

20<sup>th</sup>

CENTURY BIOGRAPHIES

# FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT



HE WAS A  
PRESIDENT  
FOR ALL THE  
PEOPLE

BY ANNE SCHRAFF

**FRANKLIN  
DELANO  
ROOSEVELT**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Chapter 1	4
Chapter 2	10
Chapter 3	16
Chapter 4	22
Chapter 5	27
Chapter 6	36
Chapter 7	39
Chapter 8	43
Chapter 9	48
Chapter 10	55
Bibliography	62
Glossary	62
Index	64



Franklin Delano Roosevelt was the 32nd President of the United States. He was the only president elected four times. Roosevelt led the United States during two of the greatest crises in American history, the Great Depression of the 1930s and World War II.

He had been stricken with **polio** as a young man and could not walk without help. Still, Roosevelt was a smiling, strong, cheerful person. He gave those around him, and the whole country, confidence because he had confidence.

Roosevelt introduced the idea that the federal government had a duty to help Americans who were in **economic** trouble. If people were jobless or were losing their homes, Roosevelt believed the federal government had to do something about it. Today, the federal government helps people in many ways. Medical care for the aged and education for the young are two examples.

On January 30, 1882, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was born in Hyde Park, New York. He weighed ten pounds. He was a big, healthy baby.

Franklin's father, James Roosevelt, was a businessman. He was a widower in his fifties when he married twenty-six-year-old Sara (Sallie) Delano. Sara was well educated. Like her husband, she was wealthy. The Roosevelts lived in a beautiful home. It was surrounded by woods, gardens, and sweeping green

lawns. Franklin was loved and welcomed by both parents. He was their only child. They gave him love and material goods.

Franklin became the little prince at Hyde Park. His parents and all the servants fussed over him. The little boy loved pets. He was given his first dog, Budgy, when he was two years old. He and Budgy rode around the estate at Hyde Park on the back of Franklin's pet donkey. The donkey had a special seat on its back for the boy and his dog.

Franklin was the only child in the house. There was nobody else to get his parents' attention. Even the aunts and uncles came to admire the boy. Sara Roosevelt, Franklin's mother, kept the boy in dresses. His long blonde hair was left uncut until he was five years old. In photographs taken of him at the time,

he looked like a little girl. After his fifth birthday, he was dressed in kilts and dressy suits.

As a boy, his favorite dog was named Marksman. He also had a pony named Debbie. The family built him a great tree house so he could sit up in it and pretend to be watching for pirates coming down the Hudson River.

Young Franklin did not go to school. His parents and private tutors taught him. He learned right from wrong and a sense of duty to other people. Though his parents were very wealthy, Franklin learned that there were many poor people who needed help. Franklin grew up believing he was a lucky boy. He knew he would have to help others who were not so lucky.

Franklin lived a **sheltered** life. Sometimes he played with other



*Franklin Roosevelt with his mother*



children, but he spent most of his time with adults. During the summer he traveled to Europe with his parents. Sometimes, the family vacationed at their large cottage at Campobello Island. It is off the coast of New Brunswick, Canada. Because he spent so much time with his parents, Franklin became deeply attached to them.

Franklin was taught good manners, and he became a charming boy. His mother praised him for being obedient. At eleven, he learned to shoot. A sea captain taught him how to sail. He tended his own garden, iceboated on the river, and learned the names of all the trees and shrubs on the property. Franklin also collected stamps and model ships. He loved everything about the navy. He collected many navy related treasures. Franklin enjoyed his childhood very much.



As a teenager, Franklin had his own **yacht**. It was a twenty-one footer named *New Moon*. He sailed it from Maine to Canada. Franklin's father often took his son on business trips because he wanted the boy to learn the ways of the world. When the elder Roosevelt inspected railroads, Franklin went along. The family lived on a special **luxury** car on the railroad. It had bedrooms, sitting rooms, and servants.

Franklin was tutored privately in French and German. When the family went to Europe, he practiced his language skills with the local people. At age eleven, Franklin was well ahead of most children his age.

The Roosevelts finally decided to send Franklin to school when he was fourteen. He was sent to Groton School, a small boys **prep school** fifty miles from Boston. Rev. Endicott Peabody, the headmaster, was known for training fine boys. Still, it was very hard for Franklin's mother to part with her son.

All the other boys at Groton were also from wealthy families, but none had been privately tutored like Franklin. He felt out of place and homesick. He did not get top grades. He rarely got better than a C.

