



All Too Human

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All Too Human is a new-generation political memoir, written from the refreshing perspective of one who got his hands on the levers of awesome power at an early age. At thirty, the author was at Bill Clinton's side during the presidential campaign of 1992, & for the next five years he was rarely more than a step away from the president & his other advisers at every important moment of the first term. What Liar's Poker did to Wall Street, this book will do to politics. It is an irreverent & intimate portrait of how the nation's weighty business is conducted by people whose egos & idiosyncrasies are no sturdier than anyone else's. Including sharp portraits of the Clintons, Al Gore, Dick Morris, Colin Powell, & scores of others, as well as candid & revelatory accounts of the famous debacles & triumphs of an administration that constantly went over the top, All Too Human is, like its author, a brilliant combination of pragmatic insight & idealism. It is destined to be the most important & enduring book to come out of the Clinton administration.

All Too Human Details

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From Reader Review All Too Human for online ebook

Amy Hillis says

I read this while pregnant with Abby (so 10+ years ago) and came across it again recently. I enjoyed this book immensely. It is well written, cleanly told, and you get such a beautiful insider's perspective on life in DC and how it can unravel a man and his soul. He paints his demise from a healthy idealist to a jaded, neurotic, depressed political aide so well, it reads like a novel.

To me, this is a political must-read for anyone who lived through and studied the Clinton-era. (Wait - with Hil as SOS - are we still in a Clinton-era? I'm so confused.)

Shawna says

I was interested in learning about Clinton, as I was in high school when he first became President. At the time, I didn't really pay much attention to him, or his office.

This was an interesting perspective because it's written by a man on the inside. It actually confirmed much of what I believed about the Presidency: candidates can make many promises, but once in office, newfound knowledge can sometimes make it hard to follow through. In addition, this book is a good balance of the man and the Office, and how the two intermingle.

Like many history books, this one was a little dry. It took me almost six weeks to finish. But, I came away with a greater understanding of politics, politicians, and those who work for them. My conclusion is that I would not do well in that arena, so it's a good thing I changed my major from PolySci after the first semester of college.

Kurt says

I was born in 1980, so I was a little too young to engage with the politics of the first Clinton administration. This book, though, by a talented communicator who blends a little Hollywood celebrity with some academic analyses of issues and campaign tactics, makes me feel like I have caught up on what I missed during my junior high years. Stephanopoulos gives us a candid look at his time on the campaign trail and in the White House, written after President Clinton's impeachment but before the decision about his removal, and he seems to treat his companions fairly. James Carville, Paul Begala, and Rahm Emanuel are generally portrayed positively, and although the ultimate picture of Hillary Clinton is a basically negative one (especially when Stephanopoulos keeps making reference to her repeated accusations of his disloyalty), it is not without positive aspects. Dick Morris is clearly the villain of the book, with the author stating in no uncertain terms that he "hated" the man. The picture of President Clinton, though, is a fascinating one, as the author never loses his faith in the President's potential and his political strengths, even as he steadily loses confidence in his character. I highly recommend this to any reader who feels like he or she missed the inside story on President Clinton's first term.

Joanie says

Apparently I bought this book almost 18 years ago, then forgot I had it. During some recent cleaning, I found it and decided to read it. I must admit up front, I LOVE George Stephanopoulos, much to the chagrin of my right-wing husband who cannot abide him. That said, I enjoyed the inside look at the first Bill Clinton Presidential campaign and the story of George's experience of working in the White House. While I found many of the stories intriguing, some of the writing jumped around so much, that I often had to go back and re-read passages to make sure I was following details properly. Learning more about wacky people like Dick Morris was mind-boggling, but I was sometimes flummoxed by the appearance of other hangers-on in the book. Nevertheless, and I am glad I read it, and while he readily admitted many of his own flaws and insecurities, I came away from reading it liking George even more!

Kim says

I would have given this 3 1/2 stars if that had been an option. For a conservative republican like myself, this might seem like a weird book choice, but I found it to be an interesting view of what went on in the Clinton White House. It didn't make me like the Clintons any more or less, but it helped give me a better understanding of who they are. I found Stephanopoulos surprisingly honest about his faults which I appreciated. Had the whole book been about how wonderful he was while working in the White House I probably wouldn't have believed what he wrote. Because he was able to point out his mistakes and make honest assessments of his shortcomings I was able to trust when he did write about the positive things he did. I think when reading material like this you always have to keep in mind that this is the way one person viewed things, it doesn't mean that's exactly how it happened, it's just how they saw it happen and their take on it. Reading this did re-affirm for me that politics is a dirty business.

