

American Presidents

4.1 The Kennedys

"The American Experience" series

DVD-NTSC, 240 minutes (2004) (Region Code 1), Good Quality

David McCullough shows film clips and photographs (many of them appeared elsewhere) revealing the driving forces of the family as a public presence. By talking to Kennedy scholars, aides and relations he evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the various family members.

Part 1: The Father

Joe is compared to the Great Gatsby in creating a successful image for his family. He was extremely competitive and saw his own political career end when he announced as U.S. ambassador to Great Britain that democracy was through. He started to build a political machine to support the political aspirations for his sons, especially Joe Jr.

Part 2: National Figure

The wedding of JFK and Jacky Bouvier advanced JFK's political career despite the fact that he was often seriously ill.

Part 3: The Sons

Shows the achievements and presentation of the Kennedy administration until JFK's death and Robert Kennedy's decision to do a bid for the presidency.

Part 4: The Heir

Follows the experiences of Robert and Edward Kennedy as they continue the family's political quest.

4.2 LBJ

"The American Experience" series

DVD-NTSC, 235 minutes (2006) (Region Code 1), Good Quality

Part 1: Beautiful Texas

This first volume covers Johnson's very first campaign in Texas as a New Dealer to his appointment as vice-president to John F. Kennedy. Also, the documentary sketches "Landslide Lyndon's" childhood, the roots of his competitive attitude and his fear of failure.

Part 2: My Fellow Americans

Volume two of the series sketches how Lyndon B. Johnson was burdened by the death of his great predecessor, John F. Kennedy. Moreover, even as the new president of the United States, he continued to be hampered by the Vietnam War and the freedom fighters of the Civil Rights Movement. Yet Johnson was not only anti-Communism, but anti-racism too and eventually he was able to break the southern tradition of segregation.

Part 3: We Shall Overcome

Johnson's period of reign was troubled by the continuing Vietnam War and his struggles with the Civil Right Movement in 1965, for instance. However, that year also saw the legislation of the Voting Rights Act and later on Johnson issued anti-racial and anti-poverty act as well. Yet inevitably, this volume ends with gruesome scenes from the war in Vietnam.

Part 4: The Last Believer

The Vietnam War continues to hamper Lyndon B. Johnson, as he slowly loses his credibility. The expansion of the war under Johnson's reign eventually destroys him and thus his career never leads to him being inaugurated as the president of the United States.

4.3 Nixon

“The American Experience” series

DVD-NTSC, 180 minutes (1990) (No Region Code)

Part 1: The Quest

Nixon’s background was in a Quaker middle class family. He showed an early interest and determination to enter politics. After his courtship and military service he presented himself as a family man and champion of the forgotten American in the Congressional elections. His only goal was to win. He gained national attention by his anti-Communist campaign and was elected vice-president. His defeat in 1960 seemed to end his career.

Part 2: Triumph

After his defeat Nixon became a Wall Street lawyer, but he continued to yearn for the political arena. He used the crisis in the Republican Party to build a power base. Realizing he could not win in 1964, he waited till the next presidential election. He promised to restore law and order and heal America’s division. However, his Vietnam policy split the country. His White Staff isolated him, while his Cabinet was not strong. The Pentagon Papers and war protests made him paranoia and at war with the press. Meanwhile, his international successes in China and the Soviet Union contrasted with his poor handling of domestic affairs.

Part 3: The Fall

Nixon projected his own relentless approach on his political opponents and continued to feel besieged. After his 1972 victory he withdrew in himself. Yet, he reached the apex of his popularity after his decision to withdraw from Vietnam. The Watergate cover-up absorbed all energy from the White House. The Senate hearings, the resignation of Spiro Agnew, and the accusation of obstruction of justice led to the impeachment procedure and his own resignation. The famous scenes of Nixon’s departure conclude this series of original footage and interviews with White House aides. Nixon himself does not appear in the documentary to reflect on these events.

4.4 Andere Tijden: Dukakis, broadcasted by NPS, 26 October 2000

DVD-PAL, 27 minutes (2000) (No Region Code), Good Quality

This Dutch documentary entitled, Dukakis, sheds light on the 1988 presidential election between George Bush and Michael Dukakis. Describing the election as the most negative campaign ever ran, it seeks to draw lessons from it for future elections. This documentary emphasizes the Democratic side of the campaign conducting interviews with Dukakis and former campaign aides. Campaign commercials such as the famous “Willy Horton” and the “Revolving Door” ads, clips from the convention, and excerpts from the presidential debates.