Franklin hoped to use sports as a way to make new friends, but he was a poor

athlete. He had to settle for a place on the Bum Team. It was made up of the school's worst baseball players. Franklin then tried football, but he was no better. Franklin was tall and awkward. He wore glasses and braces on his teeth. Since he could not succeed at sports, he joined the debating team and the choir.

Franklin lived in a small, simple room at Groton. It was much different from his luxurious room at home. Because he was so serious, he was called "Uncle Frank." He did not seem to think too deeply so he was also called "feather duster." Rev. Peabody called Franklin a quiet, agreeable boy.

Franklin almost got into **mischief** only once. He decided to run away from Groton to join the navy. He wanted to fight in the Spanish-American War. But before he could run away, Franklin came down with scarlet fever.

After graduating from Groton in 1900, Franklin went to Harvard University. He and a friend moved into a nice apartment at the university called The Goldcoast. Franklin was eager to be a social success at Harvard. He tried to join the most popular club—The Procellian. He was turned down. So, he joined a less popular club called The Fly.

Still tall and thin, Franklin tried sports again. He tried out for the rowing team, but they turned him down, too. There were eight football teams at Harvard. The weakest was called The Missing Link. That team accepted Franklin.

Although Franklin liked history, government, and economics, he did not spend much time studying. He maintained a C average. He did enjoy teaching in a boys club in a poor neighborhood.

In his freshman year at Harvard, Franklin lost his father. Seventy-two year old James Roosevelt died. He left his son an **annual** income of \$6,000, a lot of money at that time. In 1900 the average American worker made less than \$1,000 a year. Sara Roosevelt, Franklin's mother, was not yet fifty when she was widowed. Her dear son was her only family now. She wanted to be close to him. She rented an apartment in Boston so she could visit Franklin often .

In 1901 Franklin's cousin, Theodore Roosevelt, became President of the United States. As president, he came to Harvard and visited some of Franklin's classes. This gave Franklin a wonderful feeling of pride.

Franklin Roosevelt had always wanted to be editor of the Harvard newspaper, the *Crimson*. In his last year at Harvard,

he achieved his dream. Upon graduating from Harvard, Franklin sailed for Europe alone. He spent an exciting summer of travel and parties before returning to the United States to start his career.



*Franklin Roosevelt as a member of the Harvard Crimson*



Franklin Roosevelt was a handsome young man who liked parties. The tall, charming Roosevelt was popular with young ladies. One of them was a distant cousin—Anna Eleanor Roosevelt. Unlike Franklin, who had enjoyed his childhood, Eleanor had grown up with tragedy. Eleanor’s beautiful mother was disappointed because her little girl was very plain looking. Eleanor’s handsome father loved his daughter very much, but he was a troubled alcoholic. By the

time Eleanor was ten years old, both her parents were dead.

Franklin Roosevelt was confident at social gatherings, but Eleanor, who was six feet tall, felt shy and awkward. She hated parties. Eleanor had pretty blue eyes and golden hair, but her chin receded and her teeth were too large.

At one party, Franklin came up to Eleanor and told her how beautiful her eyes were. They began talking. They found that they shared many interests. They both worked in poor neighborhoods to help the less fortunate. They both liked poetry. They made each other laugh. Soon, they were dancing together and having fun. Eleanor did not feel plain and out of place anymore.

Franklin was charmed by Eleanor's honesty. They began writing long letters

to each other. The letters contained favorite poems, shared secrets, and dreams. They were falling in love.

Sara Roosevelt, Franklin's mother, did not want to lose him. When she learned that Franklin was dating Eleanor, she was very upset. She hoped they would forget about each other in time. But Eleanor and Franklin continued to see each other. They were counting the days when the year would end and they could marry.

On March 17, 1905, on St. Patrick's Day, Franklin Roosevelt married his fifth cousin, Eleanor Roosevelt. He was twenty-three years old. She was almost twenty-one. They were married at a cousin's **mansion**. Rev. Endicott Peabody of Groton School conducted the ceremony. Her uncle, President Theodore Roosevelt, walked Eleanor down the aisle.

Franklin Roosevelt was a law student, but the young couple took a three-month European honeymoon. While they were gone, Sara Roosevelt bought a house for them in Manhattan, very close to her own home. She accepted that her son was married now, but she was going to remain very close to him

When Roosevelt returned home with his new wife, he finished law school and passed the New York Bar examination. But the only work he could get was as an unpaid law clerk. His family supported him.

