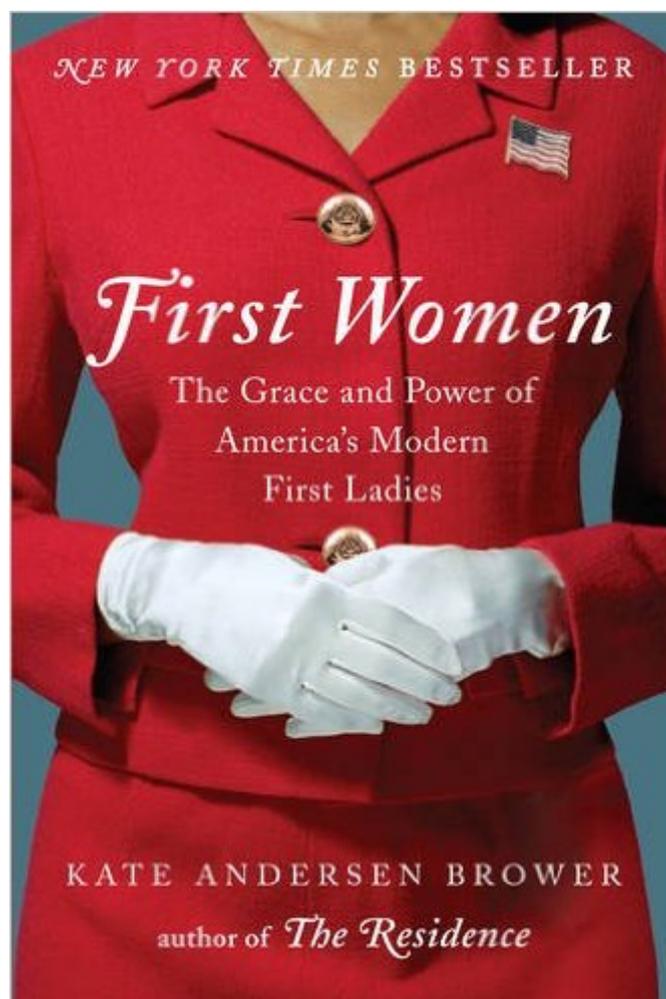


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First Women: The Grace And Power Of America's Modern First Ladies



Synopsis

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER From the #1 New York Times bestselling author of the groundbreaking backstairs look at the White House, *The Residence*, comes an intimate, news-making look at the true modern power brokers at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue: the First Ladies, from Jackie Kennedy to Michelle Obama. One of the most underestimated and challenging positions in the world, the First Lady of the United States must be many things: an inspiring leader with a forward-thinking agenda of her own; a savvy politician, skilled at navigating the treacherous rapids of Washington; a wife and mother operating under constant scrutiny; and an able CEO responsible for the smooth operation of countless services and special events at the White House. Now, as she did in her smash #1 bestseller *The Residence*, former White House correspondent Kate Andersen Brower draws on a wide array of untapped, candid sources from residence staff and social secretaries to friends and political advisers to tell the stories of the ten remarkable women who have defined that role since 1960. Brower offers new insights into this privileged group of remarkable women, including Jacqueline Kennedy, Lady Bird Johnson, Patricia Nixon, Betty Ford, Rosalynn Carter, Nancy Reagan, Barbara Bush, Hillary Clinton, Laura Bush, and Michelle Obama. The stories she shares range from the heartwarming to the shocking and tragic, exploring everything from the first ladies' political crusades to their rivalries with Washington figures; from their friendships with other first ladies to their public and private relationships with their husbands. She also offers a detailed and insightful new portrait of one of the most-watched first ladies of all time, Hillary Clinton, asking what her tumultuous years in the White House may tell us about her own historic presidential run . . . and what life could be like with the nation's first First Husband. Candid and illuminating, this first group biography of the modern first ladies provides a revealing look at life upstairs and downstairs at the world's most powerful address.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I was very excited about this book because I'm extremely interested in this era of American history, but I'm confused about the reviews. Several readers mention they feel that this is a "well written" and "thoroughly researched" work. I'll give Brower the points on research (I'm sure this was quite a task to undertake), but I'm lost at the notion that people feel this book is well-written. In my opinion, this entire narrative reads like pages and pages of notes that someone has jotted down and published, prior to the editing process or prior to even formatting the story into a cohesive outline. Brower begins the introduction with a story of Hillary Clinton and Jackie Kennedy and later repeats the exact phrasing of this same story in a subsequent chapter. It's odd. The chapters in general are long-winded and only vaguely connected to their titles ("motherhood" for instance is the heading for one chapter but naturally, this topic is covered throughout the book, so this subdivision means little in the context of the entire thread) and because it's written out of order, the author is forced to constantly use last names and descriptions ("Amy's nanny," "Jack's doctor") repeatedly, even when writing about someone who's already been discussed. Had my opinion been solicited (which I know is comical, given that the author is a NY Times #1 Best Seller), I would have definitely suggested putting it in chronological order.

This is a pleasant valentine for ten first ladies. It is not profound but neither is it particularly critical. A few of the anecdotes appeared in Brower's *The Residence*. Many of the stories she shares are already widely known: the coolness between Barbara Bush and Nancy Reagan, the Clintons' profane arguments, the fact that Michelle Obama was not particularly happy about moving to Washington and into the White House, and so on. At first Brower appears to want to make readers think that the First Ladies have some special relationship because of the role they shared, however, that theme doesn't really work. In fact, the only two first ladies who seemed to have developed a true friendship were Lady Bird Johnson and Betty Ford. Rosalind Carter remained bitter for a while after her husband's defeat and even was somewhat resentful because Hillary Clinton did not ask her anything about health care although that had been Rosalind's major effort as first lady. Nancy Reagan doesn't seem to have cared much for any of them with the possible exception of Jackie

Kennedy Onassis (snob appeal, maybe?) There is one photograph of several of the women at an event which tells all. The five or six others appear to be talking to each other but Mrs. Reagan is at the end of the table and is turned completely away. The expression on her face says, more or less, "when will this purgatory end"? All in all, the book is interesting as a sidelight into the lives of these women who have tried to fulfill the role as best they could. Some more successfully than others. Some tidbits are fascinating.

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