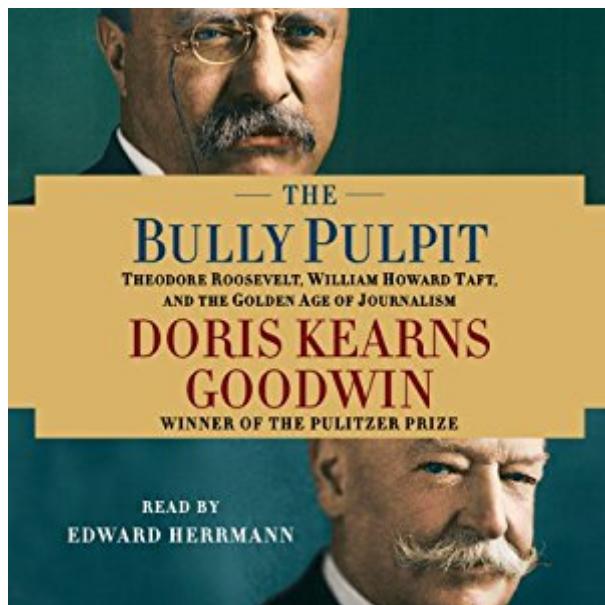


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# The Bully Pulpit: Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, And The Golden Age Of Journalism



## Synopsis

Audie Award, History/Biography, 2015 After Presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln, Doris Kearns Goodwin wields her magic on another larger-than-life president, and another momentous and raucous American time period as she brings Theodore Roosevelt, the muckraking journalists, and the Progressive Era to life. As she focused on the relationships between Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt in *No Ordinary Time*, and on Lincoln and his team in *Team of Rivals*, Goodwin describes the broken friendship between Teddy Roosevelt and his chosen successor, William Howard Taft. With the help of the "muckraking" press - including legendary journalists Ida Tarbell, Lincoln Steffens, William Allen White, and editor Sam McClure - Roosevelt had wielded the Bully Pulpit to challenge and triumph over abusive monopolies, political bosses, and corrupting money brokers. Roosevelt led a revolution that he bequeathed to Taft only to see it compromised as Taft surrendered to money men and big business. The rupture between the two led Roosevelt to run against Taft for president, an ultimately futile race that resulted in the election of Democrat Woodrow Wilson and the diminishment of Theodore Roosevelt's progressive wing of the Republican Party. Like Goodwin's chronicles of the Civil War and the Great Depression, *The Bully Pulpit* describes a time in our history that enlightened and changed the country, ushered in the modern age, and produced some unforgettable men and women.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

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: \* although it wasn't an easy read, it was a worthwhile read and we were all glad to have read it\* most liked Taft more than Roosevelt - we were dismayed by Roosevelt's actions over Taft's presidency\* both had strong wives\* loved the role of the press\* author is great at conveying scenes - you feel you are there\* we were blessed as a nation to have both men serve in office\* Teddy was more visionary, Taft better at executing perhaps\* 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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