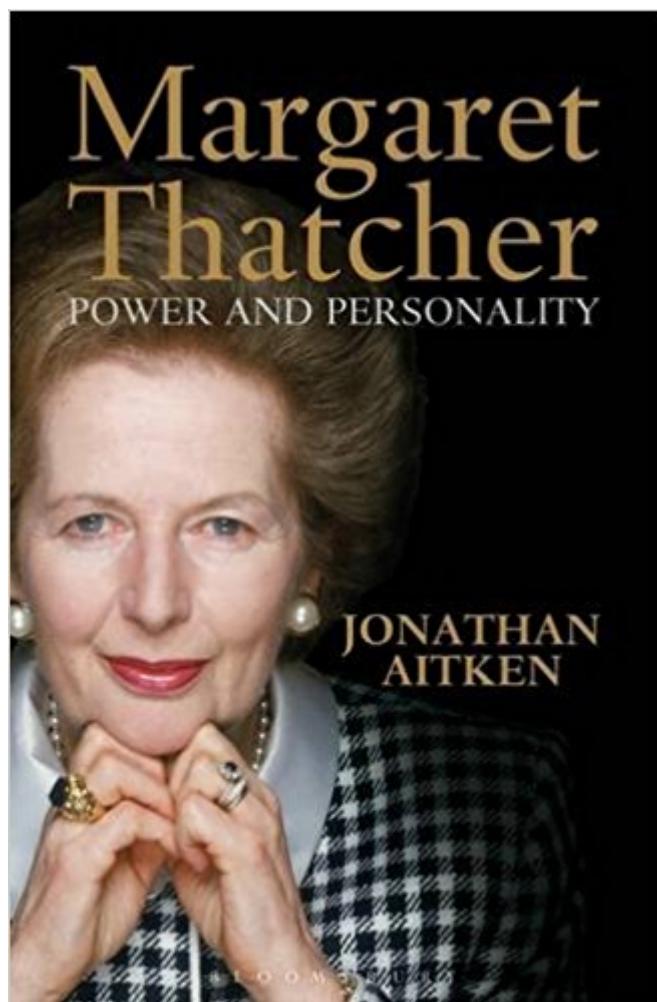


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Margaret Thatcher: Power And Personality



Synopsis

A strong and sometimes divisive figure in British and world politics, Margaret Thatcher was the longest-serving British Prime Minister in the 20th century and the only woman to ever hold the office. Drawing from an abundance of new, previously unpublished material from the Thatcher Archive at Churchill College, Cambridge, Jonathan Aitken's fresh and original biography is a lively and perceptive exploration of the personality that dominated conservative British politics for more than 10 years and her profound and worldwide impact on the historical tapestry of her time. At once positive and critical in its assessment of her governance, Margaret Thatcher: Power and Personality is crafted from the author's longtime personal relationship with his subject, his eyewitness account of public and private episodes in her life, and more than 100 interviews with the former Prime Minister's political colleagues and close personal friends. Penetrating and insightful, it chronicles one of the most remarkable political lives of our time.

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Customer Reviews

I found this bio a little too caught up with the political intrigue and personalities of the Conservative Party. I enjoyed reading about Thatcher the person and felt the sections covering her experiences dealing with the Falkland Islands, Gorbachev, and Reagan to be the strongest parts of the book. The author was a former MP so I guess it is understandable that he spent so much time on the politics and for someone interested in that aspect of the Thatcher era, the book may be of greater interest, but for this reader, it made for more difficult reading than I had anticipated.

I've read a few biographies on Margaret Thatcher to include her autobiography as well as her official biography by Charles Moore but I enjoyed and appreciated Margaret Thatcher: Power and Personality far more than those earlier reads primarily as a result of my perspective as an American not as familiar with the details of British politics and policy. Had I been a UK resident who lived through the current events and observed the media coverage I would've understood and likely better related to those other works a bit better. However I didn't find my American perspective to be as much of a barrier in reading Aitken's work. First, as the title states, he focused on Thatcher's personality and human traits something which we can all identify with and universally relate. Second, he consistently provided the background or summary of the events in question making it unnecessary to be grounded in UK current events to understand the context. Finally as an elected official I especially appreciated Aitken's view of Thatcher both as a fellow Conservative Party member and member of Parliament who knows first hand and expertly captures the pressures of elected office and its influence on one's actions and decisions. I also appreciated that he personally knew Prime Minister Thatcher to include dating the Thatchers' daughter Carol - a unique perspective that other authors cannot replicate.

Excellent book. The author's unique perspective as an MP, a three year intimate of the family, and an author give him insight to both the public and private Thatcher. Unlike most author's, he concedes the strong support which he gave to her.

Aitken paints a very descriptive, yet intriguing picture of Margaret Thatcher. He not only shows the strength and power of Margaret's personality, he also show the destructiveness of it as well. Aitken does not write one sided, instead he shows her human weakness and many flaws. I honestly did not want to finish the book, because of how well he portrayed her. He showed that Margaret was not only as the Iron Lady who struck fear into so many around the world but also as a fragile woman who could be hurt. This was one of the best biographies I have ever read, and I would recommend it. I have actually bought several copies for friends.

Really enjoyed this book. I did have to stop reading and go educate myself on how British government is structured. I knew our (American) government was patterned after Britain, but was ignorant of the details. I found myself getting very lost, so I had to spend some time understanding the structure and nuances of British government before I could enjoy this book. This is an honest,

sweeping, stunning portrayal of Thatcher and her life from childhood to death. It covers everything from the early childhood forces that shaped her, her constant fight to break into a man's world, her forceful personality, her political beliefs and many of the politicians who both aided and hindered her. It spares no punches so you see Mrs. Thatcher in both good and bad light. I would highly recommend this book.

This book, by a Conservative MP, did a very good job of revealing Margaret Thatcher's personality, both on her qualities that led to her rise in Tory leadership during a time of great confusion and uncertainty in the U.K., as well as the hubris she was responsible for her downfall. Indeed, the latter truth made for sad reading, as the author documented Thatcher's fall at the hands of her Cabinet--a scenario that never should have developed if Thatcher had only paid better attention to back-room politics and basic human relations to those she led and gave responsibility to. Generally, this is an engaging and well-researched read, though it also draws on the author's personal experiences with Thatcher and many of the principals involved. My only complaint is the repetition of certain phrases like "chalk-and-cheese" or "hubris" that get repeated way more than necessary in this book.

I knew very little about Margaret Thatcher before reading this book. Of course she was in the news, along with Reagan, for many years, but I had no personal impression of her and her time in office. She changed Britain and the world in several major ways, especially with privatization and as a friend of Gorbachev. She had a lot going for intellectually, but her personality was divisive. Good book, fair, admiring, but doesn't pull punches. Well written, flows.

This sympathetic account of Thatcher's life is successful in adding nuance to her polarizing legacy. That said, reviews of the book characterizing it as "readable" are speaking relatively. Thatcher was a complex person making complex decisions at a complex time, facing complex challenges and surrounded by complex people. Aitken successfully gestures at this complexity without ever becoming hopelessly mired in it, but the pace of the book is by no means swift, and at times his dedication to the "inside baseball" of conservative political intrigue will frustrate readers looking for a strong narrative style.

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