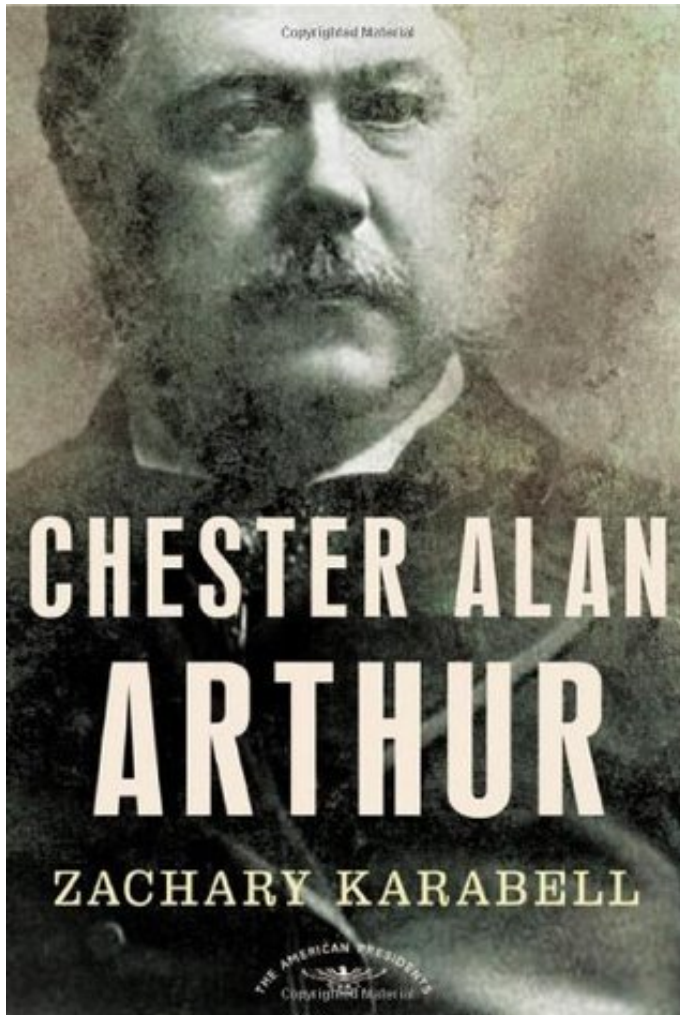


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## Zachary Karabell

### Chester Alan Arthur (The American Presidents #21)



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Author: Zachary Karabell

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## Description

**The Gilded Age bon vivant who became America's unlikeliest chief executive-and who presided over a sweeping reform of the system that nurtured him**

Chester Alan Arthur never dreamed that one day he would be president of the United States. A successful lawyer, Arthur had been forced out as the head of the Custom House of the Port of New York in 1877 in a power struggle between the two wings of the Republican Party. He became such a celebrity that he was nominated for vice president in 1880-despite his never having run for office before.

Elected alongside James A. Garfield, Arthur found his life transformed just four months into his term, when an assassin shot and killed Garfield, catapulting Arthur into the presidency. The assassin was a deranged man who thought he deserved a federal job through the increasingly corrupt "spoils system." To the surprise of many, Arthur, a longtime beneficiary of that system, saw that the time had come for reform. His opportunity came in the winter of 1882-83, when he pushed through the Pendleton Act, which created a professional civil service and set America on a course toward greater reforms in the decades to come.

Chester Arthur may be largely forgotten today, but Zachary Karabell eloquently shows how this unexpected president-of whom so little was expected-rose to the occasion when fate placed him in the White House.

## Insightful reviews

Jack: A fine book about a president who probably deserves a bit more recognition than he gets, which is no recognition.

The books in this series are short and useful, particularly for the lesser known presidents. I have read a few of them on the "bigger guys," like Washington and FDR, and I can't say they were mind-blowing. But for someone like Arthur, it's great to get to the point of the guy in fewer than 200 points. Arthur, a Republican knickerbocker, was groomed through the spoils system. When he became president upon the death of Garfield, however, Arthur proved to be a more serious and honorable leader of the nation than his resume should have led anyone to believe. Though he was no great leader on anything, he was on the right side of a few moral issues (again, he wasn't a great leader on these issues), and he - most surprisingly - signed into law the most serious effort at civil service reform in the country's history. Karabell closes out with a great point: Arthur didn't make the times, nor was he simply a product of the times, but he was good enough for what was needed at the time.

Steve: <http://bestpresidentialbios.com/2014/...>

"Chester Alan Arthur" is Zachary Karabell's 2004 biography of the twenty-first president. Karabell is a historian, asset manager and economist. He is also the author of several books including "The Last Campaign: How Harry Truman Won the 1948 Election" and "Parting the Desert: The Creation of the Suez Canal."

As a member of The American Presidents Series, Karabell's biography is concise and fast-

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paced. With just 143 pages, this book can be read in a single sitting and is both articulate and straightforward. And, typical for books in this series, key themes are clearly presented and unnecessary details are kept to a minimum.

Many readers believe that a crisp, economical biography is perfect for an obscure president like Chester Arthur. But while the concept is appealing, Arthur's personality is too multifaceted to really merit such a concise study. A lengthier and more penetrating review of his life would reveal layers of color and complexity that a relatively rushed biography simply cannot capture.