Samarth Gupta says

“Years later, that image sticks with me - not as a counsel of despair or an excuse for cynicism, but as a reminder to be humble about the promise of politics and the potential of government. Because I believe in original sin, because I know that I’m capable of craving a cold beer in a village of starving kids, because I understand that selfishness views for space in our hearts with compassion, I believe we need government - a government that forces us to care for the common good when we don’t feel like it, a government that helps us channel our better instincts and checks our bad ones. But I also believe in containing government and tempering the claims make for it.” (20)

“Camus spoke to me that night in a passage eI had carried in a notebook for years: ‘Perhaps we cannot prevent this world from being a world in which children are tortured. But we can reduce the number of tortured children. And if you don’t help us, who else in the world can help us do this?’” (105)

“‘We’re going through Stockman’s revenge,’ he said at a September budget meeting, referring to Reagan’s budget director David Stockman’s insight that even if supply-side economics didn’t balance the budget, the deficits created by their tax cuts would create persistent resistance to all government spending.” (387)

Kimberly Boenig says

Let me explain: I will admit that I did not finish this book. While I adore Stephanopoulos, I couldn't help but be troubled by the fact that his entire team was well aware of his affairs and did nothing. I get that they wanted to win, but the idea that Clinton was using his power to seduce women for years was honestly sickening to me. Up until that, I did enjoy Stephanopoulos's candid writing. Unfortunately, with today's climate surrounding the #MeToo movement, I just couldn't get through it.

Chunyang Ding says

I grew up on a steady diet of ABC, NPR, and PBS. I would remember watching Charles Gibson on World News and Jim Lehrer on NewsHour right afterwards. And then every now and then, I would see this funny guy with a long last name show up and make commentary on W.'s white house.

George Stephanopoulos really has an amazing work ethic, and is so incredibly dedicated in everything he does. Growing up in the 2000s, I was never truly familiar with the Clinton administration and the multiple scandals, victories, and defeats of that era. The writing in this book is lucid and tight, with just enough starpower and name-dropping to make you feel like a beltway insider. I was particularly surprised by the back and forth between the press and the white house.

Especially in today's age, it's been boggling to me where the white house leaks typically come from. But reading through this memoir, and especially seeing Stephanopoulos and his relationship with Dick Morris, you get a better sense for where these feuds can end up going.

Really excellent read; highly recommend.

Craig says

****Spoiler Alert**

"All Too Human" by George Stephanopoulos serves as a young yet powerful political consultant's experience inside the presidential administration of former United States President Bill Clinton. The presentation is largely early presidential career biography with firsthand storytelling for Stephanopoulos in his early 30's, from transition to the 1992 campaign for president through much of Clinton's first of two terms as United States President in 1996. This book gives insight into much of Stephanopoulos' role within the campaign, the first term administration, and offers the political junkie a lens through which to see a layperson's view into the day-to-day of becoming, then serving, inside a presidential administration.

George Stephanopoulos spends much of "All Too Human" apologizing for his actions in serving idealism and ambition as a political aide to the most powerful person in the world. He ends up confessing to an endless compromise of pragmatic decisions that wound up undercutting the good fight for an agenda that he, Stephanopolous wanted for the administration of 42nd President of the United States, Bill Clinton.

Much of my motivation for reading the book, which I started last fall when I thought that Clinton would wind up in the White House again as First Gentleman, was to reacquaint myself with the dynamic of both

Bill Clinton and former U.S. Senator and U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Getting to know them more, through the eyes of somebody near the inside for the better part of five years, seemed like a way to gain insight.

Truth be told, I struggled through much of the second part of the book because I lived so much of the Bill Clinton presidential narrative the first time around. The nature of the advice and council that Stephanopoulos offered never really is addressed in the book, though largely I think his role was to be a voice in the room, understand the moods of the president and his wife while serving as a buffer for them, and to sometimes help as speechwriter.

