

THE ACCIDENTAL PRESIDENT:

Harry S. Truman and the Four Months That Changed the World by A.J. Baime

Presented by ICL Reads 2023

SYNOPSIS:

Heroes are often ordinary men or women who, through fate and circumstance, are thrust into challenging situations, and through courage and a good deal of luck become enduring historical figures. Such a person was Harry S. Truman. In “Accidental President”, journalist A. J. Baime draws on letters, memoirs, and published sources to offer a fast-paced, well-detailed chronology of Truman's transformation from an official with little administrative responsibility into a politically astute and ultimately beloved leader.

Truman was chosen as FDR's fourth-term vice president for his well-praised work ethic, good judgment, and lack of enemies. Never briefed by his predecessor, he inherited a presidency, which he did not want. The first four tumultuous months of Truman's administration saw the founding of the United Nations, the fall of Berlin, victory at Okinawa, fire bombings in Tokyo, the first atomic explosion, the Nazi surrender, the liberation of concentration camps, the mass starvation in Europe, the Potsdam Conference,



the controversial decision to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the surrender of imperial Japan, and finally, the end of World War II and the rise of the Cold War. No other president has ever faced so much in such a short period of time

Author Baime escorts the reader through the new president's day-to-day—and sometimes hour-by-hour—schedule as he confronts these challenges. Although the narrative focus is on the challenges of this four-month period, readers are also given a comprehensive review of his pre-presidency. This engrossing read reminds us all that although fate can throw unexpected challenges, all of us are capable of doing things that we never imagined if we rely on our principles.

PROGRAMS:

THE BUCK STOPS HERE: THURSDAYS WITH TRUMAN

**Guest Speakers will join ICL Readers
via Zoom**

March 30, 2023, 1:00 - 2:30 PM

MEET THE AUTHOR, A.J. BAIME

Guest Speaker, A. J. Baime, Author

April 6, 2023, 9:30 - 11:30 AM

ON THE WAY TO THE WHITE HOUSE:

*Guest Speaker, Sam Rushay
Supervisory Archivist, Harry S. Truman
Library and Museum*

BESS' STORY

*Guest Speaker, Tammy Williams
Archivist, Harry S. Truman Library and
Museum*

April 13, 2023, 9:30 - 11:30 AM

POTSDAM: THE CONFERENCE THAT REMADE EUROPE

*Guest Speaker, Dr. Michael Neiberg
Chair of War Studies, US Army War
College*

April 20, 2023, 9:30 - 11:00 AM

HARRY TRUMAN AND THE SOVIET UNION

*Guest Speaker, Gary Midkiff
Historian and Professor*



BOOK DISCUSSIONS:

Thursday, March 16, 2023 9:30 - 11:00 AM

Thursday, March 23, 2023 1:00 - 2:30 PM

Not all readers are leaders, but all leaders are readers.

Learn what other ICL Readers have to say about The Accidental President and share your thoughts, likes, dislikes, memorable situations-and more.

For a detailed bibliography, visit iclru.org/icl-reads for related books, videos and documentaries.

All presentations and discussions (March - April) will be hosted on Zoom.

- Join our Facebook Group - ICL Reads!

READING GUIDE:

1. Character is so essential in a world leader: What were Truman's simple "heartland" values that made him a man of moral character?
2. What were Truman's most significant achievements in office?
3. Readers know the outcomes of most of the situations covered. How does author Baime turn those situations into a "factual page-turner"?
4. We know more about the atomic bomb now than Harry Truman did when he became president. Should a president be required to share similar information with the vice president? Considering Roosevelt's health, why do you think FDR did not share information about the program with his vice president?
5. Many of today's combustible conflicts can be traced back to Truman's time. What are some examples of this?
6. Truman's wife Bess and his daughter Margaret were only lukewarm about his political career and living in Washington D.C. Discuss what their lack of support meant to Truman personally and politically.
7. When did Truman's decision making style serve him well and when did it not? Provide examples.

(Sources: Committee members; <https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/Truman/David-McCullough/9780671456542>; <http://www.bookrags.com/studyguide-truman/topicsfordiscussion.html#gsc.tab=0>)

OUR SPEAKERS:



A.J. Baime
Author



Samuel Rushay, Ph.D.
Harry S. Truman
Library and Museum



Michael Neiberg,
Ph.D.
US War College



Tammy Williams
Harry S. Truman
Library and
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Gary Midkiff
Professor and
Historian

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"America was not built on fear. America was built on courage, on imagination and an unbeatable determination to do the job at hand."