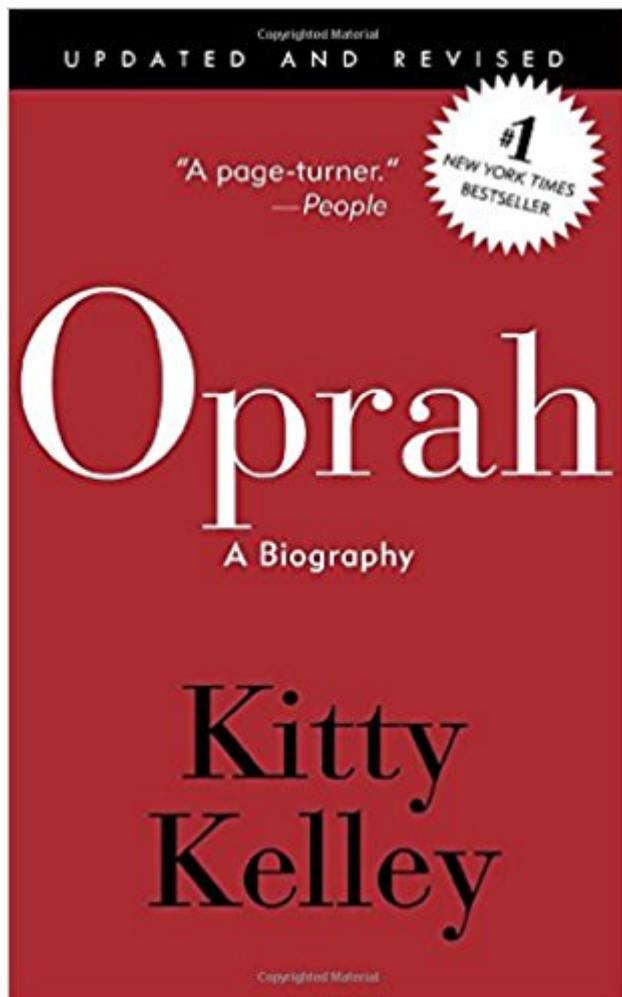


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Oprah: A Biography



Synopsis

For the past twenty-five years, no one has been better at revealing secrets than Oprah Winfrey. On what is arguably the most influential show in television history, she has gotten her guests—often the biggest celebrities in the world—to bare their love lives, explore their painful pasts, admit their transgressions, reveal their pleasures, and explore their demons. In turn, Oprah has repeatedly allowed her audience to share in her own life story, opening up about the sexual abuse in her past and discussing her romantic relationships, her weight problems, her spiritual beliefs, her charitable donations, and her strongly held views on the state of the world. After a quarter of a century of the Oprah-ization of America, can there be any more secrets left to reveal? Yes. Because Oprah has met her match. Kitty Kelley has, over the same period of time, fearlessly and relentlessly investigated and written about the world's most revered icons: Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, Frank Sinatra, Nancy Reagan, England's Royal Family, and the Bush dynasty. In her #1 bestselling biographies, she has exposed truths and exploded myths to uncover the real human beings that exist behind their manufactured facades. Turning her reportorial sights on Oprah, Kelley has now given us an unvarnished look at the stories Oprah's told and the life she's led. Kelley has talked to Oprah's closest family members and business associates. She has obtained court records, birth certificates, financial and tax records, and even copies of Oprah's legendary (and punishing) confidentiality agreements. She has probed every aspect of Oprah Winfrey's life, and it is as if she's written the most extraordinary segment of The Oprah Winfrey Show ever filmed—one in which Oprah herself is finally and fully revealed. There is a case to be made, and it is certainly made in this book, that Oprah Winfrey is an important, and even great, figure of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. But there is also a case to be made that even greatness needs to be examined and put under a microscope. Fact must be separated from myth, truth from hype. Kitty Kelley has made that separation, showing both sides of Oprah as they have never been shown before. In doing so she has written a psychologically perceptive and meticulously researched book that will surprise and thrill everyone who reads it.

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Customer Reviews

The tables are turned on Oprah Winfrey, as celebrity biographer Kelley digs deep to uncover the secrets of the talk show host and humanitarian. Kelley weaves her revelations from interviews with those who knew Oprah best--relatives, former lovers, and coworkers. Kelley's reading is inspired and professional, and her voice brims with remarkable selfassurance, making for a convincing presentation, despite the fact that this is an unauthorized biography. Although Kelly gets a bit breathy at times, she brings things back to the ground with a steady rhythm and energy. A compulsive (if slightly guilty) listen. A Random hardcover. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Kitty Kelley couldn't find very many people who like Oprah. Astonishingly, almost everyone she interviewed seems to have a bone to pick with the talk-show host, even Oprah's cousin and father (who might not be her father, after all). Of course, many of those people haven't seen Oprah in a long time; take the insulted woman who threw her a good-bye party when she left her first television job: "That was the last I saw of Oprah . . . she divorced herself from Nashville." Even when Oprah does something thoughtful, like return to Baltimore to spend time with a dying former coworker, she gets bashed for not attending the retirement party of another. As in her previous biographies, Kelley follows a predictable pattern. She gathers lots of information via published articles, on-the-record interviews (often with bit players), and anonymous quotes from those who may or may not be well connected. (Moreover, even the identified quotes are difficult to track in the massive list of source material in each chapter.) She then writes, in rather clunky prose, about her subject, twisting the story to prove her thesis—in this case that, yes, Oprah is a spinmeister and a controlling one at that. Though Oprah's many achievements and her charitable work are