It was interesting to see how Stephanopoulos was played a bit, within the evaluation of the Clintons and others, for bad council that Stephanopoulos had given in offering background for Bob Woodward's book *The Agenda*. It was interesting to see how Stephanopoulos butted heads with Dick Morris, who championed much of the re-election campaign for Bill Clinton's second presidential term by moving the president from many Democratic Party positions in America towards, at the time, more Republican Party positions.

I sense from Stephanopoulos own account that he never came to grips with accepting, if even understanding, much of why the Clintons needed Morris for getting a second term. I think this was evidence that fed the narrative feeling of the tale; the tale of of George Stephanopoulos losing some degree of influence and idealism and suffering over the loss of the moral platform that he felt he shared with former president Bill Clinton.

Overall, the presentation was clearly and forthrightly told. While difficult to stay with at times, I found myself entertained. My rating for the book is 3-stars out of 5 stars.

Heidi Thorsen says

I might have found this more interesting had I read it closer to the publication date. Now, so many decades removed from the action described, I'd read about events with an, "oh yeah, I kind of recall reading something about that in the news" thought instead of a more enlightened reaction.

Nevertheless, I thought this book was interesting because of the young age at which Stephanopoulos was influential within the White House. So many memoirs are written by retired men reviewing their career during their middle age, while this was a middle-aged man reviewing his work as a young man. The perspective is not one I'd read before, and can recommend the book for anyone interested in a behind-the-scenes look at politics for that reason alone.

Jody says

My biggest complaint with the book is that I also purchased the audiobook which turned out to be an abridged version. I was interesting to hear George Stephanopoulos read his own memoir. With the detail cut out, some of what was left didn't flow well, but overall it was a good book.

Vivek says

George Stephanopoulos was an essential part of Bill Clinton's first presidential campaign, and of his white house staff during the first term. In this book, Stephanopoulos recounts what it was like being such a crucial adviser and his experiences working for the Clintons. There is also a bit in the beginning about about how George got into politics in the first place.

I found this book fascinating for the first half, and then it seemed to drag a little bit. But this reflects his experience - the excitement of the campaign and the first couple of months in the white house before it became a daily grind. There are a lot of interesting insights into what its like serving in a such a high level staff position to the President, as well as into just how Clinton ran his White House - far from perfectly. By the end, you get a good idea of what it must have been like to be in Stephanopoulous' shoes, and how much the job that he has held entails and must take out of you. The book is also very well written - the author has a way with words.

Anyone who is a fan of the TV-series "The West Wing" will get a special kick out of this book, as you see how Sorkin (the screenwriter) obviously based many of the happenings in his episodes on what really happened (indeed, he admitted that he based Rob Lowe's character Sam Seaborn on Stephanopoulos, and that he used stories he found in this book).

Dean Cummings says

After reading George Stephanopoulos' "All Too Human" I am certain that the five years he spent as Chief Adviser to Bill Clinton were the equivalent of riding on the tail of a speeding comet as it streaked across the political skies.

As I read, I was amazed how Stephanopoulos, the accomplished "Spin Doctor" was capable of telling a gritty, authentic and genuine feeling story. Every chapter was filled with well described "scenes" from the Clinton presidency.

A very well written biography that I'm certain will stand the test of time.

Jim B says

As the country went through the Clinton years, I mainly got my slant from Republican sources. It was interesting to compare events I remember as being evidence of the evil of the Clintons with the Stephanopoulos' close up view that things were very dysfunctional. He blames Hillary's lawyer-honed aggressive instincts for Bill Clinton's worst political missteps. Stephanopoulos describes his evolution from blind trust to disappointment and anger and finally resignation to Clinton's flaws and admiratin for his achievements.

????? ??? ??? says

There was so much to enjoy in this - I flew through it. Descriptions of Bill and Hillary's relationship were real and fascinating and I loved how Stephanopoulos freely acknowledged the effect of his work on his mental health. This was such a fascinating look into the interplay between Clinton's personal problems and his political goals - particularly interesting to read about Dick Morris's frightening influence over Clinton. I couldn't get through Clinton's autobiography of his time as President- it was too meandering and each chapter told about a trillion stories. Stephanopoulos' book is how Clinton's should have been written. It gives sufficient detail about legislative fights and scandals borne by the Clinton administration, but doesn't lose you in a vortex along the way. I loved the last line too: if only this good President had been a better man. Perfect summary.
