
Kathleen McCallister

William & Mary, krmccallister@wm.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wm.edu/librariespubs

Part of the Library and Information Science Commons

Recommended Citation


https://scholarworks.wm.edu/librariespubs/5

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the William & Mary Libraries at W&M ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in W&M Libraries Publications by an authorized administrator of W&M ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@wm.edu.
Uncompromising determination; between Scotland and England; twins switched at birth & reunited

refuge in solitary surroundings with her beloved dog, Elvis, Auvinen reflects on her often contradictory needs for both isolation and community. VERDICT This memoir presents an engaging and uncompromising portrait of a woman seeking peace amid the untamed background of wilderness living. An essential purchase where memoirs circulate widely.—Mattie Cook, Flat River Community Lib., MI

Kennedy, Robert F. RFK: His Words for Our Times. Morrow. May 2018. 480p. ed. by Edwin O. Guthman & C. Richard Allen. notes. biblio. index. ISBN 9780062834102. $29.99; ebk. ISBN 9780062834119. BIOG Although former New York senator Robert Kennedy (1925–68) only held elected office from 1965 to 1968, he remains a political icon. Here, Allen, who served as President Bill Clinton’s deputy assistant, updates the late Guthman’s (Kennedy’s press officer from 1961 to 1965) original 1993 edition of this book. The editors include what they consider to be Kennedy’s most memorable speeches, and Allen adds commentary on the politician’s legacy from former presidents Clinton and Barack Obama, pundit Van Jones, and U2 singer Bono. This anthology is divided into four chapters that cover Kennedy’s service as counsel for the Senate Rackets Committee, 1956–59; his term as attorney general, 1961–64; his tenure as senator; and his tragic 1968 presidential campaign. Rich background information on policy and historical context introduces each chapter and frames each speech, which reveal Kennedy’s appeal to Democrats and Republicans, minorities and the middle class. Themes include civil rights, mistrust in large government, citizen participation in local government, eliminating poverty, and ending the Vietnam War. The speeches demonstrate Kennedy’s skill at connecting with large, enthusiastic audiences with promises of hope and equality. A companion website (rfkspeeches.com) features videos of speeches included here. VERDICT Will modestly appeal to RFK admirers, historians, and political communications specialists.—Karl Helicher, formerly with Upper Merion Twp. Lib., King of Prussia, PA

Lal, Ruby. Empress: The Astonishing Reign of Nur Jahan. Norton. Jul. 2018. 320p. illus. notes. index. ISBN 9780393365340. BIOG Born to Persian nobility traveling to the Mughal empire, Nur Jahan (1577–1645) survived an uncertain birth and childhood to go on to hunt tigers, lead men in battle, and wield power and influence at a level almost unheard of for a Muslim woman of that time, reigning over India with her husband, the emperor Jahangir, from 1614 to 1627. Lal’s (South Asian history, Emory Univ.; Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World) examination of Jahan’s life attempts to look beyond slanted historical opinions, legends, and fiction to form a more balanced viewpoint of her life. And while that resulting portrait still contains gaps—little record remains, for example, of Jahan’s early life, and none of exactly how she rose so quickly and so high from the ranks of Jahangir’s other wives—the author makes use of the absences to explore the upbringing of girls and the responsibilities of royal wives in the Mughal empire in general. VERDICT More a narrative history than full biography, Lal’s work nevertheless provides a vivid look at her subject and the world in which she lived. An excellent choice for popular history readers interested in women rulers.—Kathleen McCallister, Tulane Univ., New Orleans

Schwartz, Dana. Choose Your Own Disaster. Grand Central. Jun. 2018. 272p. ISBN 9781478970392. pap. $15.99; ebk. ISBN 9781478970385. BIOG Part memoir, part personality quiz, this book recounts many of the poor decisions arts and culture writer (the Guardian, Marie Claire, Vice, The New Yorker) and YA author (And We’re Off) Schwartz made during her 20s in a quirky, “choose your own adventure” style format. Her experiences are relatable, especially because she uses second-person singular to put readers in her shoes. She writes candidly about the disordered eating habits and mediocre men that dotted the landscape of her young adulthood with humor and unflinching honesty. She tells the real story of setting up the Twitter account @GuyInYourMFA while studying at Brown University, and how it led to a Tinder date in London with the same type of guy the Twitter account parodies—he recognized her as the creator. VERDICT Equal parts amusing and cringe-worthy, these stories will have millennial readers relating and older ones nodding, “Yes. I’ve made similar mistakes.”—Erin Shea, Ferguson Lib., CT