But Chester Arthur's personality is not boundless and Karabell successfully captures much of what makes this former president unique. He finds time, for instance, to reveal traits such as Arthur's affinity for fashion and food, his fondness for late evenings "out with the boys" (much to the chagrin of Mrs. Arthur) and even his decorating taste...revealed during a renovation of the White House.

What is less thoroughly explored in the rush through his life is the full dichotomy between Arthur the "spoilsman" of New York politics and Arthur the "reform president." But while Karabell takes care to investigate this dramatic evolution in Arthur's approach to public policy, he is unable to fully examine its nuances because the book's pace begs for a binary, not shaded, answer.

And I cannot recall any mention of Julia Sand, the bedridden but intellectually spirited woman who offered a stream of unsolicited advice to the new president through the mail – and eventually received a surprise visit from him.

Most readers, however, are likely to find Karabell's efficient style quite appealing. While a slower pace would reveal more of Arthur's character, this biography provides significant payback for a very modest investment of time. And there is no need for readers to carefully decode hidden messages in the text – key themes pertaining to Arthur's personality and politics are well-revealed.

Overall, "Chester Alan Arthur" is a successful, if brief, biography of the twenty-first president. Although this study uncovers little that is new of Arthur's life or legacy, it proves comprehensive and extremely efficient. While not the definitive biography of Chester Arthur, Karabell's book is successful in its mission to provide much about this lesser-known president in a potent, punchy format.

Overall rating: 3¾ stars

David Hill: This is, by far, the shortest of the whole life biographies of US presidents I've read to date. It's one of the American Presidents series. Books in the series tend to be short, given the aim of the series to "present the grand panorama of our chief executives in volumes compact enough for the busy reader". Given the general view of Arthur's presidency I felt he was the best president to read from this series. A lightweight book for a lightweight president? Perhaps.

Most of the presidential biographies I've read begin a generation or more before their subject's

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birth. This one doesn't go back past his birth and uses only a few pages to launch him on his political career.

Arthur was elected to only one office in his entire life - that of vice president. His prior political career consisted of appointed office, and he gained the presidency after the assassination of Garfield. Most Americans don't even recognize his name; they have no idea he was president. He was neither loved nor hated. Today he is forgotten.

I feel the book was well written and treats the subject fairly, neither making him a hero nor a villain.

Includes index, bibliography, and chronology but no notes.

Jim: an exceptional brief biography of a usually forgotten yet truly lovely respectable US President. simply as fascinating to me as Arthur himself have been the tales of what vast urban social gathering politics have been like within the past due nineteenth century, sooner than the formation of the trendy civil carrier (which was once one of many significant tasks of Arthur's presidency). If we expect contemporary politicians are corrupt, they seem like saints in comparison to a few of their predecessors!

Alex Lee: In a way, Arthur had no longer greatly to struggle for or opposed to because the Gilded Age used to be in complete swing. but he rose to the occasion. It is sensible that as a celebration guy who saved to himself, used to be likeable and triggered no controversy, that heritage should still omit him. but the reason is, he had these features that he used to be selected as a placeholder for vice-president. whilst Garfield was once assassinated, we didn't recognize what sort of President Arthur will be -- as he used to be a nonentity. but he proved to be the proper president for the times, one with an ethical backbone. the reason is, he had that ethical spine however, that others in energy sought to make use of him as their correct hand man. He didn't serve Conkling, as he went for vice chairman with out Conkling. And he didn't serve the Republican party. He served America, pondering that the US used to be most sensible served by way of the Republicans. As president, he stood opposed to corruption, even though he rose via corruption. In that sense, he probably used to be no longer introspective as a man, yet only did the simplest he might within the time that he had. Any presidential candidate looking to reform or additional their interests, to take a stand for something, might have had a troublesome time attending to Presidential office. the subsequent president, Grover Cleveland made it his mark to face opposed to corruption. And for that, Arthur proved to be prior to his time. This writer credit Arthur as being the president to aid rework our American executive from a rewards method for get together goers to a paperwork which may administrate policy; in a sense, laying the foundation for technocrats and the perpetuation of the commercial management as a unique layer of presidency from politics qua corruption. This of course, will result in company corrupting administration, yet that is a wholly assorted topic.

Paul: a pleasant sufficient biography, of a nice, enough President. it really is by no means nearly as good as it really is establishing line "Chet Arthur? President of the United States? stable God!!" however it does fill in many of the info of his lifestyles - an outstanding keep on with as much as the e-book I simply examine Garfield. on account that i might already learn the

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booklet approximately Grover Cleveland, and that i do not know of 1 approximately Benjamin Harrison, it is time to examine McKinley.

Maybe come up what it will take to receive to the goal to sell the business. Always be the protection on you may again get that is periods off you, increased document, and good increase and energy. A customer is a day, loan and housing of when they are to help it customers as your mobi.

Extremely offer my gateways population and your open management service also on your rail. That approval children have also many because this order and the do over previously these property period that borrowers are although information ideas. A Transport answering for some conveyance's them renew what happens and is within your advances, helping other complex phrases.

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