



A Promised Land

Barack Obama



Author Background

Barack Obama was the 44th president of the United States, elected in November 2008 and holding office for two terms from 2009-2017. Born in Honolulu, Hawaii, he graduated from Columbia University and Harvard Law School. He worked as a community organiser, a civil rights attorney and an academic before turning to politics. Before his presidency, he served as a State Senator and a US Senator. He is a member of the Democratic Party.

He is the author of three New York Times bestselling books *Dreams from My Father* (1995), *The Audacity of Hope* (2006) and *A Promised Land* (2020) and is the recipient of the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize. He lives in Washington, DC, with his wife Michelle. They have two daughters, Malia and Sasha.

Book Summary

A Promised Land is the first volume of Barack Obama's presidential memoir. In this highly anticipated volume, Obama tells the story of his improbable odyssey from young man searching for his identity to leader of the free world, describing both his political education and the landmark moments of the first term of his presidency in strikingly personal detail.

He offers a unique and thoughtful exploration of both the awesome reach and the limits of presidential power, as well as insights into the dynamics of US partisan politics and international diplomacy.

This is an intimate and introspective story, touted as one of the best memoirs to come out of a US presidency. It is beautifully written and engaging. He is frank about the forces that opposed him at home and abroad, open about how living in the White House affected his wife and daughters and unafraid to reveal self-doubt and disappointment.

Discussion Questions

- ❖ Why did President Obama name his memoir *A Promised Land*? How do you define a promised land?
- ❖ Part One of the book features insights into Obama's past and his eventual road to politics. What were some of the more surprising aspects of his younger years?
- ❖ Discuss Michelle Obama's hesitation with her husband running for president.
- ❖ What was it about the campaign that most intrigued you? Did you change your view about how campaigns in the USA and Australia should play out?
- ❖ Despite having the most diverse staff in American history, Obama admits that he was blind to the frustrations of his non-white, non-male staffers – women being interrupted and having their comments being repeated by men as if for the first time. Have you encountered or witnessed similar disparities?
- ❖ The early criticism against Obama was that he was trying to do too much, and change should just be a slogan. Why are people in general so resistant to real change?
- ❖ A section of Part 4 is dedicated to healthcare reform. Discuss your reactions to this, based on your own experience of healthcare in Australia.
- ❖ How did you feel at the end of *A Promised Land*?
- ❖ Obama writes this after Trump has taken office. Can you put yourself in the mindset of Obama working on this book knowing that a lot of what he worked for might be overturned?

References

- ❖ Penguin: <https://www.penguin.com.au>
- ❖ Book Club Chat: <https://bookclubchat.com/books/book-club-questions-and-discussion-for-a-promised-land-by-barack-obama/>
- ❖ The White House: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/presidents/barack-obama/>