His mother took over the house and Eleanor became her obedient servant. It was a very hard time for the young wife, but her husband was happy. Franklin Roosevelt hosted many parties, played poker with his friends, and enjoyed married life.

Over the next several years, the Roosevelt family grew quickly. Anna was born in 1906, James in 1907, and Elliott in 1910. Roosevelt spent his time in minor law work and business ventures. In 1910 he was asked to run for the New York State Senate as the Democratic candidate. The district was always Republican and a Democrat had little chance of winning. But Roosevelt was bursting with self-confidence and eager to campaign for the job.

Roosevelt rented a bright red Maxwell touring car. He decorated it with flags and drove all over the district. He gave **rousing** speeches about the good he would do if he were elected. At the time, New York politics were very dishonest. Rich men gave money to politicians so they would get what they wanted. The people were forgotten.

The voters were charmed by the twenty-eight-year-old with the big smile and wonderful voice. Roosevelt won the Senate seat. The family moved to Albany. Eleanor Roosevelt was very happy about that because now she could run her own household away from her mother-in-law.



*Eleanor Roosevelt*



In Albany, New York, Roosevelt took on the dishonest political machine. He would not work for special interests. He fought for the good of the common people. Roosevelt got help for farmers, and he helped **soil conservation**. He argued for the right of women to vote. (At the time only men could vote.) He tried to limit the hours children could work. Roosevelt was seen as an outspoken young politician who got things done. In 1912 he was easily elected to a second term.

In 1912 Democrat Woodrow Wilson was elected president. He was looking for bright young men for his **cabinet**. He heard about State Senator Roosevelt and how much he loved the sea and admired the navy. So, Wilson asked Roosevelt to become Assistant Secretary to the navy.

He had the job of running the day-to-day operations of the navy. He had to deal with labor unions and **contractors**. He inspected the fleet, climbing aboard many ships to make sure everything was right. Roosevelt was always a strong supporter of a large and efficient navy.

The Roosevelts lived in Washington, D.C., now. Franklin Jr. was born in 1914. In mid-1914, Roosevelt ran for the United States Senate but he was defeated. In 1916 the last Roosevelt child, John, was born. There were now four boys and one girl.

At thirty-two, Franklin Roosevelt was attractive and charming. Ladies always admired him. When Eleanor hired twenty-two-year-old Lucy Mercer to be her social secretary, Mercer and Franklin became close. In September 1918 Eleanor Roosevelt unpacked her husband's suitcase after a trip. She found something upsetting. There was a packet of love letters written by Mercer to her husband. It was clear that Franklin Roosevelt and Lucy Mercer were more than friends.

Eleanor went to Franklin with the letters. Sara Roosevelt stood at her side. Roosevelt admitted he was in love with Mercer. Eleanor told him he could have a divorce if he wanted. She just hoped the children would not suffer too much. But, Eleanor said that if Franklin wanted to remain married to her he had to stop seeing Mercer.

Sara Roosevelt was furious with her son. She warned him that if he left Eleanor for Mercer, she would end all **financial** support.

Roosevelt agreed to stop seeing Mercer. He had many reasons for this decision. He had a deep affection and respect for Eleanor. He loved the children. He knew that divorcing Eleanor would end his political future. Finally, he still depended on his mother for money.

The marriage went on, but it was never the same. Eleanor forgave her husband but she could not forget. To help recover from the hurt, she plunged into outside activities. She worked for the needy and **humanitarian** causes.

In mid-1919 Roosevelt made many important speeches for national Democratic candidates. He was getting

the attention of party leaders. In June 1920 he gave the nominating speech for Al Smith, who was running for president. Smith withdrew from the contest, but everyone remembered Roosevelt's great speech. When James Cox became the Democratic candidate for president in 1920, he asked Roosevelt to be his vice-presidential running mate.

Roosevelt was now running for the second highest office in the land. He campaigned all over the country by train, car, and even airplane. He conducted a "whistle stop" campaign. His train stopped at every little town so he could make a speech. Everywhere Roosevelt went, people were impressed.



The American people had been through a lot with World War I. They were sick of Democrats in the White House. Now they wanted a president to make them feel good. Franklin Roosevelt, the Democratic candidate for vice president, was charming. But the people chose Republican Warren Harding as president.

Thirty-eight-year-old Franklin Roosevelt was now out of a job. He returned to

private life. He joined a law firm. He invested in oil, forestry, utilities, and resort hotels. He was now a lawyer and a rising businessman.

