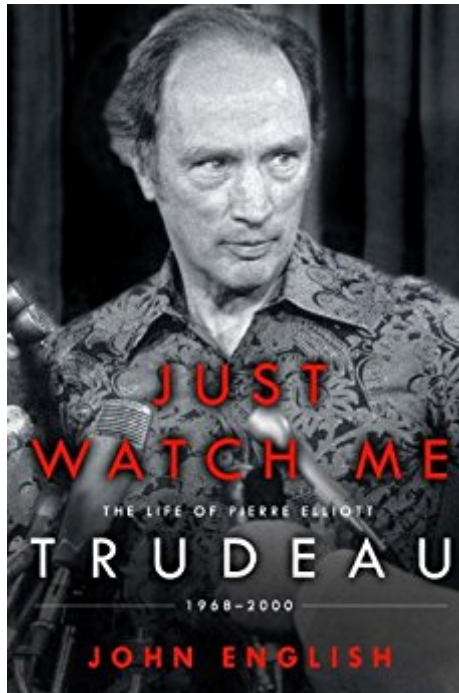




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Just Watch Me: The Life Of Pierre Elliott Trudeau: 1968-2000



Synopsis

This magnificent second volume, written with exclusive access to Trudeau's private papers and letters, completes what the Globe and Mail called "the most illuminating Trudeau portrait yet written" sweeping us from sixties Trudeauania to his final days when he debated his faith. His life is one of Canada's most engrossing stories. John English reveals how for Trudeau style was as important as substance, and how the controversial public figure intertwined with the charismatic private man and committed father. He traces Trudeau's deep friendships (with women especially, many of them talented artists, like Barbra Streisand) and bitter enmities; his marriage and family tragedy. He illuminates his strengths and weaknesses "from Trudeauania to political disenchantment, from his electrifying response to the kidnappings during the October Crisis, to his all-important patriation of the Canadian Constitution, and his evolution to influential elder statesman. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

As many others more famous and eloquent than I have said, this book is probably the best

biography written on Pierre Trudeau's ascent to the position of prime minister and his gentle paddling into the new world afforded by his retirement. I was especially glad to see so much written about Margaret Trudeau, as few previous Trudeau biographers covered a person who, for better and for worse, was far more important to Trudeau's life and his time as prime minister, than too many want to realize. The sourcing is immaculate and the quotes quoted are often biting, laudatory, and concise. Wonderful. Cannot recommend it enough.

Pierre Trudeau was bright, forceful, flamboyant, a visionary, and had a clear headed view of Canada - and how to build a better nation. Like all of us, he could also be venial and petty. John English, I think, gives us an insightful and honest account of Pierre Trudeau and his times.

Very well written - once you get started, you won't want to put this down...

This is a thorough and sympathetic review of Pierre Trudeau's years in power starting from 1968 (less than 40 pages of the book are concerned with the years after 1984). Mr. English covers the tumult of this era from the short honeymoon of Trudeau-mania to his vehement opposition to the Meech Lake Accord. His biography puts to rest the myth that Trudeau was merely an image. While it is true that Trudeau knew how to project himself to the media - he was a complicated and captivating individual. For many Canadians during this time he was a positive counterpoint to our dominant U.S. neighbour immersed in the Vietnam War, with their cities in turbulence and Nixon harried out of office. In contrast to Nixon it was Trudeau who intimidated the press. No politician of this era in the democratic world stood up to his adversaries as Trudeau did. As the author points out - during the Trudeau years the question of "who speaks for Canada" was easy to answer. In a country, like Canada, always befuddled by perennial power struggles between the provinces and the federal government, it could be said to be necessary to have leadership at the helm in Ottawa. At over 600 pages this is a detailed portrait. The author does bring out alternative viewpoints on many of the issues like the October crisis, the failed constitutional talks and the patriation of the Canadian constitution. He also analyzes issues from a retrospective viewpoint - for instance after the October Crisis separatism in Quebec became a democratic process instead of being propelled by violent terrorist acts. The author also illustrates well Trudeau's capacity to plough ahead. We get a vivid picture of a man who was a wonderful father, but had a rocky relationship with his wife Margaret. He could be unappreciative to those working with him on a professional level. His constant serial dating of mostly younger women (Margaret was thirty years younger!) would, to me, seem to be at odds

with his professed Catholicism. This Catholicism never entered into his political legislation - he separated government from religion. For Trudeau, the individual must be able to live freely within the laws of society - and in his words "without being bound up by standards of morality... which have to do with prejudice and religious superstition" (page 20 of my edition). As Mr. English indicates, in many ways Canada evolved for the better during the Trudeau era. We became part of the G7 and the constitution was brought home to Canada. Bilingualism has become much more acceptable across Canada - most Prime Ministers since have a good working knowledge of French. As another example, the number of French Canadians (or Quebecois) in the Canadian Armed Forces has increased enormously and they now make up a bigger proportion in the army of their representative population. This book gives a moving picture of this dynamic leader whose role in Canada will not be forgotten.

Very interesting.. and intelligent...but too much information....and heavy. It could have been a thinner book.

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