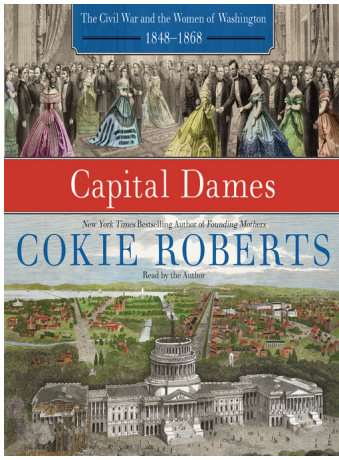


Bayou Bend/Rienzi Book Club Guide

January 2018



Reading Guide:

Capital Dames: The Civil War and the Women of Washington, 1848-1868 by Cokie Roberts (2015)

1. Cokie Roberts discusses many women, from both the North and the South, in her book. Which ones were you familiar with? Which were new to you? Whose story did you find most interesting?
2. The history of the Civil War and Reconstruction is very challenging for many Americans to discuss. What did you think of Roberts's perspective on the war? Did it alter your personal perspective?
3. Roberts framed the book around the convoluted history of the construction of the Washington Monument. Did this literary device work for you? Why or why not?
4. What was the most surprising thing you learned from this book? What will you remember about it a year from now?
5. For those who have also read Roberts's *Founding Mothers* (a previous book group selection), which book did you prefer, and why?
6. Unlike *Founding Mothers*, which had a broad geographical reach, *Capital Dames* focuses specifically on the city of Washington, D.C. Do you think this approach works, and if so, why? What issues did the Washington focus create?
7. If you could invite one of the women described in the book to a dinner party, whom would you choose?
8. If someone enjoyed this book, what other books, movies, museum exhibits, or other resources might you recommend to them?

Author Biography

Cokie Roberts is a political commentator for ABC News. From 1996–2002 she and Sam Donaldson coanchored the weekly ABC interview program “This Week.” Roberts also contributes political analysis for National Public Radio. In her more than forty years in broadcasting, she has won countless awards, including three Emmys. Cokie Roberts’s books include the number-one bestseller, *We Are Our Mothers’ Daughters*, an account of women’s roles and relationships throughout American history. Roberts’s histories of women in America’s founding era—*Founding Mothers*, published in 2004, and *Ladies of Liberty*, in 2008—also became instant bestsellers. In 2008 the Library of Congress named Roberts a “Living Legend,” one of the very few Americans to have attained that honor. (Excerpted from ABC.com)

Related Texts

If you liked *Capital Dames*, you may enjoy these other books (descriptions courtesy of Amazon.com):

- ***Ladies of Liberty: The Women Who Shaped Our Nation***
by Cokie Roberts (2009)
Roberts brings to life the extraordinary accomplishments of women who laid the groundwork for a better society. Drawing on personal correspondence, private journals, and other primary sources, many of them previously unpublished, the book presents true stories of first ladies and freethinkers, educators and explorers, all part of an exceptional group of women that included Abigail Adams, Dolley Madison, Rebecca Gratz, Louise Livingston, Sacagawea, and more.
- ***Liar, Temptress, Soldier, Spy: Four Women Undercover in the Civil War***
by Karen Abbott (2015)
Karen Abbott illuminates one of the most fascinating yet little-known aspects of the Civil War: the stories of four courageous women—a socialite, a farm girl, an abolitionist, and a widow—who were spies.
- ***The Light of the Home: An Intimate View of the Lives of Women in Victorian America***
by Harvey Green (1983/2003)
Harvey Green's *Light of the Home* is a rich portrait of Victorian domesticity and everyday life. Lively, accessible writing and evocative illustrations combine in this volume to convey a sense of nineteenth-century family relationships, women's experiences, and the material culture of the home.
- ***They Fought Like Demons: Women Soldiers in the Civil War***
by De Anne Blanton (2003)
This lively and authoritative book opens a hitherto neglected chapter of Civil War history, telling the stories of hundreds of women who adopted male disguise and fought as soldiers. It explores their reasons for enlisting, their experiences in combat, and the way they were seen by their fellow soldiers and the American public.

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