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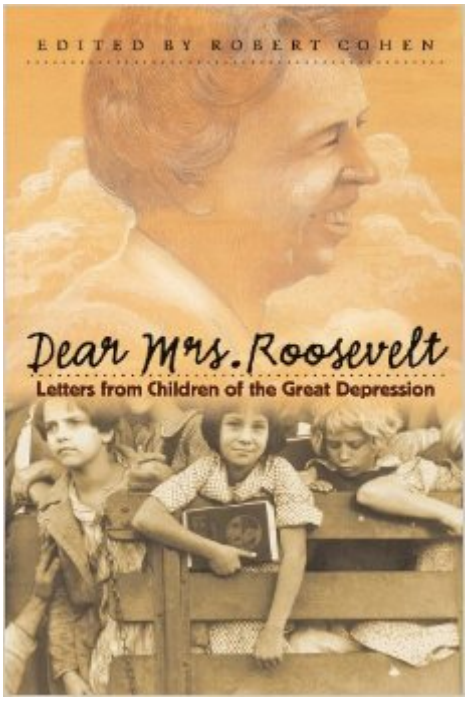
Dear Mrs. Roosevelt: Letters From Children Of The Great Depression



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Synopsis

Impoverished young Americans had no greater champion during the Depression than Eleanor Roosevelt. As First Lady, Mrs. Roosevelt used her newspaper columns and radio broadcasts to crusade for expanded federal aid to poor children and teens. She was the most visible spokesperson for the National Youth Administration, the New Deal's central agency for aiding needy youths, and she was adamant in insisting that federal aid to young people be administered without discrimination so that it reached blacks as well as whites, girls as well as boys.This activism made Mrs. Roosevelt a beloved figure among poor teens and children, who between 1933 and 1941 wrote her thousands of letters describing their problems and requesting her help. Dear Mrs. Roosevelt presents nearly 200 of these extraordinary documents to open a window into the lives of the Depression's youngest victims. In their own words, the letter writers confide what it was like to be needy and young during the worst economic crisis in American history.Revealing both the strengths and the limitations of New Deal liberalism, this book depicts an administration concerned and caring enough to elicit such moving appeals for help yet unable to respond in the very personal ways the letter writers hoped.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book contains absolutely touching letters written by the youth of America during a time when the country was struggling feed, clothe, and employ a large part of the population. Robert Cohen must have spent millions of hours researching the letters that were kept by Mrs. Roosevelt's

staff.Chapters focus on the following subjects: Ill-Clothed, Ill-Housed, Ill-Fed; Education; Social Life; and Minorities. Mr. Cohen draws conclusions based on the letters he researched, then includes letters written to Mrs. Roosevelt from the children. The letters are, for the most part, heartbreaking - I wouldn't recommend reading more than 4 a day, otherwise you might be overwhelmed.This book gave me a greater understanding of what my grandparents lived through. I also that some things in life never change - our desire for art and culture, education, and societal acceptance.A must-read for anyone with an interest in history, or for someone who is interested in hearing firsthand accounts of what life was like for a large part of the American population in the late 1920's and early 1930's.

I have read many books on the depression and have noticed that a lot of them talk about the positive outcome and peoples resiliency which is good, this book shows a much different side of the great depression. Here, you get the raw, sad version of that time period. If you're looking for a pick me up don't buy this.

Robert Cohen has taken letters from children (and young adults) who wrote to Eleanor Roosevelt asking for help during the Great Depression. Mrs. Roosevelt had become a beacon of hope for millions of Americans who had lost everything in the Depression and the letters are, at times, difficult to read due to the needs of the people writing directly to her hoping she would sent them money, clothes or other items to help their families.Cohen takes each group of letters and introduces them with a short chapter explaining in more detail the issues addressed in the letters.The fact that so many people wrote to Mrs. Roosevelt (more than 300,000 letters) and the fact that her staff was overwhelmed and unable to do much more than send form letters in return or refer some of the people to social agencies speaks volumes of the fact that the New Deal just could not possibly help everyone.

I was too young, and we were well fixed so didn't experience personally the impoverishment that motivated the letter writer requests. It was not that long ago. Wish we could get today's youngsters to read some of them.

GREAT

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