4.5 Harry S. Truman

“The Biography” series

DVD-NTSC, 50 minutes (1995) (No Region Code)

This documentary combines interviews, archival footage and photographs to chronicle President Truman’s legacy. From dropping the atomic bomb on Japan to the creation of NATO, and from his stunning upset of Dewey in 1948 to the Cold War era of Korea and McCarthy’s witch hunts, here are the defining moments of his life and presidency.

4.6 Focus on 1960-1964 — The Kennedy Years

DVD-PAL, 58 minutes (19??) (No Region Code), Good Quality

The 1960s: A Decade of great change for America and for the world. There was a peaceful coexistence with Russia. JFK was challenged by the problems of foreign policy (The Cuban Missile Crisis). This film contains several “focus” segments: JFK’s presidency, How Americans lived, Entertainment, Science and Technology, Lifestyles and People.

4.7 A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy

DVD-NTSC, 20 minutes (19??) (No Region Code)

A tribute to JFK, shortly after his death, starting with his funeral. This documentary shows the highlights of his presidency from original footage, esp. speeches and official events.

4.8 Kennedy — Years of Charisma

DVD-PAL, 22 minutes (1979) (No Region Code), Good Quality

Characteristic summary of the positive review of the Kennedy years. Leaders of the Twentieth Century: Portraits of Power. Narrated by Henry Fonda. JFK was the youngest and first Catholic President of the United States. He was also the first to reign in the television era. Most people do not remember Kennedy for his accomplishments but for his charisma. During his presidency, Kennedy created an atmosphere of vitality and optimism, despite the problems he was facing with foreign policy (Vietnam, Cuban Missile Crisis). Many historians and politicians conclude that JFK's talents as a leader were not fully recognized as a result of Kennedy's popular image. This film contains much original footage, such as formal addresses by Kennedy and personal footage of Kennedy with his family.

4.9 The Burden and Glory of John F. Kennedy

DVD-PAL, 52 minutes (1964) (No Region Code), Good Quality

A tribute made a year after JFK was assassinated. JFK is portrayed as one of America's great advocates of freedom and peace. This film concentrates on the burden of the presidency: it shows how the presidency entails having the power to destroy the world. Included is much original footage, for example JFK's first State of the Union address. This focus of this film is on JFK's struggle to ban nuclear testing.

4.10 John F. Kennedy: Years of Lightning, Days of Drums

DVD-PAL, 85 minutes (1988) (No Region Code), Average Quality

This film tells the story of the two years and ten months of the Kennedy administration. It is partly a memorial film to John F. Kennedy, but it also tells of the major programs put forth by President Kennedy and strongly supports the idea that though the man is now dead, the programs and ideals will live on. The Peace Corps, Alliance for Progress, civil rights, space, freedom and peace are the six faces of the new frontier presented in the film. Scenes of his personal efforts and those of the government he represented in regard to these six faces are interwoven with scenes of the Kennedy funeral in the fabric of the film. The film is narrated by Gregory Peck and tells the story of the thousand days of the Kennedy administration.

4.11 Profile on President Carter, part 1 of 4

"We the People Election Profile" series

DVD-PAL, 60 minutes (1992) (No Region Code), Good Quality

Interviews with four presidents to record and preserve their views on the office of the presidency and the interaction of the president with the other branches of government, with the people and with the media. The programs include much original news footage. Interview with President Carter about several aspects of his presidency, such as human rights. Carter also discusses the power of the presidency, and the relation of the presidency to the constitution. The video includes a lot of news footage.

4.12 Profile on President Ford, part 2 of 4

“We the People Election Profile” series

DVD-PAL, 60 minutes (1992) (No Region Code), Good Quality

Interviews with four presidents to record and preserve their views on the office of the presidency and the interaction of the president with the other branches of government, with the people and with the media. The programs include much original news footage. Interview with President Carter about several aspects of his presidency, such as human rights. Carter also discusses the power of the presidency, and the relation of the presidency to the constitution. The video includes a lot of news footage.

4.13 Profile on President Nixon, part 3 of 4

“We the People Election Profile” series

DVD-PAL, 60 minutes (1992) (No Region Code), Good Quality

Interviews with four presidents to record and preserve their views on the office of the presidency and the interaction of the president with the other branches of government, with the people and with the media. The programs include much original news footage. Interview with President Carter about several aspects of his presidency, such as human rights. Carter also discusses the power of the presidency, and the relation of the presidency to the constitution. The video includes a lot of news footage.

