

Further Reading

My Life, My Love, My Legacy
Coretta Scott King (2017)
BIOGRAPHY KING

From her childhood in segregated Heiberger, Alabama through her college days in Ohio and her classical music studies in Boston, Coretta aspired to be a professional musician. That changed after Martin Luther King Jr persuaded her to marry him, build a family together, and return South to combat Jim Crow. This up-close, graceful narrative offers a vivid depiction of the Kings' lives, especially Coretta's, and the Civil Rights movement

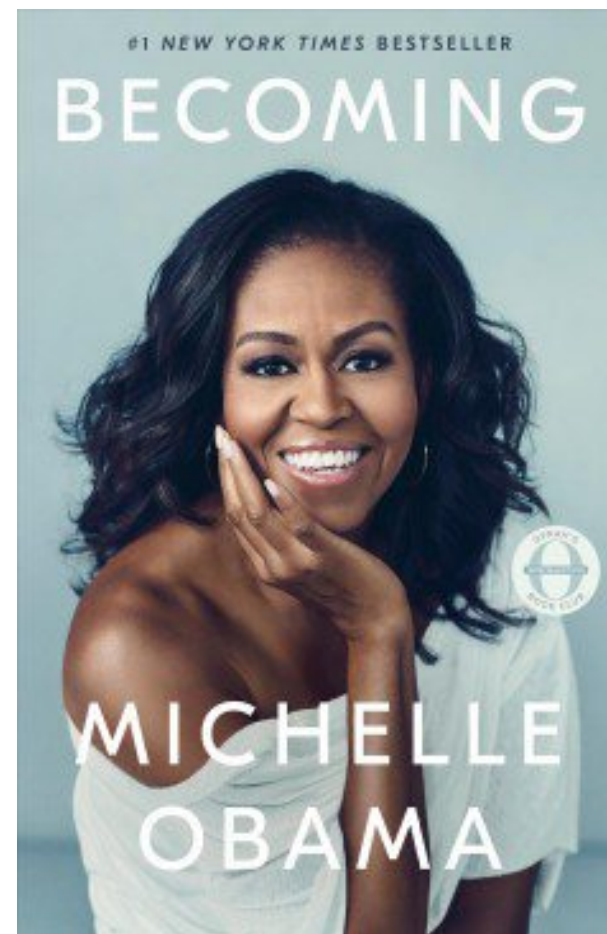
First Women: The Grace and Power of America's Modern First Ladies
Kate Anderson Brower (2016)
HISTORY US 20TH BRO

An intimate, news-making look at the true modern power brokers at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue: the First Ladies, from Jackie Kennedy to Michelle Obama.

The Obamas
Jodi Kantor (2017)
BIOGRAPHY OBAMA

Explores the Obama family's transition into the White House, capturing the emotions and personalities beneath the public facade as the president and the First Lady deal with their new roles.

Book Discussion Guide



About the Book

In her memoir, a work of deep reflection and mesmerizing storytelling, Michelle Obama invites readers into her world, chronicling the experiences that have shaped her—from her childhood on the South Side of Chicago to her years as an executive balancing the demands of motherhood and work, to her time spent at the world’s most famous address. With unerring honesty and lively wit, she describes her triumphs and her disappointments, both public and private, telling her full story as she has lived it—in her own words and on her own terms.

Discussion Questions

1. Mrs. Obama begins her book with a story about making cheese toast on a quiet night at home, a few months after leaving the White House. Why do you think she chose this story to begin her memoir?
2. Mrs. Robinson is the opposite of a helicopter parent. She gave her children agency at a very young age. How did that shape Mrs. Obama? What is the balance between discipline and trust?
3. In discussing her neighborhood on the South Side of Chicago, Obama writes, “Failure is a feeling long before it becomes an actual result. It’s vulnerability that breeds with self-doubt and then is escalated, often deliberately, by fear.” How did this insight shape Obama’s work as First Lady? What can we all do as individuals, parents, and community members to help break this cycle?
4. Mrs. Obama writes about the early influences of her mother, and her TV role model Mary Tyler Moore. One was a single, professional living on her own in the big city. One was a supportive stay-at-home mother, who later went to work to help pay for her children’s education. Where do you see the influences of both of these women in Obama’s life?
5. At Princeton, Mrs. Obama was faced with questions of whether she was the product of Affirmative Action programs. She felt like she was representing her entire race. Was she actually representing her communities in those settings? Have you had moments in life where you feel as though you are a representative symbol of a community of which you are a part?
6. In her early life Mrs. Obama writes about being a “box checker,” but as she gets older she learns how to “swerve” to adjust to life’s circumstances. What does it mean to swerve and how do we develop that skill in life?
7. In Chapter 15, Mrs. Obama explains why she chose to support her husband’s run for the presidency despite her misgivings about politics. What made her change her mind? Would you have made the same choice? How do you balance the competing worlds of family life and work in your life?
8. As Mrs. Obama notes, First Lady is a role without a job description. How did Mrs. Obama choose to approach the role? If you were in charge of writing the job description for the First Lady, what would you include and exclude?
9. Mrs. Obama writes candidly about detractors who tried to invalidate her standing or her work. “I was female, black, and strong, which to certain people, maintaining a certain mind-set, translated only to ‘angry.’ What is the root of that “angry black woman” cliché? How and why does it do damage?
10. In the epilogue, Mrs. Obama writes, “I’ve never been a fan of politics, and my experience over the last ten years has done little to change that.” Did you find her statement surprising? Do you think politics is an effective way to make social change?

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