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"Readers interested in a serious revisionist examination of Kennedy’s life and record should look at A Question of Character, . . . a book that, judging by Hersh’s ‘Chapter Notes,’ seems not to have come to his attention. If it had, perhaps we would have been spared The Dark Side of Camelot.”

? Jonathan Yardley, in his Washington Post review of Seymour Hersh’s The Dark Side of Camelot.

"The John Kennedy who emerges from these pages was not a man of good moral character. He was reared not to be good but to win."? Los Angeles Times

"It is the Marilyn Monroe chapter that speaks the loudest in this book of the incredible hubris of Jack and Bobby Kennedy. You have to read it to believe it."? Liz Smith -- Review -- This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

By John G. Hilliard

This review is from: A Question of Character: A Life of John F. Kennedy (Paperback)

The title of the book says it all, A Question of Character. This is one author’s attempt at looking at the political life of President John F. Kennedy’s, before and during his time in the White House. It details the differences in what the spin is and the private life that is described as being close to Hugh Hefner’s. We also get a very detailed and for me, somewhat troubling, view of the constant controls his father, Joe Kennedy’s had of JFK throughout his career. Not that comforting given the somewhat dubious reputation of Joe.

The author came close to a Kitty Kelly sex scandal tell all, but did not completely let himself drop that low. I thought the author was almost sad to be telling me, the reader, some of the less than flattering truths here. Almost if he was a firm believer in Camelot and this book and research pained him. Overall this is a well-written book that has some interesting conclusions. The author could have spent more time on the domestic policies and international issues that faced JFK to make the account better rounded. I do not think it is the one-volume definitive story of JFK, but it is a very good start.

26 of 31 people found the following review helpful:

No hero worship, but not a chop-job either,
April 19, 2003
By chefdevergue (Spokane, WA United States) - See all my reviews

This review is from: A Question of Character: A Life of John F. Kennedy (Paperback)

As he cuts through the myths of Camelot, Thomas Reeves could have been content with dragging the name of JFK through the mud. That
It was far from a given that JFK could have won re-election in 1964, and Reeves knows this.

Overall, this is an excellent example of a measured, critical biography that contributes to the scholarly dialogue, rather than simply being a "tell-all" book.

By A Customer

This review is from: A Question of Character: The Life of John F. Kennedy (Paperback)

To those who want to get past the hype and drivel, Reeves' well written and researched book makes a convincing case that yes, character does matter. The argument that John Kennedy was a great, but flawed, leader is shown by Reeves to be erroneous. The seeds of the Bay of Pigs disaster were sown in Kennedy's youth. PT-109, interestingly, was the first and only PT boat ever rammed by an enemy destroyer. Not on a foggy night with the men topside, but in clear weather and daylight, with Kennedy and his men below decks sleeping and swapping war stories.

"My story about the collision is getting better all the time," Kennedy told a friend after launching his political career. "Now I've got a Jew and a Negro--in the story and with me being a Catholic, that's great."

Kennedy's bringing the U.S. to the brink of war was typical of the disasters he'd made in his personal and military life. The real reason the Soviets put missiles in Cuba was because of U.S. missiles in Turkey. School children are seldom taught that the U.S. had to withdraw its nuclear weapons from Turkey in exchange for the Soviets "backing down" in the Western Hemisphere.

From the Kennedys' dealings with the mob to the wiretaps of Martin Luther King, Jr., the fact that Kennedy could not remain faithful in a marital relationship is hardly a dichotomy in leadership. So yes, Virginia, character does count. Now and in the latter part of the 1990s. Those who say it doesn't are probably also lacking in this area.

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