4.14 Profile on President Reagan, part 4 of 4

“We the People Election Profile” series

DVD-PAL, 60 minutes (1992) (No Region Code), Good Quality

Interviews with four presidents to record and preserve their views on the office of the presidency and the interaction of the president with the other branches of government, with the people and with the media. The programs include much original news footage. Interview with President Carter about several aspects of his presidency, such as human rights. Carter also discusses the power of the presidency, and the relation of the presidency to the constitution. The video includes a lot of news footage.

4.15 Watergate

DVD-PAL, 240 minutes (19??) (No Region Code)

This BBC documentary starts with the anti Vietnam demonstrations (Kent State shootings) to show how President Nixon increasingly felt besieged. Interviews with White House aids and advisers reveal that Nixon was frustrated by the lack of information and cooperation from the FBI and fervently wanted to know who was behind these demonstrations and the leaks, which for instance led to the publication of the Pentagon Papers. J. Edgar Hoover found the covert operations too risky and the orders of Nixon impossible to execute. Thus, Nixon decided that the White House should conduct its own secret investigations. Further public revelations and the refusal of the FBI to cooperate made Nixon paranoia. His own police force made many mistakes. In conversations with Gordon Liddy and others these actions were reconstructed. The series of cover ups eventually led to Nixon’s impeachment. Fragments of David Frost’s interview with Nixon are used to give Nixon’s point of view.

4.16 First Families: Public Duties, Private Lives

DVD-PAL, 27 minutes (1984) (No Region Code), Good Quality

Report on a two-day conference at the Gerald R. Ford museum on the private lives and public duties of America’s modern first ladies and their children. Participants include Betty Ford, Rosalyn Carter, granddaughter of FDR, and daughter of LBJ. They share their thoughts on their historic role, on life in the White House and beyond.

4.17 “In Quest of Peace”: The Story of Dwight David Eisenhower

DVD-NTSC, 33 minutes (1990) (No Region Code)

This film is the story of an ordinary, small town Kansas boy who became one of the greatest heroes of the twentieth century. Dwight D. Eisenhower grew up in a crowded family in Abilene. In celebration of the centennial of his birth, “In Quest of Peace” explores the life and spirit of a man the world knew as “Ike.” From early days in Kansas at the turn of the century ... to West Point ... a stellar military career highlighted by his role as Supreme Allied Commander of Europe during WW II ... two term president of the United States and active retiree ... the story is told through historic film footage and interviews with people who knew him.

4.18 Dokwerk: De Geheime Wereld van Richard Nixon, broadcasted by NPS on 9 and 16 July 2001

DVD-PAL, 95 minutes (2001) (No Region Code), Good Quality

In this two-part Dutch documentary the complex person of Richard Nixon is explored through interviews with close family members and some of his political colleagues. Nixon is described as a controversial figure, who is both hailed as a successful peacemaker and as one of the biggest disasters in the history of the American presidency. Part I discusses his youth, the campaign elections, his presidency and subsequent resignation after Watergate from a political and a psychological perspective. Part II discusses the historical consequences of Nixon’s psychological life.

4.19 Nixon’s China Game

DVD-NTSC, 60 minutes (2000) (No Region Code)

In February 1972, the world watched in awe as Richard Nixon began an historic visit to China. It was the first high-level political contact between the two nations since the Communist takeover in 1949. And it was the culmination of a dangerous game of diplomacy that threatened to collapse at any moment. Drawing on newsreel footage, home movies of Nixon’s visit, and remarkable access to many of the most critical players, this documentary takes us behind the scenes of one the boldest diplomatic maneuvers in history.

4.20 Truman, 2 parts

“The American Experience” series

DVD-NTSC, 270 minutes (1997) (No Region Code)

He was a farmer, a businessman gone bankrupt, an obscure Missouri politician almost unknown in Washington. Now Harry Truman was president. Of all the men who had held the highest office, he was the least prepared. But he would prove to be a surprise. Incorporating remarkable archival film footage and photographs, a wide range of eyewitness interviews, personal diaries and letters, and new film footage, these two videos trace the unlikely rise of a gritty American original. Taking over after Franklin Roosevelt’s death shocked the nation, Truman faced some of the biggest crises of the century. He would end the war with Germany, use the atomic bomb against Japan, confront an expanding Soviet union and wage war in Korea—all while the woman he adored, his wife Bess, refused to stay in the White House and play the role of First Lady. Truman’s stubborn determination and Midwestern modesty eventually earned him the admiration of many middle-class Americans, who propelled him to a stunning political upset with the rallying cry “Give ‘Em Hell, Harry.”

