



A Time to Act: John F. Kennedy's Big Speech

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A 2017 School Library Journal Best Book of 2017!

Acclaimed author Shana Corey and *New York Times* Best Illustrated, Caldecott Honor, and Coretta Scott King Honor–winning artist R. Gregory Christie deliver a fresh look at President John F. Kennedy and his relationship with the civil rights movement.

From prominent leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and Jackie Robinson to children and teenagers, it was the people speaking out and working for civil rights through sits-ins, freedom rides, and marches who led John F. Kennedy to take a stand.

And with his June 11, 1963, civil rights address, he did.

This is the story of JFK—from his childhood to the events that led to his game-changing speech and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Corey and Christie offer a deeply human look at our country's thirty-fifth president, underscoring how each one of us, no matter who we are, have the power to make a difference.

With quotes from JFK's speeches, detailed back matter, and a thought-provoking author's note, this biography—in time for what would be JFK's 100th birthday—offers a sensitive look at a tumultuous time in history and compelling questions about effecting positive change today.

A Time to Act: John F. Kennedy's Big Speech Details

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From Reader Review A Time to Act: John F. Kennedy's Big Speech for online ebook

Susan says

A beautiful picture book that starts with a short history of Kennedy's life. It turns to his presidency in regard to civil rights that had him make his antidiscrimination and set the stage for the Civil Rights Act of 1964. At the end of this book, it reminds us that "you can speak up, to act and make history." There is a bibliography and source notes. There is also a description of the people that are also in this book.

I enjoyed reading this book as it reminded me of what was happening in our country at that time. It is so easy to forget that period. It's also a great way not only for kids to read this book but adults too!

Barbara says

President John F. Kennedy is known for his heroic actions during WWII and his privileged background. This picture book provides insight into some of his decisions as the nation's thirty-fifth president. While I am quite impressed with the illustrations that seem to portray the personalities of the individuals who are introduced in the book, sometimes in a not necessarily flattering way, I also appreciated the author's efforts to show JFK's indecisiveness about civil rights. Even while his election and inaugural speech seemed to herald bold new steps, the author makes it clear that he "didn't take bold action" (unpaged) concerning social justice and civil rights until he almost had no choice but to do so. When he does, his words are memorable and inspiring. A thoughtful and essential Author's Note amplifies the significance of those words and raises questions about whether JFK should be praised for his strong words and damned for being so reluctant to speak out on this issue. Young readers are sure to be clueless as to the importance of some of the individuals who appear on the book's pages, necessitating the thumbnail sketches that appear in the back matter. It is impressive that the author has portrayed this political figure with some of his imperfections on display, and I'd certainly use the book during a series of lessons on civil rights, but there is danger in painting JFK as a heroic figure in this instance. He was, after all, a product of his times and was assailed by his own fears concerning offending his supporters and risking his popularity. Perhaps, most tellingly, students may enjoy pondering whether our nation has, indeed fulfilled its promise, as JFK urged.

Kirsten says

Informative, concise, thought-provoking and inspirational, Shana Corey's picture book biography of our 42nd President brings him to life. The space race, the Russians, the Greensboro Sit-In, the Cuban missile crisis, Martin Luther King and more all contributed to a tumultuous time in American history. Kennedy's question still rings true today--how will each of us act in the face inequality and unfair treatment? How will we build a better world? (ok, yes, Summer Reading 2017 permeates everything these days). Picture book biographies are my new favorite genre.

Victoria says

I've reduced this book by a star not because it isn't excellent - it is- but because the message of this book may be very hard for younger readers to understand. Regardless, Corey has done an exceptional job mining Kennedy's archives and correspondence in order to form an introspective yet flawed JFK; a man who struggled with having courage at the right time...and what happens when you don't. Parents will appreciate this realistic perspective on Kennedy's role in the Civil Rights and the book should offer a great jumping off point for conversations about how our actions - or lack of them - change history. R. Gregory Christie is a great choice for illustrator. For those familiar with his work, this is the Christie of Bass Reeves and Coltrane. Christie's pallet and strength with portraiture puts the president before us in all his weighted seriousness and frailty while the children he places around Kennedy are all joy and movement. A great book.

Darcie Caswell says

A quick backstory/bio of JFK, including some of the well-known pieces of his life (his family, sinking of his boat during WWII, early runs for political office), then focuses on his journey toward the event in the title of this book, his speech supporting civil rights, and the bill introduced in Congress. It feels like the overall message of this book is that Kennedy was slow to act but then he did and it all went well from there. While the author may have simplified the complicated politics of this era for the intended audience, this book is a little soft on Kennedy's nuanced and inconsistent support of Civil Rights, including his complicated negotiations with organizers of the March on Washington and even the timing and strength of the Civil Rights Bill mentioned in this book.