After a day of fishing and swimming at the family cottage at Campobello in August 1921, Franklin Roosevelt became feverish. His aches turned to terrible pain. He was **paralyzed**. He was diagnosed with infantile paralysis, or polio. This was a severe disease that killed and crippled many people. Most were children and young people. It looked as if the vigorous young man with such a bright future would be an **invalid** for the rest of his life.

In mid-September, Roosevelt was taken to New York City's Presbyterian Hospital by private railroad car. He spent six weeks in the hospital, but his condition did not improve. Doctors

told him he would never regain the strength he once had in his legs.

News of the terrible illness was kept from the public. Franklin and Eleanor both hoped there was still a political future ahead. They did not want the public to know how sick he was. Sara Roosevelt advised her son to retire to Hyde Park and accept the fact that his active life was over. But both Eleanor and Franklin never lost faith that he could rise above this setback. With stubborn patience, Roosevelt exercised his legs. He struggled to **regain** control of them. Eleanor and other family members worked with him in his therapy sessions.

Roosevelt was finally able to stand on his feet with the help of leg braces. He could walk slowly with the aid of crutches.

Swimming was the best form of exercise. He went to Warm Springs, Georgia, a health spa with mineral waters. He never gave up hope of a complete cure. Warm Springs proved helpful. So, Roosevelt bought it for two hundred thousand dollars. That was two-thirds of all the money he had. He developed Warm Springs into a polio therapy center for himself and others struggling against the disease.

As a result of his illness, Roosevelt became a much stronger person. He once said that once you struggle for years to try to wiggle your toes, you can do anything. As he recovered his strength, Roosevelt bought a custom made Ford Phaeton with special hand controls so he could drive. By 1924, Roosevelt was ready to return to public life.

At the 1924 Democratic convention, Al Smith wanted to be the party's candidate for president. Franklin Roosevelt dragged himself to the podium. He used his leg braces and crutches. He made such a rousing speech for his friend, Al Smith, that nobody noticed his disability. Smith did not win. In 1928 Roosevelt spoke for him again. This time, Smith became the Democratic candidate for president. Franklin Roosevelt was the Democratic candidate for Governor of New York.

Roosevelt campaigned hard for governor despite his physical problems. He rode the train all over New York State. He spoke to large crowds from the rear platform. Then he would switch to a convertible car. He made as many as seven speeches a day.

His energetic, **optimistic** style seemed to sweep away any misgivings people

had about his disability. In November, Al Smith lost the presidency to Republican Herbert Hoover. But Franklin Roosevelt was elected governor of New York.

On January 1, 1929, Franklin Roosevelt was sworn in as Governor of New York. He was forty-seven years old. He had many **ambitious** ideas for helping the people. He wanted to develop cheaper energy and set up old age pensions. He wanted to set maximum working hours for women.

But the Republicans had control of the state **legislature** in New York. They fought everything Roosevelt tried to do. He decided to use a method that later became one of his trademarks. He went directly to the people of New York. He used the radio, a powerful new means of communication. He told the people

what he was trying to do for them. He asked them to contact the Republican legislators and ask them to stop blocking his programs. This was successful. Roosevelt was making real progress when economic disaster struck the whole country.

The stock market in New York collapsed on October 24, 1929. The day was called “Black Thursday.” Many ordinary Americans had been buying stocks with a little money down. They used too much credit. When the prices of the stocks fell, the owners lost everything. Prices went down for several days. Billions of dollars were lost in a week. Factories cut back, and people lost their jobs. Thousands and then millions of people lost their income. They could no longer pay their mortgages. Many lost their homes.

The events following Black Thursday were called the Great Depression. New York suffered along with the rest of the country. Roosevelt was the first governor to set up an effective relief system to feed and house people. He set up unemployment compensation to give jobless people some income. His quick action earned him the gratitude and affection of the people.

All through 1930 and 1931, conditions got worse. Roosevelt was reelected to a second term as governor of New York. Meanwhile, President Hoover promised that things would soon improve. But the misery of the people was growing.

On January 23, 1932, Franklin Roosevelt announced that he was a candidate for president on the Democratic ticket. It was one week

before his fiftieth birthday. He built a team of advisors called the “brain trust.” They made plans to fight the Depression. He talked about the suffering of the “forgotten man.” This was the farmer who lost his land, the worker who lost his job, the family that lost its home. The term “forgotten man” became a battle cry because so many Americans felt forgotten by their government.