4.21 Ike

“The American Experience” series

DVD-NTSC, 150 minutes (1997) (No Region Code)

He went off to war an unknown soldier and returned a beloved hero. Often dismissed as a good-natured bumbler, he was actually a skillful politician, a tough Cold Warrior and one of America’s least understood presidents. These two videos present a fresh look at Dwight D. Eisenhower, incorporating recently declassified information, extensive archival footage of World War II and the 1950s, hundreds of still photographs, excerpts from Eisenhower’s correspondence and diaries, and interviews with historians, eyewitnesses, and members of the Eisenhower family. From his childhood years in Kansas,

through his meteoric rise during World War II to become the symbol of the Allied victory over the Nazis, the videos trace Eisenhower's rise to the White House, where his two terms were marked by turbulent anti-communism, an increasingly dangerous Cold War and the beginning of school integration. When he left office in 1960, historians ranked Eisenhower in the bottom third of American presidents. By the 1990s, he ranked near the top.

4.22 Reagan

"The American Experience" series

DVD-NTSC, 263 minutes (2003) (No Region Code), Good Quality

Incorporating interviews with key political insiders, former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, and members of the Reagan family, this video series explores the man who saw America as a "shining city on a hill" and himself as its heroic defender. The program traces Reagan's life from his itinerant boyhood in Illinois to his scrap with "communist agitators" in the Screen Actors Guild and his dramatic victory over Jimmy Carter in 1980. Only seventy days into his presidency, a would-be assassin's bullet left him more debilitated than anyone knew. Reagan's massive military buildup and bold challenges to the Soviet Union caused his critics to portray him as a trigger-happy cowboy. But he negotiated deep cuts in nuclear weapons and resolved to end the Cold War. Five years after leaving office, Reagan announced he had Alzheimer's disease and dropped from public view.

4.23 The Clinton Years

DVD-NTSC, 120 minutes (2001) (No Region Code), Good Quality

A unique pictorial record by veteran White House photographer Rober McNeely drawn from over a half million images. Intimate and anecdotal interviews with twenty White House staffers, cabinet members and advisors.

4.24 Andere Tijden: Truman versus Dewey

DVD-PAL, 28 minutes (2004) (No Region Code), Good Quality

This documentary tells the story of the miraculous 1948 presidential elections, in which Harry S. Truman defeated Governor Thomas E. Dewey. Dewey had enjoyed a comfortable lead in the polls, but his reluctance to tackle controversial topics and his rigid, elitist appearance, eventually made him lose against the relaxed farmer's son from Missouri. The program also shows the famous whistle-stop campaigns of the "Truman Special."

4.25 Ronald Reagan

DVD-PAL, 55 minutes (2000) (No Region Code)

This BBC documentary sheds light on the Reagan presidency, Reagan's early life, and his family background. Originally and actor from Hollywood, Reagan would quickly climb the rungs of political fame to become one of the most conservative presidents in American history. The documentary also examines Reagan's negotiations with Gorbachev and his friendship with Britain's Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

4.26 Truman, part 1 of 2

"The American Experience" series

DVD-NTSC, 144 minutes (1997) (Regio Code 1)

He was a farmer, a businessman gone bankrupt, an obscure Missouri politician almost unknown in Washington. Now Harry Truman was president. Of all the men who had held the highest office, he was the least prepared. But he would prove to be a surprise. Incorporating remarkable archival film footage and photographs, a wide range of eyewitness interviews, personal diaries and letters, and new film footage, these two videos trace the unlikely rise of a gritty American original. Taking over after Franklin Roosevelt's death shocked the nation, Truman faced some of the biggest crises of the century. He would end the war with Germany, use the atomic bomb against Japan, confront an expanding Soviet union and wage war in

Korea—all while the woman he adored, his wife Bess, refused to stay in the White House and play the role of First Lady. Truman's stubborn determination and Midwestern modesty eventually earned him the admiration of many middle-class Americans, who propelled him to a stunning political upset with the rallying cry "Give 'Em Hell, Harry."