Margie says

Working within the laws as set forth in the United States Constitution, the President of the United States has the ability and responsibility to build lasting institutions, promote programs and introduce new legislation designed for the good of all people. Our thirty-fifth president, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, on March 1, 1961 signed an executive order establishing the Peace Corps. It evolved from a speech made on the University of Michigan campus on October 14, 1960 several hours after midnight.

Let me say in conclusion, this University is not maintained by its alumni, or by the state, merely to help its graduates have an economic advantage in the life struggle. There is certainly a greater purpose, and I'm sure you recognize it. Therefore, I do not apologize for asking for your support in this campaign. I come here tonight asking your support for this country over the next decade.

It is still flourishing today.

JFK believed in winning the space race. On May 5, 1961 Alan B. Shepard, Jr. was the first American in space. Twenty days later Kennedy during a speech to Congress strongly encouraged the United States to be the first country to place a man on the moon by the end of the decade. (On July 20, 1969 our astronauts, Neil Armstrong and "Buzz" Aldrin, were the first men to walk on the moon.) John Glenn, on February 20, 1962, was launched into space becoming the first American to orbit Earth.

A United States President can set things in motion to create great change. On my twelfth birthday, June 11, 1963, President John Fitzgerald Kennedy delivered a speech. A Time To Act: John F. Kennedy's Big Speech (NorthSouth Books, April 4, 2017) written by Shana Corey with illustrations by R. Gregory Christie chronicles the life of this man prior to and after he spoke.

My full recommendation: <http://librariansquest.blogspot.com/2...>

Lynn says

Kudos for this book include:

- simple, clear explanation of "Civil Rights"
- explanation of what Kennedy meant in two speeches
- both speeches are highlighted in large font
- extensive bibliography and backmatter
- variety of short and long sentences make specific points
- the book asks an important question to challenge students
- mini-bios of people mentioned in book

Not OK about this book:

- harsh illustrations may not endear youngsters to be attracted to it, for example, Eleanor Roosevelt looks like a mean old lady
- there are two speeches highlighted - which one is the "Big Speech"?
- does not indicate that the "Ask not what your country..." may have been words spoken to Kennedy and classmates by headmaster George St John
- speeches highlighted are in light color - darker color would give them more 'punch'
- the image on pg 43 doesn't match text closely - it's a bit abstract
- pg 44 & 45 discuss one event that happens before another - I understand the author is making a point, but I prefer linear presentations
- does the statue image on the last page represent a real statue??

Overall, I'd use this book in Civil Rights studies with middle elementary.

Eva-Maria Obermann says

Diese Rezension bezieht sich auf die deutsche Übersetzung von Elisa Martins, erschienen im Nord Süd Verlag.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy kommt aus einer reichen Familie, genießt eine gute Bildung. Als Kind ist er kränklich, liest viel. Vom Vater geplant ist dagegen, dass Johns großer Bruder eines Tages Präsident wird. Doch im zweiten Weltkrieg ändert sich alles. John geht in die Politik, ist beliebt und erkennt in der Diskriminierung von Schwarzen ein großes Problem. Dagegen will er kämpfen, es ist Zeit zu handeln. Zuerst möchte ich die tollen Zeichnungen loben. Sie sind nach meiner Meinung genau im richtigen Maß detailliert. Da das Buch eher zum Selbstlesen als zum Vorlesen geeignet ist, sind die Zeichnungen ergänzender Schmuck, unterstützen den Text, stehlen ihm aber auch nicht die Show. Gerade die Gesichtszüge sind sehr nah an den realen Figuren dran und liefern das Gefühl von Historizität. Das wird durch direkte Zitate von J.F.K. unterstützt, die groß gedruckt immer wieder eine Seite füllen.

Sehr schön fand ich aber auch den Text. Biografisch in der Kindheit einzusteigen erzeugt natürlich eine Nähe zum jungen Leser. Die lesende Figur im Buch und das lesende Kind mit dem Buch in der Hand – ein wunderbares Bild. Gekonnt schafft es Zeit zu handeln Kennedys Lebensstationen aufzuzeigen und zu umrahmen, wie aus dem kränklichen Kind ein beliebter Präsident werden konnte. Im eigentlichen Fokus steht aber eher die Bürgerrechtsbewegung und wie Kennedy dazu stand.