In July 1932 Roosevelt flew to Chicago to accept the Democratic nomination for president. He was the first nominee to ever personally go to a convention to accept the job. Dressed in a blue suit with a red rose in his lapel, Roosevelt made his way slowly to the podium. The cheering, clapping delegates broke into the song, “Happy Days are Here Again.” Roosevelt promised a “New Deal” for America.



Herbert Hoover had tried to solve the Great Depression. Conditions only grew worse. Americans were losing hope. Now, for many, hope was coming back.

Franklin Roosevelt **brimmed** with warmth, vitality, and confidence. He set out on a cross-country tour. Each of his hundreds of talks was devoted to a major issue. He discussed relief, public works, farm prices, and conservation.

He discussed unemployment insurance and long term programs to fix problems with the American economy.

As he campaigned for reelection, Hoover warned the people that Roosevelt's plans would threaten liberty. He said they would give the government too much control over the lives of people. The government would grow too strong. But most Americans were worried about surviving. They were not afraid of Roosevelt's plans.

On election day, Franklin Roosevelt won 42 states, and Hoover won 6. Roosevelt's Democratic party won the Senate and the House of Representatives. Most Americans agreed it was time for a change.

There were four months between the election and the **inauguration** of the

new president on March 4, 1933. (This was later changed, making January 20 Inauguration Day.) During this interim period, the Depression was at its worst.

It had been a long winter without much food or shelter for many people. Fifteen million lived in shack towns dubbed “Hoovervilles” or in other **makeshift** living conditions. One of Roosevelt’s advisors, Rexford Tugwell, said that never had Americans seen such widespread misery in their land.

On the evening before the inauguration, Roosevelt told the American people “the only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” It was a call for courage and patience.



Franklin Roosevelt called Congress into emergency session. He began the most amazing one hundred days in any president's term. Laws passed with incredible speed.

In the first four days, the government worked on the banking system. When the Depression struck, money that people had put away in the bank was often lost. The banks went out of business. Roosevelt wanted to do something so that this would never happen again.

So all banks were placed under federal control. Before the end of the month, most of the banks were allowed to reopen and the people could get their money again. Ninety percent of the bank deposits were saved.

The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation was formed to keep all deposits secure for the future. The government from here on would **guarantee** deposits people put in the bank up to a certain amount. In 1933, the amount was \$5,000, and now it is \$100,000.

One of the causes of the Depression was the stock market crash. Roosevelt set up the Securities and Exchange Commission to regulate stocks. People could no longer buy stocks with small amounts and owe so much they could lose everything. From now on, the stock market had to play by fair rules.

President Roosevelt appeared frequently on the radio to make a “fireside chat.” He explained everything he was doing. As each new program was introduced, he explained it to the American people.

Many bills were passed during the first one hundred days. They came to be called “alphabet soup” after the letters that described them. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) gave jobs in conservation to a million young people. The Agricultural Adjustment Agency (AAA) paid farmers to control their production when prices began to fall. The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) brought cheap power to the region and provided jobs. The Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) loaned money to small businesses.

Some of Roosevelt's new laws were bitterly criticized. Some did not work as they were supposed to. But the new president was dealing with an economic disaster. He had to work fast. He tried many new things.

The Works Progress Administration (WPA) employed millions of jobless men. They built new post offices and bridges. Even unemployed writers were paid to write the histories of their states. The National Recovery Administration (NRA) used a blue eagle as its symbol. Companies that displayed this symbol agreed to reasonable wages and working hours for workers in return for guaranteed prices for their products.

But as more alphabet soup programs appeared, **opposition** to them increased. Some said that President Hoover had been right to warn the American people against Roosevelt's programs.



Some Republicans thought the government was playing too large a role in peoples' lives under Roosevelt. Suddenly, the government was telling farmers how much to plant and businessmen how much to charge. There was a lot of paperwork for people to fill out.

But the economy was coming to life. The most desperate misery had been eased. Some people were annoyed by all

the government activity. But they were not cold and hungry anymore. Relief and recovery seemed on the way.

One of the most far-reaching of Roosevelt's programs was the Social Security Act of 1935. Before this, Americans who were old or disabled had to live on whatever money they had saved or rely on charity. There were places called poorhouses where old, sick people lived in bitter poverty.

Under the Social Security Act, people who worked paid out a portion of their salaries to the government. When they were old they could depend on a pension. If they were laid off, they got unemployment compensation. If an employee died before retirement age and left dependent children, they would receive a pension. This was a revolutionary idea in its time. The

federal government was going to make sure every retired or disabled American had at least a small pension.

