



# Citizen Soldier: A Life of Harry S. Truman

*Aida Donald*

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When Harry S. Truman left the White House in 1953, his reputation was in ruins. Tarrred by corruption scandals and his controversial decision to drop nuclear bombs on Japan, he ended his second term with an abysmal approval rating, his presidency widely considered a failure. But this dim view of Truman ignores his crucial role in the 20th century and his enduring legacy, as celebrated historian Aida D. Donald explains in this incisive biography of the 33rd president.

In *Citizen Soldier*, Donald shows that, for all his failings, Truman deserves recognition as the principal architect of the American postwar world. The son of poor Missouri farmers, Truman overcame professional disaster and personal disillusionment to become something of a hero in the Missouri National Guard during World War I. His early years in politics were tainted by the corruption of his fellow Missouri Democrats, but Truman's hard work and scrupulous honesty eventually landed him a U.S. Senate seat and then the Vice-Presidency. When Franklin Roosevelt passed away in April 1945, Truman unexpectedly found himself at the helm of the American war effort—and in command of the atomic bomb, the most lethal weapon humanity had ever seen. Truman's decisive leadership during the remainder of World War II and the period that followed reshaped American politics, economics, and foreign relations; in the process, says Donald, Truman delineated the complex international order that would dominate global politics for the next four decades. Yet his accomplishments, such as the liberal reforms of the Fair Deal, have long been overshadowed by a second term marred by scandal.

Until we reevaluate Truman and his presidency, Donald argues, we cannot fully understand the world he helped create. A psychologically penetrating portrait, *Citizen Soldier* candidly weighs Truman's moments of astonishing greatness against his profound shortcomings, offering a balanced treatment of one of America's most consequential—and misunderstood—presidents.

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