression. Many historians dismiss him as merely ineffective. But in *Herbert Hoover in the White House*, Charles Rappleye draws on rare and intimate sources—memoirs and diaries and thousands of documents kept by members of his cabinet and close advisors—to reveal a very different figure than the one often portrayed. The real Hoover, argues Rappleye, just lacked the tools of leadership. The Hoover presented here will come as a surprise to both his longtime defenders and his many critics. In public Hoover was shy and retiring, but in private he is revealed as a man of passion and sometimes of fury, a man who intrigued against his enemies while fulminating over plots against him. Rappleye describes him as more sophisticated and more active in economic policy than is often acknowledged. We see Hoover watching a sunny (and he thought ignorant) FDR on the horizon. FDR did not cure the depression, but he experimented with steps that relieved it. Most importantly he broke the mood of doom almost immediately. The Hoover we see here—bright, well meaning, energetic—lacked the single critical element to succeed as president. He had a first-class mind and a second-class temperament. *Herbert Hoover in the White House* is an object lesson in the most, perhaps only, talent needed to be a successful president—the temperament of leadership.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A doorstopper of a book on Herbert Hoover's presidency -- arguably four of the worst years in U.S. history --- has just arrived, and it will be applauded by those interested in the parallels between those times and our own recent recession. Interestingly, comparisons between partisan infighting and mudslinging might also be made. But what will intrigue those who thought they knew what Hoover was like is how complex a man he really was, and how often he got close to a revolutionary solution to economic ills, only to second guess himself or those around him. It's always a problem for a biographer coming to terms with how he or she feels about the subject at hand: Growing disdain is obviously worse than sustained admiration, but usually there's a mixture of both. Charles Rappleye, author of three previous biographies, veers between the two, with exasperation toward Hoover being most frequent. Somewhere in the last half of the book, as 1931 rolled around with no improvement in the economy, he vents: "none of Hoover's industry and none of his spirit of policy initiative came across to the public. The president's penchant for secrecy, his spite for the press, and his overriding fear that disclosure of the difficulties facing the nation would only make things worse, meant the Hoover White House operated as the political equivalent of a black hole, a collapsed star that allowed no sound or light to escape its gated premises." Hoover was something of a hero when first elected to the presidency. Known as "The Great Humanitarian" because of his work on the Wartime Food Administration and the American Relief Administration in World War I, he also organized a massive relief effort for victims of the Mississippi Flood of 1927.

Herbert Hoover was a complex man. He was a man of great accomplishment, a great humanitarian and at times a capable administrator. He was also someone who was at sea in the give-and-take world of politics, reluctant to compromise, uncomfortable in many social and public settings, a stilted orator, thin-skinned and blind to political reality. In this terrific work, author Charles Rappleye does an outstanding job of capturing and presenting the complexities of character of this very private and enigmatic president, while at the same time walking the reader through the experiences of the great depression as it unfolded on Hoover's watch. As the title of the book suggests, this is mainly a

chronicle of Hoover's presidency, though his antecedents and post-presidency are both touched on. Rappleye draws from a variety of interesting sources, including the diaries of a number of Hoover contemporaries and subordinates, as well as letters from Hoover and his wife Lou to their children. He gives the reader a fascinating perspective of what it must have been like in the White House for Hoover and his inner circle as he began and continued his presidency besieged with an unrelenting and incessant series of financial bad news, commencing with a stock market bubble that Hoover recognizes, but whose significance he is unable to get others to appreciate until it is too late. This is followed by the great stock market crash of 1929, the politically sensitive issue of European reparation loans, bank collapses and closings at home and in Europe, rampant unemployment, and falling crop and commodity prices so low that they make production a losing proposition. This book will likely be of special interest to those with a fascination for economics and with an interest into how the great depression came to be.

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