

# Leadership In Turbulent Times Discussion Guide

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1. Goodwin singles out Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Lyndon Johnson as examples of past presidents having a shared purpose, collaboration, and civility. She feels by examining and remembering historical leaders, we are less likely to accept modern polarization and civility. **What leaders, past or present, are successful role models?**
2. Although different in background, abilities, and temperament, these four presidents shared a fierce ambition and a deep-seated resilience that enabled them to surmount uncommon adversity. **What other leaders do you think surmounted adversity?**
3. Out of the four leaders Goodwin has focused on, she feels that Theodore Roosevelt would be best suited to serve the country today. His diverse careers included rancher, writer, civil service commissioner, police commissioner, various military positions, as well as holding government offices in multiple capacities. This diversity would help him navigate the complexities of today. Plus, he had charisma that she feels would translate well to social media. **Which historical leader do you think could handle today's complexities?**
4. Goodwin feels there is the right leader for the right time, but she identifies some key traits of great leaders: "resilience, humility, an ability to listen to diverse opinions, control negative impulses, replenish energy, and most importantly, an ambition for greater good." **What leadership skills do you feel are the most important?**
5. Goodwin feels one of the greatest issues with today's leaders is a lack of shared purpose. She writes that the spoken word does not hold the same weight as it once did. Democracy is being threatened by the lies, walk backs, alternative facts, and so forth that our leaders exude. **What do you think are the most damaging characteristics of leaders?**
6. Goodwin feels leadership is a two-way street because change comes from social movements that drive leadership in Washington. To make things better, citizens must band together. **What do you think citizens can do to make things better for their country?**



## About the Author Doris Kearns Goodwin

Presidential historian and Pulitzer Prize-winning author Doris Kearns Goodwin brings history alive with an uncanny sense for detail and a master storyteller's grasp of drama and depth.

## Attend the Lecture

Join Cincinnati & Hamilton County Public Library at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 5, 2021, at the Aronoff Center for the Arts to hear Goodwin speak as part of the Mary S. Stern lecture series.

Tickets go on sale 10 a.m. EST Tuesday, Aug. 10, at [CincinnatiLibrary.org/stern](https://CincinnatiLibrary.org/stern), [CincinnatiArts.org](https://CincinnatiArts.org), and 513-621-ARTS (2787).

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- Lincoln is known for the Emancipation Proclamation, Theodore Roosevelt the Square Deal, Franklin D. Roosevelt the New Deal, and Johnson the Great Society. **What other sweeping legislation agendas dramatically impacted the country?**
- Goodwin identifies Vietnam as Johnson's biggest failure and states this was the foundation for today's increasing mistrust in the government. **What events or actions do you feel have led to the modern-day mistrust in the government?**
- Citing Lincoln's counsel to "read of and recount" the history of our country to better preserve our democratic system, Goodwin shares that her aim with this book was to provide a roadmap for current leaders and citizens to follow. Think about your experience with learning about the country's history. **Do you feel familiar with the ideals of our founding fathers and do you think they are still relevant today?**
- Some of the large crises the four leaders in this book face bear striking similarities to current events: Lincoln with the Civil War and racism, Theodore Roosevelt with the Industrial Revolution and a growing wage gap, FDR with a tanking economy and the growing Fascist movement, LBJ with conspiracy theories and Civil Rights. **What can the way that those past leaders handled those issues teach us about our current struggles?**
- Goodwin identifies "ambition for a greater good" as one of the key leadership traits, but states that it is a trait that often evolves from "ambition for the self." **Do you think this is true? Or can these motivations can coexist alongside one another? Can you see where in their lives these leaders transformed?**
- In giving the example of the presidents who led directly before Lincoln, Roosevelt, FDR, and Johnson, Goodwin indicates that simply holding the highest political office in the United States does not automatically make a person the most qualified to handle the challenges of the time. And yet, none of Goodwin's examples followed the same path to greatness: "they all essentially made themselves leaders by an inordinate ambition to succeed, by perseverance and hard work." **Do you agree with this evaluation? How do you think leaders can take these examples and the lessons of the book to help them evolve to better address a current crisis?**



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