By 1936, Franklin Roosevelt had drastically changed America. The government acted as a watchdog for the banks and stock markets. They made sure trade unions could bargain fairly. Sometimes they set prices and wages. Some Americans believed the government had gone too far.

Late in 1935, the United States Supreme Court, which was made up mostly of Republican judges, decided to strike down some of Roosevelt's laws as unconstitutional. The justices believed the government was doing too much.

Franklin Roosevelt was afraid his entire program might be declared unconstitutional. He said that these

judges did not understand what a grave situation America was in. There were nine Supreme Court justices. Roosevelt developed a scheme where he could add six more. These new six would agree with him and save his program.

Shock and alarm greeted Roosevelt's idea. Some said he was trying to destroy the Constitution and become a dictator. But the nine men on the court were so frightened by the idea that they stopped declaring laws unconstitutional. By threatening drastic action, Roosevelt got his way.

When the election of 1936 came along, there was less unemployment, but the Great Depression continued. The economy had not yet recovered, but government programs were helping. Not everyone was happy, but most people saw improvement in their lives.

Since more people felt they were better off in 1936 than they had been in 1932, Roosevelt was reelected to a second term. Still, many believed the New Deal of Franklin Roosevelt had been a failure.

But now another dark cloud was rising on the horizon. The entire world had been suffering from the Great Depression that **ravaged** the United States. It was extremely bad in Germany. Families were fighting their neighbors over the contents of garbage cans just to stay alive. Five weeks before the United States inaugurated Franklin Roosevelt, Germany also greeted a new leader. Like Roosevelt, he too promised his people that he would lift them from economic misery. His name was Adolf Hitler. In the 1930s, he became a terrible menace to all humanity.



The American people did not pay much attention to the rise of Adolf Hitler in Germany. After fighting World War I, Americans were sick of thinking about the problems of Europe. Most Americans were **isolationists**. They wanted the United States to be isolated from the troubles of the rest of the world. But extremely dangerous things were happening in the world.

Japan was very **militaristic**. Hitler formed an alliance with Japan and also with another dictator, Benito Mussolini of Italy. Mussolini attacked Ethiopia in Africa and took over the country. Hitler grabbed part of Czechoslovakia. Japan threatened China. President Roosevelt wrote a letter to Hitler and Mussolini asking them to stop all aggression against other nations. They ignored the letter.

It was clear to Roosevelt even then that the world was in trouble. Germany, Italy, and Japan were threatening the peace and safety of the entire world. Roosevelt feared that if something was not done to head them off, there would be a disaster. But this is not what the American people wanted to hear.

On October 5, 1937, Franklin Roosevelt gave the “Quarantine

Speech.” He compared the aggressive intentions of Germany, Italy, and Japan to a spreading disease. These nations, he argued, had to be **quarantined** from the rest of humanity. Roosevelt asked all honorable nations to join together to wall off these states which were known as the “Axis Powers.” This could be done if all nations refused to trade with the criminal nations. But it was already too late.

In 1939 Hitler invaded Poland. France and Britain declared war on Germany. President Roosevelt told the American people that he still hoped to keep America out of war. But he said America had to send military supplies to help Britain and France. He said America had to become an “arsenal of Democracy.” This was done through the Lend Lease Act.

The United States began pouring military aid to the Allies (France, Britain, and others), but it seemed there was no stopping the Axis march. Hitler swept across Denmark, Norway, and then France. German bombs were raining down on Great Britain.

At this time, Roosevelt learned of another horror taking place in Germany. Hitler had set up death camps to kill the entire Jewish population as well as others that Hitler considered unfit to live. Roosevelt now believed the threat facing the world from Hitler was the greatest of any danger in history.

In September 1940 Roosevelt began transferring American ships to Britain. Some Republicans were angry. They said this violated American law and would drag the United States into an unwanted war. They reminded

Roosevelt of his promise to keep America at peace.

Roosevelt ran for a third term in 1940 against Republican Wendell Wilkie. Roosevelt and Wilkie did not disagree much about the threat Hitler posed to the world. But many other Republicans bitterly disagreed with any American involvement in the war. Roosevelt was elected to a third term, the first American president ever to serve three terms.

The American people knew Hitler was evil and dangerous. They were hoping the Allies would defeat him. But they still wanted to stay out of the war. Charles Lindbergh, who in 1927 had been the first person to fly a solo airplane flight across the Atlantic ocean, set up an organization called America First. Lindbergh was a national hero. He

argued against any American participation in the war against Hitler. In a poll taken in November 1941, eighty percent of the American people agreed with Lindbergh.