Die Gefahr, J.F.K. zu überzeichnen geht das Buch dabei nicht ein. Es zeigt, dass Kennedy gezaudert hat,

Angst hatte und lange gewartet hat, ehe er sein Versprechen von der Verbesserung der Bürgerrechte eingehalten hat. Wenn ich daneben die heutige Ist-Situation stelle, zeigt sich schnell, dass damit nicht alles Mögliche und Nötige getan ist. Dennoch porträtiert das Buch über Kennedys Biografie den Kampf um die Bürgerrechte recht gut.

Da John F. Kennedy: Zeit zu handeln aber ein Kinderbuch ist, dass sich am besten selbst liest, wird es heute Zeit, meinen Sohn zu Wort kommen zu lassen. Keule ist 8 (fast 9) und umstandsbedingt ein großer Bücherfreund. Ich hatte erst Angst, dass eine Biografie mit deutlichem Sachbuchcharakter nichts für ihn ist. Immerhin geht es durchaus um komplexe Probleme. Doch er war begeistert:

„Mir hat das Buch sehr gut gefallen. Was mir aber nicht gefallen hat, was aber leider wahr ist, ist dass John F. Kennedy erschossen wurde. Er hat ja so viel Gutes gemacht. Ich fand es ganz toll, wie mutig die Leute waren. Schlecht finde ich, wie die Bürgerrechtler behandelt wurden. Jemanden zu verhaften, weil er einfach nur sitzt, verstehe ich nicht. Auch manche Zitate habe ich nicht verstanden, aber andere fand ich richtig cool.“

Paul Franco says

A bare-bones bio of the great president, zeroing in on his civil rights activity, for kids. Beautiful in its simplicity as well as its watercolor paintings. It might be a call to action for those far too young to know much about the Sixties but who might draw comparisons to the present-day tensions in this country. For someone who's as big a fan of counterfactuals as I am, throwing in the phrase "History isn't a straight line" is pure catnip. In this case, had older brother Joe not died in WW2, it's possible JFK would never have become president. Try to imagine life today without, for example, a moon landing. In the beginning the author calls him out on not doing more to support civil rights, and as a bonus at the end she explains exactly why she felt the need to do this. Had it not been for this, the book might not have been as good, or at least complete.

Donalyn says

Outstanding book with stunning illustrations. Don't miss the author's note and additional information in the back matter.

Gargi says

The JFK fascination never ends! A Time to Act was an engaging and a very well written book. I simply fell in love with the illustrations and thoroughly enjoyed the book.

A Time to Act was a short visual history of JFK's life, primarily intended for young readers. This book reflects on JFK's role in the Civil Rights Movement and the Act, among others including US-Soviet relations, the Berlin Wall, and the Peace Corps. The last few pages of the book (author's note, etc.) give more information on Kennedy's life and the activists in the Civil Rights Movement.

I'm glad I was able to get a copy of this biography and I'd like to read more of the author's work.

I got a free copy of this book in exchange for a review!

June Jacobs says

I came across this book in the online library catalog after my friend told me her daughter was going on a Peace Corps mission to Southeast Asia for twenty-seven months. I realized I didn't know a lot about the organization, so I turned to the children's collection at the local public library for resources. This book came up on the search results, so I placed a hold on it, picked it up at the library, and read it.

This biography was not at all what I expected; but as so often happens in life, surprises are sometimes even better than what we were hoping for or seeking!

The first part of the book gives an overview of Kennedy's family background and upbringing, his schooldays as a boy, and his college experience. The book provides good detail on his military service in World War II including the PT 109 incident and the leadership and heroism Kennedy displayed when an enemy ship rammed into the boat under his command.

As the book progresses, details are shared about his political career as a Congressman and then Senator. I enjoyed the section about how he wrote Profiles in Courage while he was recovering from back surgery.

On January 2nd, 1960, Kennedy announced he was running for President of the United States. Famous Americans such as President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Eleanor Roosevelt were critical of Jack Kennedy and his family for various reasons.

Another obstacle stood in Kennedy's path to the presidency--he was Catholic, and many people felt America would not elect a Catholic as President. One quote by JFK included in the book was, "I believe in an America where religious intolerance will someday end."

The next section of the book covers the civil rights struggle gripping the United States. Americans, those famous {such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.} and not famous {everyday citizens, children, and students}, were trying to change the discrimination which was rampant in the United States. They were trying to affect change through peaceful protests.

The story continues with the retelling of various incidents of protests against segregation and discrimination followed by quotations from John F. Kennedy addressing the matters.

On November 8th, 1960, Kennedy was elected the thirty-fifth president of the United States by a very slim margin. Many black people had voted for him. He wanted his inauguration speech to be inspirational and meaningful to all Americans. He requested his speech writer to research Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

On page 25, the first paragraph of the new president's speech is printed in a large font so it grabs the reader's attention.

