

II. Short Essay: Writing in *Time* (June 6, 1996), Richard Stengel reviewed Christopher Matthews's book, *Kennedy and Nixon*, in the following manner. "Christopher Matthews places a time frame around these epic 20th century figures, revealing in this smart, well-researched book that the two Cold Warriors had more in common than one may suspect.... Until they faced off in 1960, Nixon and Kennedy were cautiously friendly (though not as chummy as the author would have us believe). For eight years their offices were across the hall from each other in the Senate Office building... Ultimately both men were utilitarians who valued ideas and people on the basis of their usefulness. But whereas John Kennedy seemed to be wholly without sentimentality, Nixon seemed plagued by it."

Agree or disagree with this review of *Kennedy and Nixon*. Among the questions to consider are: Is this book "smart and well-researched?" To what extent does Matthews describe Kennedy and Nixon as Cold Warriors? Was Nixon more sentimental (emotional) than Kennedy? 20 points.

This review is generally accurate, but is especially so in its analysis of Matthews' chapters about Kennedy and Nixon's friendship. I think that some of Matthews' descriptions and assumptions about the chummy nature of the two men was underresearched. A few letters back and forth between the Vice President and an ill senator are probably little more than expected protocol and may not be representative of their true relationships. People frequently hate their co-workers behind a masquerade of friendly greetings, and I do not think Matthews got the whole story of these years. He did write about their dislike during the 1960 campaign, but there just was not enough there to justify saying that they were good friends before they were direct rivals.

The mentalities of both the men were summed up well by Stengel's review, and were certainly apparent in the book. Kennedy and Nixon both used people to gain prominence though both did it negatively - using people to downplay and berate their opponents to boost their image. This would be a good trait for a president if the country was substituted for the the beneficiary, but both men, especially Nixon, used smear tactics to glorify themselves.

The strangest point of the book is its rendition of the sentimentalities of both of the men. Kennedy was always concerned about his image to the public, a trait he learned from his father, and through all the chapters, the only way he could accomplish that was by removing himself emotionally from various situations he faced. While being unphased is a good quality for a leader, I think that Kennedy's firm stance during the talks with Khrushchev, Bay of Pigs, and Cuban Missile Crisis recklessly endangered the country with destruction; better to stand up and look unafraid than to have the people think the thought of nuclear war terrifies you...

Nixon could not have been more opposite and contrary to those mentioned above, the letters sent to ether Kennedys, Jacqueline and her children do aid in the assumption. While it was unclear if Nixon actually wrote them himself, they did lead to the saddest part of the book, the revisiting of the White House by the remaining Kennedy family. Following the dinner and ceremony, Nixon took time to engage with the guests on their tour, something that JFK probably would not have done with Pat Nixon and her family if Nixon was killed.

It seems that Matthews may have been trying to rewrite, or at least fight, the common perceptions of both men. By playing the loved Kennedy as heartless and the distrusted Nixon as chivalrous, Matthews did effectively provide new looks at the old mindsets of both Kennedy and Nixon.

essay; well organized and well written

(If you can't read any of this, I'll be happy to decipher)

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