President Roosevelt knew that war was inevitable. In September of 1940, he instituted the **draft**. He built the American army for the conflict he knew was coming.

On December 7, 1941, Japanese planes attacked the American naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Thirty-five hundred Americans died. Eight ships were sunk. It was a terrible blow to the U.S. Navy. President Roosevelt called the day one that would “live in infamy.”

The following day, Congress declared war on Japan. Germany and Italy then declared war on the United States since

they were allies of Japan. The sneak attack on Pearl Harbor settled the issue of how and when the United States would join the war on Hitler and the Axis.

Franklin Roosevelt, who had taken office in 1933 and dealt with the most terrible economic disaster in American history, would now lead his country in the most dangerous war in human history. It was clearly a war for survival. No one could imagine without deep terror how it would be to live in a world ruled by Adolf Hitler. America and its allies had to win.

Roosevelt was fifty-nine years old and still vigorous. He plunged into this battle with the same confidence and determination with which he had taken on the Great Depression.



Franklin Roosevelt chose General Dwight D. Eisenhower to lead the war in Europe, and Admiral Chester Nimitz to command forces in the Pacific. In November 1942 American forces invaded Axis positions in Africa. In July 1943 Americans invaded Sicily and forced the surrender of Italy.

The war in the Pacific, however, was deadly. Japanese forces attacked throughout Asia. In April 1942

American and Philippines forces were trapped and forced to surrender at Bataan. Many died in a brutal forced march. The first good news came when Americans destroyed one fourth of the Japanese fleet at Midway Island.

In January 1943 Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill met. They decided they would demand unconditional surrender of Germany and Japan. There would be no **negotiated** peace.

At home, Roosevelt's war effort was total. Labor, industry, and science went all out for the war effort. Civilian products all but vanished. No more automobiles or appliances. Even nylon stockings were not made. American industry produced fifty thousand planes just in 1942. During the war, almost three hundred thousand planes were

made. So were seventy-one thousand ships and eighty-six thousand tanks. There were price controls on everything to prevent war profiteering. Americans needed ration stamps to buy everything from gasoline to sugar and coffee.

On June 6, 1944, the most massive land invasion in the history of war was launched on the continent of Europe. For six weeks, the area had been pounded from the air with bombs. Then thousands of Americans and Allied troops landed on the beach at Normandy in an operation called D-Day.

The Germans were ready for them. The beaches were mined, covered with barbed wire, and guarded by artillery. On the first day, the loss of life was dreadful. Wave after wave of soldiers fell before German gunfire. But by the end

of the week, tens of thousands of Allied soldiers had dug in. The recapture of France was assured. The D-Day invasion insured the defeat of Germany.

The war in the Pacific though was not yet won. Japan had not been defeated. In November 1944 Franklin Roosevelt ran for a fourth term as president. He did not want to run. At sixty-two, he looked and felt old. His strength had drained. He wanted desperately to go home to Hyde Park and rest. But the task was not yet done.

Roosevelt felt it was his duty to remain at the helm. Visitors to the White House were shocked at how Roosevelt looked. His face looked ravaged, his skin ashen. The muscles around his lips did not seem to work anymore.

Roosevelt campaigned from the back of an open touring car against

Republican Thomas Dewey. He won, and when it came time for the inauguration, a marine guard had to lift Roosevelt to the lectern to make a brief, labored speech. He was clearly a man at the end of his life.

In February 1945 Roosevelt met at Yalta with Winston Churchill, and another ally, Joseph Stalin of the Soviet Union. They decided to divide Germany into four sectors after the war and to set up a United Nations. Roosevelt was sick and weary and unable to represent the United States well. Stalin was able to gain control of Eastern Europe. Many critics accused Roosevelt of allowing the dangerous spread of communism from the decisions made at Yalta.

On March 29, 1945, Franklin Roosevelt left Washington to go to

Warm Springs to rest. He rallied. Color returned to his face and his spirits rose. On Thursday morning, April 12, he read some newspapers and relaxed.

Roosevelt planned to sit for a portrait in the afternoon. Wearing a dark blue suit and a red tie, he settled into a leather chair. As the artist worked, Roosevelt signed some documents.

Suddenly he put his hand to his head and complained of terrible pain. He slumped in the chair and his doctor rushed to his side. Four hours later, Franklin Roosevelt was pronounced dead of a massive cerebral hemorrhage.

