



The Letters of John F. Kennedy

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John Fitzgerald Kennedy led his nation for little more than a thousand days, yet his presidency is intensely remembered, not merely as a byproduct of his tragic fate. Kennedy steered the nation away from the brink of nuclear war, initiated the first nuclear test ban treaty, created the Peace Corps, and launched America on its mission to the moon and beyond. JFK inspired a nation, particularly the massive generation of baby boomers, injecting hope and revitalizing faith in the American project.

2013 will mark the fiftieth anniversary of Kennedy's untimely death, a milestone to be marked by an avalanche of new books on his life and importance. Martin Sandler's *The Letters of John F. Kennedy* will stand out among them, as the only book that draws on letters from and to Kennedy, as collected at the Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum. Drawn from more than two million letters on file at the library--many never before published--this project presents readers with a portrait of both Kennedy the politician and Kennedy the man, as well as the times he lived in.

Letters to and from the likes of Martin Luther King Jr, Clare Booth Luce, Pearl Buck, John Wayne, Albert Schweitzer, Linus Pauling, Willy Brandt, Eleanor Roosevelt, Nikita Khrushchev, Harry Truman, Herbert Hoover, a young John Kerry, and Ngo Dinh Diem are complemented by letters from ordinary citizens, schoolchildren, and concerned Americans. Each letter will be accompanied by lively and informative contextualization. Facsimiles of many letters will appear, along with photographs and other visual ephemera from the Kennedy Library and Museum.

The Letters of John F. Kennedy Details

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Author : Martin W. Sandler (Editor)

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From Reader Review The Letters of John F. Kennedy for online ebook

Heather says

For me, reading letters is one of the most interesting ways to learn about history. Martin W. Sandler does a fantastic job of organizing JFK's letters in a way that makes sense, with summaries at the beginning of each section to put them all in context. I think this section of his summary of the last chapter sums it up well:

"Some fifty years after he (Kennedy) envisioned it, the Peace Corps can boast of having had more than 210,000 volunteers working in 139 countries, and it is still growing. Although he did not live to see an American step on the moon, it was his vision and determination that led to the stars. By attaining the historic Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, he took the first steps toward steering the world away from self-destruction. Ultimately, he initiated the most meaningful civil rights legislation in the nation's history. And he helped elevated the arts to a position they had never held in America.

For a president who served little more than three years, for a man with considerable physical and moral chinks in his armor, it is an enormous achievement."

Samantha (AK) says

It is with disappointment that I must say the parts of this book which I liked best are those to which Mr. Sandler can lay no claim--the letters themselves.

Make no mistake, for a student of history, familiar with the times and circumstances, this collection of letters, consolidated as they are, is a fine resource. As with all letters, they breath life into the names of the past, rounding historical figures into real people, and giving insight into the struggles and emotions of the writers and their times.

This collection, however, is chronologically disjointed, and grouped only loosely by topic. Several times I found myself confirming the dates of letters relative to each other, so that I could accurately track the sequence of events. In the same vein, some letters are abbreviated (an editorial choice of presentation that I accept only grudgingly). More reprehensibly, only half of the Cuban Missile Crisis letters are present, the others loosely alluded to in the contextual notes, but not presented to the reader, a choice that I simply cannot fathom.

So, 2/5 seems about right. The letters make for good reading, if you know the times, but this is neither a complete collection nor an unbiased biography. Your Mileage May Vary.

Christine says

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Letters to and from President Kennedy are published in book form and edited by Martin W Sandler to mark fifty years since the assassination of 1963. And a selection, abridged in five episodes by Penny Leicester,

reveal the drama and tensions to do with American foreign policy. Other letters reveal Kennedy's wit and warmth when contacting friends and members of the public.

1. During WW2 young Kennedy was in touch with his brother Joe and the lo

Rachel says

This book makes the reader appreciate the nearly obsolete art of letter-writing. I say nearly because I do know of only one person who still writes letters with similar tone and wording to the ones written by JFK. I found this book extremely informative and interesting. I wouldn't recommend it as your first book if you are wanting to learn about JFK because a pretty thorough background on the events covered in the book is very helpful while reading. For people with a strong knowledge of the JFK era, I think you would find that this book gives you a different, more personal insight into the president than other books. The letters show, rather than tell who JFK was as a leader.

Jo Jackson says

JFK had some amazing relationships with a broad range of leaders across the world. He also received endless correspondence from the general public, of which many of these letters he personally responded did to. Back in his life, before the introduction of technology to an extensive degree in my life, he treated letter writing with a respect that is to be admired. How grateful anyone would have been to receive correspondence from a man of his stature and responsibility.

