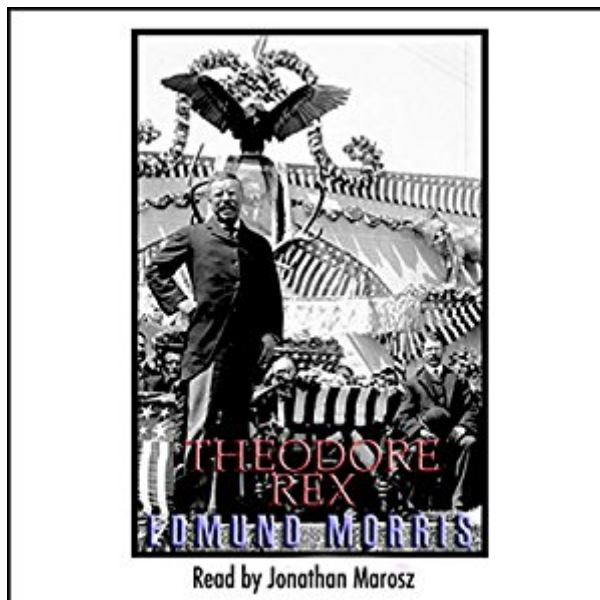


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Theodore Rex



Synopsis

Theodore Rex is the story—never fully told before—of Theodore Roosevelt's two world-changing terms as President of the United States. A hundred years before the catastrophe of September 11, 2001, "TR" succeeded to power in the aftermath of an act of terrorism. Youngest of all our chief executives, he rallied a stricken nation with his superhuman energy, charm, and political skills. He proceeded to combat the problems of race and labor relations and trust control while making the Panama Canal possible and winning the Nobel Peace Prize. But his most historic achievement remains his creation of a national conservation policy, and his monument millions of acres of protected parks and forest. Theodore Rex ends with TR leaving office, still only fifty years old, his future reputation secure as one of our greatest presidents. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is the second in a three part biography of TR. I devoured Volume 1 and ordered this before I finished so I wouldn't have to stop. I have already purchased volume 3 even though I am only a couple hundred pages into volume 2. Wonderful research, superb writing. I am learning a lot about the history of my country within the context of a story about an amazing, brilliant energetic man. A man of his time, a man for the ages. We owe him a debt of gratitude.

This second book in the series by Edmund Morris on the life of Theodore Roosevelt focuses on his

two terms as President of the United States. Roosevelt did not actually serve two terms as President, at least not as we recon it today. His first term was in his ascension to the Presidency when William McKinley was assassinated only six months into his second term. TR thus was elected in his own right as President to only one term. Recognizing the custom that a President only serve two terms in office, (the 22nd amendment limited the President to two terms had not been enacted yet) TR vowed upon his election to President in his own right that he would not seek a second term. The fact that he remained true to his word even though he was extremely popular and could have been reelected easily to a second term is an indicator of the character of Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt was a political paradox. As a Republican he favored a strong national defense and was responsible for modernizing and increasing the size of the United States Navy. He also strongly favored capitalism and was against any hints of socialism in any form, yet he was pivotal in ushering out the era of laissez-faire economics and fought for stronger government regulation of business through the new Interstate Commerce Act, of which he was a major driving force. In direct opposition to Republican doctrine both of his era and today, he favored a much stronger centralized government. Above all, Roosevelt was both a man of strong character and moral values, and he was a man of action.

While Mr. Morris's previous volume, "The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt," was a more rollicking adventure than this second volume, "Theodore Rex" is still an excellent work. The book covers the years of his presidency (1901-1909). The story bolts out of the gate where the vacationing, 42-year-old Roosevelt is barrelling down a mountain soon after he finds out that President McKinley has been shot. Based upon the introduction, I thought the second volume was going to have the same feel as the first one. It wasn't the case. Instead, the biography settles into describing the machinations of early 20th-Century politics. I felt it helped quite a bit to have read the first volume and understand what makes Teddy tick. People in Washington D.C. were understandably nervous about a Roosevelt Administration. Everything about his past blared out that the guy never did anything small. It is a time before broadcast radio, the automobile, child-labor laws, food safety, conservationism and worker rights. But other things will sound all too familiar to present-day politics: power struggles in both domestic and the world theater, the arrogant rich manipulating the levers of Washington by throwing gobs of money at it, outsized egos, hypocrisy and Congressional stonewalling. There are also some bon mots like President Roosevelt near-death experience during the first year of his administration and the story on how the teddy bear came to have his name. Other notables of the era such as Henry James who came up with the name Theodore Rex, Henry

Adams, J.P. Morgan, Booker T. Washington and Oliver Wendell Holmes make appearances. Also, Mr. Morris focuses on other key, powerful figures who have unjustifiably faded from memory like Elihu Root and Philander Knox. The man's presidency was one of progressive movement forward. My God, the guy was instrumental in dramatically expanding our national parks, starting the construction of the Panama Canal, making our Navy a world power, taking on trusts or monopolies through the use of the Sherman Act, helping end the Russo-Japanese War and reluctantly walking away from the presidency when he could have easily had a third term. He, much like his distant relative Franklin Delano Roosevelt came to be viewed during his presidency, was looked upon as a traitor to his class. I came to laugh at many of the dire, end-of-the-world predictions by Wall Street and conservative politicians because of President Theodore Roosevelt's progressive actions. Even back in the early 1900s, socialism was thrown about with such abandon by conservatives at even the slightest hint of trying to help the downtrodden. It all sounds EXACTLY like what we hear today. I must stress that I don't believe the book holds up as well as a stand-alone biography. Read the "The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt" first. Great history such as Mr. Morris's entertaining and informative biography helps me keep life in perspective.

This second volume of Morris's three volume biography continues his attention to detail and delivers a very readable and enjoyable history of Theodore Roosevelt's presidency years. Beginning with the aftermath of McKinley's assassination, the book covers TR's completion of the term, his reelection in 1904 and the full term until March of 1909. One is struck by the prodigious work of this amazing man, his political skills, and his particular relish for power. TR certainly was the pacesetter for the 20th century accumulation of power by the executive branch which continues to this day. His use of executive orders resembles the Obama years. I was especially surprised by his diplomatic skills, which seem inconsistent with his domestic tendency to ignore opposition sensibilities. Still, he brought to the international arena the same ability to dominate the news agenda that he demonstrated so effectively at home. His timidity in pursuing his early attempts to address racial issues disappoints, but is probably the clearest example of how all political leaders tend to suborn their best intentions to the vagaries of politics. I am looking forward to the final volume, especially the election of 1812 and the adventure on the "River of Doubt" in Brazil.

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