The next section of the book delineates JFK's accomplishments during his short term in office:

Established the Peace Corps;

Declaration that the United States would be the first nation to land a man on the moon;

Worked to keep a peaceful relationship with the Soviet Union.

Unfortunately, President Kennedy was slow to act on civil rights issues. Jackie Robinson wrote to the president imploring him to take action. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., met with the president to urge him to take action.

President Kennedy did not take action, but others took action in the form of protests in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963. In June, 1963, two black students applied to the University of Alabama, and the state's governor vowed to block the students' entrance into the university.

Finally, President Kennedy took strong action. He ordered the National Guard to escort the students safely into the school, and then that evening he spoke to the nation on television and on radio. Some of the text of the speech is printed in a large colored font on pages 36 and 37 of this book.

"This Nation . . . will not be fully free until all its citizens are free. . . ."

Dr. King and Jackie Robinson acknowledged the speech was one of the best presidential statements on the issue of human rights ever given.

The following week the president sent a civil rights bill to Congress. In August, 1963, after his 'I Have a Dream' speech, Dr. King and other leaders went to the White House to meet with President Kennedy.

Just a few months after his civil rights address to the nation, the president was assassinated.

A list of events which have subsequently happened around the world widely considered to be directly linked to President Kennedy's hard work include:

The Soviet Union no longer exists;

Peace Corps volunteers still travel around the globe to help build infrastructure and improve communities in need; and

On July 20, 1969, two United States astronauts were the first humans to walk on the moon.

On July 2, 1964, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was finally passed. The statute made it "illegal to discriminate in jobs based on the color of one's skin and providing for the integration of schools and public places."

At the close of the book, young readers are encouraged to "speak up, to act, to move the world forward--to make history."

Back matter includes an informative Author's Note with a lot of historical information about the Civil Rights Act, thumbnail biographies of some of the other people in the book entitled 'Who Are Some of the Other People in This Book?', 'For Further Reading' -- a list of books and online resources, 'Selected Bibliography', and 'Quotes Were Drawn From' list.

Highly-recommended for readers of all ages and fans of United States/presidential history, civil rights history, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Jackie Robinson, and John F. Kennedy.

I borrowed this book from the children's non-fiction section in the local public library.

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Katie Lalor says

This book was a condensed version of JFK's life, yet it was very informational. It showed Jack had to make sacrifices and work hard. Even though he came from a wealthy family, he wasn't entitled to who he became. I also enjoyed the book because it included actual quotes from JFK.

Much of the book explains the Civil Rights time period well to young readers. It shows his struggles, such as decision making, during the Civil Rights time period, and tells about other Civil Rights leaders who were involved. Moreover, the story shows how his legacy continued on after his assassination.

The introduction and conclusion connects the reader and history, "And so now it's your turn, to choose your course, to speak up, to act, to move the world forward- to make history." The author continues to make this connection in the Author's Note, which is also very well written.

The illustrations throughout the book and book cover are beautiful too!

"You are the writers of history." -JFK

Carla Johnson-Hicks says

This biography of John F. Kennedy, is succinct and zeros in on his civil rights promises and activity once elected 35th president of the United States. It mentions his book "Profiles in Courage" where he wrote about leaders standing by their beliefs, yet he was reluctant to go against the people in Congress who were against Civil Rights for the black population. He finally made the decision to pursue the Civil Rights laws when he saw the violence perpetrated on the children and young people who were willing to stand up for their rights. He worked with Dr. Martin Luther King to draft Civil Rights Legislation. He and his brother boycotted clubs that did not allow blacks and he had more blacks working and visiting the White House than other president before him. Tragically, he was assassinated before the legislation was passed, but his successor, Lyndon B. Johnson pursued it. The book is simple in the facts and uses two of his speeches as a call to action. One quote from the book that hit a chord with me was, "History isn't a straight line." Everything we do is two steps forward and one step back. We are still not where we need to be on civil rights, but it is better than it was when JFK became president. We also see other things that happened and where we are now as a result of decisions and statements made by JFK while he was running and while he was president, such as space exploration, the Peace Corps and more. At the end of the book Shana Corey writes in her Author's Note why she wrote this book the way she did and gives a few more details about the achievements of JFK. I love the stylized watercolour illustrations in this book. This a great biography for schools to use when studying JFK, the civil rights issue, the space race and even art. The publisher generously provided me with a copy of this book via Netgalley.

Brenda Kahn says

An excellent bio of JFK with a focus on his Civil Rights record. Beautifully illustrated with long author's note, source notes and additional information at the end. Great addition to any collection!