Mark Dawes says

Sandler's volume of Kennedy letters is diverse and very broad including JFK's own writings as well as those of family and all manner of colleagues. It comes off as a bit of a defense of the "Kennedy as great man" theory and consequently likely leaves blank some aspects of his more controversial exchanges - civil rights come to mind as well as exchanges with some foreign leaders.

As a piece of writing it is a bit scattered and rangy tottering from one topic to another without a clear or complete line of thought in many places. That communicates poorly particularly as the reader is left wanting more completion in subjects than the author provides.

I was attracted to this book after finding an excerpt of a letter it includes from Jacqueline Kennedy to Nikita Khrushchev immediately after JFK's assassination in 1963. In it she affirms that LBJ will continue to pursue the same line of foreign relations and private communication with Khrushchev as JFK had founded. I found this very enlightening that a First Lady would take a moment so quickly out of her mourning period to establish a foundational expectation with a foreign leader as influential as Khrushchev. It's very interesting to me who and how the mechanics of state work behind the scenes. For that capture alone this becomes an important book.

There are of course many other important letters to other leaders like Churchill and Eleanor Roosevelt that establish the kind of leader JFK was as well as his priorities and approaches, but this puts us back on the "great-man" platform and I think that's been amply established. I'm now interested in more of the former -

understanding how JFK envisioned a president should engage globally to effect the outcome of events.

Jacquelin Devlin says

Excellent. This book of selected letters provides behind-the-scenes insight into some of the most significant events in our country's history, as well as the multiple facets of the man.

Without omitting Kennedy's faults, Sandler includes letters and context notes that add to the stature of this remarkable president. The extremity of Kennedy's health problems, unknown to the public at the time, and his determination to overcome them, and his secret personal correspondence with Khrushchev and its impact on the Cuban Missile Crises are two notable instances. His compassion is clearly evident from his many letters of condolence to his reassurance to a young girl during the Cold War that Santa was in no danger of being bombed by the Russians at the North Pole. "I talked with him yesterday and he is fine," he wrote.

In spite of the formality of most letters, this is a quick read, easily digested, but highly informative collection.

Bettie? says

[Bettie's Books (hide spoiler)]

Laura says

From BBC Radio 4 - Book of the week:

JFK's early letters, including his correspondence with his brother Joe during the Second World War when both were in combat. Read by Colin Stinton.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/radio/play/b03g...>

False says

Letters from childhood on. The ones I found most interesting is when Eleanor Roosevelt repeated what she had heard (from multiple sources) that Kennedy's father was buying him the Presidency and would pay anything to have his son win. There was a back and forth on this, and she very cleverly sidestepped giving him what he wanted..a complete reversal of her position. No love letters between JFK and Jackie, but letters from his Danish journalist lover (who was a journalist) and she wrote him some beautiful letters he should have been proud of, and I believe she truly loved him (despite being married and accused of being a German spy (by Hoover.)

Allysha Darwin says

A glimpse into not just Kennedy's presidency, but his whole life. This book dealt with almost every subject imaginable, from trivial matters to war.

Jojo says

Some were interesting to me but not all, hence the OK rating.

Juliana Rose says

While the title of this book makes you think it would include only letters from Kennedy, I was pleasantly surprised with the variety of people and subjects it included. There were letters from Kennedy and to Kennedy, from everyone to schoolchildren to Krushchev. They encompassed fairly trivial matters to nuclear war, which I think made the collection even better.

This book is a glimpse into the presidency of JFK. I dare anyone not to admire him after reading this book.

Robert says

I can't remember the last time I've received a handwritten letter, never mind the last time that I wrote one. It makes me wonder if one day I'll be reading a book called "The E-Mails of Barack H. Obama" but I digress.

The Letters of John F. Kennedy by Martin W. Sandler is an interesting book that contains a variety of letters that President Kennedy wrote and received throughout his life. The individuals from whom he receive letters from include former Presidents, former rivals, Heads of State, Civil Rights Leaders, children, and numerous others. This book gives a different look at Kennedy, giving more of a first-hand account throughout letters with accompanying context at the start of each chapter and each letter. The letters in this book humanize Kennedy, showing him being humorous and empathic.

Despite his flaws, it is readily apparent that the author likes Kennedy but that's not a bad thing. Sandler does a good job of giving enough context around the series of letters involving JFK's Presidential Run, Foreign Policy, and Civil Rights without giving an overabundance of information. It certainly helps that Kennedy was a man who could immerse himself in many circles, allowing the reader to see letters from individuals ranging from Harpo Marx to Martin Luther King Jr. to Nikita Krushchev and others. It also makes for a far more interesting book.

Overall, fans of Kennedy and history alike will get something interesting out of this book. At the very least, I was interested in the letters between Kennedy and former Presidents.

Amy Kolczak says

This book was excellent in its simplicity. Actual letters throughout the time of John F. Kennedy's presidency. It's a chance to review history without traveling to the presidential library.

