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Anything For A Vote: Dirty Tricks, Cheap Shots, And October Surprises In US Presidential Campaigns



Synopsis

Today's political pundits express shock and disappointment when candidates resort to negative campaigning. But history reveals that smear campaigns are as American as apple pie. Anything for a Vote is a look at 200-plus years of dirty tricks and bad behavior in presidential elections, from George Washington to Barack Obama and John McCain. Let the name-calling begin! 1836: Congressman Davy Crockett accuses candidate Martin Van Buren of secretly wearing women's clothing: "He is laced up in corsets!" 1960: Former president Harry Truman advises voters that "if you vote for Richard Nixon, you ought to go to hell!" Full of sleazy anecdotes from every presidential election in United States history, Anything for a Vote is a valuable reminder that history does repeat itself, that lessons can be learned from the past (though they usually aren't), and that our most famous presidents are not above reproach when it comes to the dirtiest game of all - political campaigning.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I loved this book. While you could read it in snippets - search out on one or two elections that were high on the sleaze-o-meter (the author gives nearly every election a rating for its dirty tricks quotient) I found it both enlightening and enjoyable to read it all the way through. Cummins has a clever, relaxed style and a real eye for quirky details. He also has no political agenda which means every party has to face up to their dirty past -Democrats, Republicans, and Democratic Republicans. After delving into several decades worth of elections I began to feel a bit better about our era, if only

because dirty tricks and cheating seems to go in cycles. The public can be snowed for awhile but they always come to their senses, and there's something reassuring about learning that. And while 2000 was awful, between the hanging chads and the Supremes deciding the election, at least not too many dead people voted, as in previous elections, and we no longer have drunks being paid in whisky to vote a few dozen times. Every page has another colorful tidbit. For example, my old TV hero Davy Crockett was actually a Whig attack dog, accusing Martin Van Buren of dressing in corsetts. And I loved finding out about the men who ran for President and lost, and what happened to them afterwards (poor Horace Greeley died within months of losing.) Also, there were some colorful Vice Presidential candidates over the years. And I had my eyes opened about several of our chief executives. Talk about anything for a vote... Finally there were many relevant comparisons you could make to the present election season. For example, Taft made no apologies for his religion. "If the American public is so narrow as not to elect a Unitarian, well and good, I can stand it." I wish Mitt Romney were so direct.

Anything For A Vote Joseph Cummins 4/5 Presidential elections are truly an American form of entertainment. Sure, the content is meant to be serious and the stakes are high, but you can't help but laugh over some of the antics and shenanigans that have occurred. Joseph Cummins examines our election process and captures both the seriousness and humor involved. === The Good Stuff === * Each election is summarized in a few pages. Obviously, in a book of this length, there are not going to be detailed discussions of every factor in every election. But Cummins is able to capture the essence of most of the elections, along with a brief description of the candidates. * The book does make me feel a little better about current politics and candidates. While the technology is certainly different, today's 24/7 partisan news channels have nothing on the pamphleteers, rumormongers and scoundrels of earlier elections. Literally, nothing seemed to be off-limits, and truth had nothing to do with the accusations. If anything, today's ranting and raving is almost calmer and more civilized. * Cummins rewards his readers with some chuckle-out-loud humor. In 1844, riverboats travelled the Mississippi, with party hacks stopping in every town along the way and voting. Franklin Pierce used his friend Nathaniel Hawthorne to write his press copy, which the author compares to having Franz Kafka managing your PR. FDR relied on silent films of his campaign speeches, and was not above babbling out nonsense for the cameras. * There was also a serious side to the book, and this seemed to get better with more recent elections.

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