ForeWord Reviews

HISTORY

So You Think You Know the Presidents? Fascinating Facts about Our Chief Executives

Peter E. Meltzer
History Publishing Company
978-1-933909-73-8
(Feb 17, 2014)

In-depth explanations and humorous commentaries turn this trivia book about the US presidents into a fascinating romp through American history.

Presidential trivia has been a popular subject for many years, but Peter Meltzer offers a more in-depth look while still keeping the "trivia quiz" format. Meltzer uses the first few pages to distinguish *So You Think You Know the Presidents?* from other books about the presidents—namely, the fact that he has endeavored to provide as much new, original information as possible, and, when necessary, he explains his answers much more fully than just offering a name. Meltzer delivers what he's promised, as the book features everything from short trivia-style questions and answers to multi-page charts showing the results of major presidential rating polls by historians, or the inflation-adjusted net worth of the presidents, both at their death and at the peak of their wealth (at least one president was comparatively wealthy while in office but nearly destitute at death).

Some of Meltzer's questions and answers meet the definition of trivia perfectly—information of little importance or value, such as the only time there were four consecutive presidents, none of whom served exactly one term or exactly two terms. While fans of trivia might enjoy this, a book consisting only of information along these lines would quickly grow tiresome, which is why other material, like the several pages of Harry Truman's very candid comments on his predecessors, is so welcome and well placed. This kind of regular, well-placed expansion of an answer makes the book worth reading even for those not particularly interested in trivia quizzes. For example, Meltzer asks, "Who is the only President interviewed by Playboy magazine?" After supplying the short answer (Jimmy Carter), he also gives an explanation of the context of the interview and a quotation of the key exchange between Carter and the interviewer, which resulted in Carter's famous quote about having "committed adultery in [his] heart."

Meltzer divides his book into themed chapters, such as "Appearance," "Inaugurations,"

“Names and Named After,” “Quotes by Presidents,” and many more. *So You Think You Know the Presidents?* is a combination of fun, factoids, faults, and foibles—a collection that will be indispensable to anyone with an interest in history and in the men who have led the United States.

Peter Dabbene