

Citizen Soldier: A Life Of Harry S. Truman - Aida Donald

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In *Citizen Soldier*, historian Aida Donald charts the life and legacy of the thirty-third president, who rose from a modest background to preside over the end of World War II and the beginning of the Cold War one of the most momentous shifts of the twentieth century. Born in late 19th-century Missouri to a family of down-on-their-luck farmers, Truman was an utter romantic and something of a mama's boy during his childhood. As a young entrepreneur, he experienced several crushing defeats, and only truly found a sense of purpose when he enlisted in the army in 1917. Truman cut his teeth as a leader while serving in an artillery unit in the Missouri National Guard, and returned to the States something of a hero. Back home, however, Truman soon found himself on the losing end of another business venture. When the father of an army buddy encouraged him to run as the Democratic candidate for a judgeship in Jackson County, Missouri, Truman took the plunge into politics. Truman's road to the presidency was a rocky one. Donald shows that Truman tried to honor his romantic ideals and be an honest politician, but had to compromise his values in order to get ahead in politics. Indeed, the corruption of some of his early political bedfellows so distressed Truman that he suffered acute psychosomatic illness as a result. But his hard work and dogged persistence eventually paid off, landing him in the U.S. Senate and then the vice presidency. When FDR passed away in April of 1945, Truman unexpectedly found himself at the helm of the American war effort and in command of the most lethal weapon humanity had ever seen. Truman's order to detonate nuclear bombs over Japan four months after assuming the presidency quickly brought World War II to a close, but has of course troubled many historians.

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