

Overall Rating:
☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Did you complete the book?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Almost

What was your overall opinion of the books?

What was your favorite part of the books?

What did you not like?

Your favorite quotes:

01. Albright examines of cases of Fascism around the world, from World War I through the present day. What common patterns does she describe that allowed Fascism to flourish?

02. One premise of Albright’s book is that the rise of Fascism in the twentieth century was not atypical and could happen again. Do you agree?

03. Does she successfully make the case that it’s important to talk about Fascism today?

04. When Albright describes Mussolini’s rise to power, she cites his talent for being theatrical and his use of the term “drenare la palude,” or “drain the swamp.” When she describes Hitler’s rise during the same time period, she talks about how he incessantly lied about himself and his enemies and how he convinced millions of people that he cared for them deeply. The parallels to Donald Trump are obvious. Do you think it’s fair to compare Trump to these particular historical figures?

05. Albright points out that the United States has not been immune to Fascism, including the embrace by some of the pro-Nazi America First Committee during World War II and Senator Joe McCarthy’s Communist hunts of the 1950s. How did the majority of the American public eventually come through these difficult experiences with a renewed commitment to democracy, and what does this suggest about how current political tensions might be resolved?

06. Albright describes a cartoon in which someone is eating a rotten egg, saying, “I assure you—parts of it are excellent!” How does the metaphor of the rotten egg relate to the condition of democracy today?

07. Albright says that technology has provided “both the blessing of a more informed public and the curse of a misinformed one.” How do social media and other nontraditional media sources help to spread disinformation—especially disinformation created with malicious intent?

08. Albright gives several examples of Fascism today, including the leadership of Viktor Orban in Hungary, Vladimir Putin in Russia, Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela, and Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey, among others. What can be learned from studying the rise of these leaders?

09. Albright points out that during his first presidential campaign, Donald Trump claimed that the United States was not a good messenger on the importance of due process, commenting, “For a person so quick to think the best of himself, it is peculiar that the president seems blind to what is most important about America—and so reluctant to speak out on behalf of the principles that are more intimately associated with the United States than any other country.” What responsibility do members of the American public have to ensuring that these principles and values are upheld?

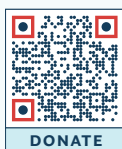
10. Albright weaves in a lot of her personal story throughout the book. As an immigrant who nonetheless feels deeply American, how did her own experiences shape her views about the potential dangers that the country is facing?

11. When asked whether she is an optimist or a pessimist, Albright describes herself as “an optimist who worries a lot.” What do you consider yourself to be, and why?

12. At the end of the book, Albright is hopeful. She ends it by referencing leaders like Abraham Lincoln and Nelson Mandela, who helped their countries move past periods of intense violence and division. She says that democracy’s problems can be overcome if we recognize history’s lessons and never take democracy for granted. The book was written in 2018, and Albright died in 2022. Do you think she would be as hopeful today? Why or why not?

QUOTES

- “ If Fascism concerns itself less with specific policies than with finding a pathway to power, what about the tactics of leadership? My students remarked that the Fascist chiefs we remember best were charismatic. Through one method or another, each established an emotional link to the crowd and, like the central figure in a cult, brought deep and often ugly feelings to the surface. This is how the tentacles of Fascism spread inside a democracy.
- “ [Mussolini] called on his followers to believe in an Italy that would be prosperous because it was self-sufficient, and respected because it was feared. This was how twentieth-century Fascism began: with a magnetic leader exploiting widespread dissatisfaction by promising all things.
- “ [Germany’s] political establishment—big business, the military, and the Church—had initially dismissed the Nazis as a band of loudmouthed hooligans who would never attract wide support. Over time, they saw value in the party as a bulwark against Communism, but nothing more. As for Hitler, they were not nearly so scared of him as they should have been. ... He was, to members of the old guard, clearly an amateur who was in over his head and unlikely to remain popular for long.
- “ McCarthy would neither have become a sensation, nor ruined the careers of so many innocent people, had he not received support from some of the nation’s leading newspapers and financing from right-wingers with deep pockets. He would have been exposed much sooner had his wild accusations not been met with silence by many mainstream political leaders from both parties who were uncomfortable with his bullying tactics but lacked the courage to call his bluff.
- “ Predictably, support for nondemocratic options is most evident among those, whether on the political right or left, who lack a higher education and are unhappy with their economic circumstances—precisely the groups hit hardest by the evolving nature of the workplace. The 2008 financial crisis reinforced this trend by causing many citizens to doubt the competence of their leaders and to question the fairness of systems that seem to protect the wealthy at the expense of everyone else.
- “ When a dictator abuses his authority, there is no legal way to stop him. When a free society falters, we still have the abilit—through open debate and the selection of new leaders—to remedy these shortcomings. ... That is democracy’s comparative advantage, and it should be recognized and preserved.
- “ There is nothing objectionable about wanting a strong leader—few yearn for a weak one—but the list of national leaders who were thought virtuous before revealing one or more disastrous effects begins with history itself and is still lengthening.



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