lauded, there's usually a but following each positive statement, as Kelley attempts to show again and again that Winfrey's generosity is often self-serving. Typically, Kelley's biographies feature one juicy story that everyone seems to remember. Laura Bush sold dope in college. Nancy Reagan and Frank Sinatra had an affair. Unfortunately, Oprah seems sadly to lack that signature take-away anecdote. She had an affair with John Tesh? She once ate two pecan pies? No staying power there. Perhaps readers will have to be satisfied with the fact that Oprah's father called her best-friend Gayle King a "dirt hog." And that's on the record. --Ilene Cooper --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

This was an interesting book, and I am sure with several truths in it. I think sometimes the way Kitty dismantled Oprah with relish actually hurt the book's credibility. She does state facts, and even though she praises Oprah from time to time for her accomplishments, Kitty herself still comes across as a catty woman. I don't know what her intentions were, and I am not sure going behind Oprah's back to hear relatives bad mouth her is so ethical, but I do think everyone should read this, not so that we can expose the real Oprah or to humiliate her, but so that we don't run the risk of worshiping people and becoming envious of who we think they are. Oprah is still an amazing woman, and her last show has been informative, fun, off the beaten path and something to look forward to watching when it was on. Her envy of beautiful white girls is something I think all of us share. Maybe just for a few minutes in our life would we like to experience that lightness and ability to be liked just for how we looked. Most of us also think these beautiful girls aren't bitter or depressed, so yes, I think it is a normal thing, and Kitty should not have pointed it out as being important and central to Oprah's motivation as a person. Oprah is my age, and disappointingly, I have not accomplished anything I thought I would, and I came from a very decent home, not wealthy, not "Little House on the Prairie" type, but one of values, and fights, and real people who made efforts to be faithful and keep loving. Oprah's accomplishments could make me feel worthless, but I don't and am quite grateful for what I do have: a loving husband, three very human but wonderful children. My complaints about my parents, may they rest in peace, totally disappear, because I see that not everyone had what I had, a mother who really cared and was ready to fight for what she thought was best for us, a father who adored all of us, despite his flaws, and siblings who have a conscience and have never been complacent about their place in the world. So Kitty's biography put my own life in perspective, and maybe she can do that for you.

It was a quick read. I purchased it because it was only \$1.99 for the Kindle ebook. This "tell all" was

really no surprise to me. So you want to nitpick on her weight, on her confidential agreements, on her threats to sue if people talk bad about her, on her past-what may or may not be true, etc. From her being accessible to not. In reality you cannot fault her. I mean even if she didn't play it off like she was the poorest of the poor in the south-she was still poor. Or are we disagreeing with that? Then she grew up, made a name for herself, and made millions and billions of dollars. All the while not only being female but a black female (regardless of what shade of black). I give credit where credit is due. She has earned every penny and even confidential agreement she has in front of her. Does she use the cameras at the right time to promote her good deeds? Probably. But who doesn't and does that mean she gets marks against her good will? I'm far from an Oprah fanatic but give her more positives than negatives. As far as Ms. Kelley-I give her credit for trying to write a book on a person who is pretty secretive about her life without very many people to be able to spill the beans. With that said-this book could have been reduced by quite a bit. A lot of it was repeated throughout the book. Overall good, nothing new or shocking. I hope Oprah, herself, eventually writes a memoir or autobiography. I think her "rags to riches" story can give a lot of people inspiration.

Okay, that title is not entirely true. I learned a fair amount about Oprah that I did not know from this sensationalized biopic. However, with the revelation of every fact, Kitty Kelly turned up the overkill on the dirt. Apparently, according to Kelly, every single good deed of Oprah's can be turned over to reveal a steaming, worm-infested underbelly. I'm not sure if this was Kelly's intention, but by the end of the book, Kelly's continual smut-smearing campaign against Ms. O left me counting myself firmly on Team Oprah--if there was ever any doubt, which I guess there wasn't. Sure, I've had my moments of adoration and disappointment with the queen of daytime television (James Frey indictment, Sarah Palin fiasco, George W. Bush, really???). But would I think any less of her because of all the garbage Kitty Kelly smeared on page after printed page? Quite the opposite. I felt that this biography humanized Oprah. She has always had a larger than life public persona and this biopic tried to bring her down to size, but in the end all it proved is that Oprah will likely never stoop as low as Kitty Kelly, not even for ratings or a best selling book. So I'm looking forward to the Kitty Kelly biopic. Who wants to write it?

I enjoyed this perspective of Oprah and her quirks & foibles, even though it does not paint a pretty picture. Ms. Kelly stays true to her revelation style as in previous unauthorized biographies

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