Eleanor Roosevelt arrived in Warm Springs the next day to take her husband home. His coffin was placed on a funeral train and huge crowds along the way waved as the train made

its way to Hyde Park. Roosevelt was buried there in the rose garden.

Harry S. Truman became president, and on August 6, the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, by the United States. On August 9, the United States dropped another atomic bomb on Nagasaki. On August 14, Japan agreed to surrender and World War II was finally over.

The legacy of Franklin Roosevelt is the principle that the federal government is responsible to help the people in times of economic crisis by relief and recovery programs. Roosevelt forever changed the way people thought about government. He changed the life of every American from his time to the present. In today's America, some government program has or will touch the life of every man, woman, and child.

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## GLOSSARY

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- ambitious** - determined, striving
- annual** - yearly
- brimmed** - overflowed
- cabinet** - group of deputies and advisors of the president
- cerebral hemorrhage** - the bursting of a blood vessel in the brain
- contractors** - builders
- draft** - conscription, the enforced selection of people to join the military
- economic** - having to do with trade and industry
- financial** - having to do with money
- guarantee** - promise, pledge, security
- humanitarian** - caring, compassionate, charitable
- inauguration** - swearing in ceremony
- invalid** - a person who needs care, usually medical care
- isolationists** - people who wanted the U.S. to stay out of World War II
- legislature** - a group of representatives who make laws, congress
- luxury** - lavishness, magnificence
- makeshift** - crude, temporary
- mansion** - large house
- militaristic** - warlike, martial
- mischief** - trouble
- misgivings** - doubts
- negotiated** - cooperative, bargained
- nominee** - candidate
- opposition** - resistance
- optimistic** - hopeful, positive
- paralyzed** - unable to walk or move
- polio** - a disease that causes paralysis
- prep school** - a preparatory school, a private school that prepares students for higher education
- quarantined** - isolated, restricted
- ravaged** - destroyed, devastated
- regain** - recover
- rousing** - inspiring, moving, stirring, exciting
- sheltered** - protected from the troubles in certain situations
- tutor** - teacher
- yacht** - sailboat

## I N D E X

---

- Agricultural Adjustment Agency (AAA), 41  
Albany, New York, 21, 22  
Axis Powers, 50, 54, 55  
Black Thursday, 33, 34  
brain trust, 35  
Campobello Island, 9, 28  
Churchill, Winston, 56, 59  
Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), 41  
communism, 59  
Cox, James, 26  
D-Day, 57, 58  
Dewey, Thomas, 59  
Eisenhower, Dwight D., 55  
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), 40  
fireside chats, 41  
Germany, 47, 48, 50, 56, 58, 59  
Groton School, 11, 12, 18  
Harding, Warren, 27  
Harvard University, 13, 14, 15  
Hiroshima, Japan, 61  
Hitler, Adolf, 47, 48, 49, 51, 52, 53, 54  
Hoover, Herbert, 32, 34, 36, 37, 42  
Hoovervilles, 38  
Hyde Park, New York, 5, 6, 29, 58, 61  
Italy, 49, 50  
Japan, 49, 50, 53, 56, 58  
Lend Lease Act, 50  
Lindbergh, Charles, 52, 53  
Mercer, Lucy, 24, 25  
Mussolini, Benito, 49  
Nagasaki, Japan, 61  
National Recovery Administration (NRA), 42  
New Brunswick, Canada, 9  
New Deal, 35, 47  
Nimitz, Chester, 55  
Peabody, Rev. Endicott, 11, 12, 18  
Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, 53, 54  
polio, 28  
Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC), 41  
Roosevelt, Anna Eleanor, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 24, 25, 29, 60  
Roosevelt, Anna, 20  
Roosevelt, Elliot, 20  
Roosevelt, Franklin Jr., 22  
Roosevelt, James, 20  
Roosevelt, James Sr., 5  
Roosevelt, John, 24

## TITLES

Cesar Chavez  
Albert Einstein  
Anne Frank  
Mahatma Gandhi  
Helen Keller  
Martin Luther King Jr.  
Charles Lindbergh  
Rosa Parks  
Jackie Robinson  
**Franklin Delano Roosevelt**

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt forever changed the way people in the United States think about government and its leaders. He, along with his first lady Eleanor, led America with courage and vision through terrible times. Together they influenced the lives of every American, and their influence is still evident today. See how this unique man overcame difficult obstacles to become one of America's greatest leaders.

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