



Fidel Castro, Nick Caistor, Reaktion Books, 2013, 1780230907, 9781780230900, 157 pages. Fidel Castro had ruled the island of Cuba for fifty-two years when ill health forced him to step down in 2008. Over the course of that time, he changed Cuba from a republic to a communist state and became one of the most divisive leaders in the second half of the twentieth century. For some, he is a champion of humanitarianism, socialism, and environmentalism. For others, he is a monster and dictator who perpetuated human rights abuses at home and abroad. Providing a rare, evenhanded account of Castro's life, journalist Nick Caistor brings together interviews with people who have known Castro with discussion of the ideas that drove him. Caistor follows Castro's life from his birth as the illegitimate son of a wealthy farmer in 1926 to the developing of his leftist, anti-imperialist ideas at the University of Havana and his primary role in the Cuban Revolution in the 1950s. He explores Castro's economic and military alliance with the Soviet Union and his hostile relationship with the United States while also looking at how he simultaneously introduced free health care and education while squelching freedom of the press and suppressing dissidents. As Caistor shows, Castro's numerous writings on politics, capitalism, and other topics have influenced leaders from Nelson Mandela to Hugo Chávez, but allegations of corruption, human rights abuses, and dictatorship never ceased during his long career. Using stories and opinions to enliven the debate about Castro's choices, strengths, and weaknesses, this concise biography gives readers the opportunity to judge for themselves how they feel about the former Cuban president..

Fidel A Biography of Fidel Castro, Peter G. Bourne, 1986, Biography & Autobiography, 332 pages. An account of the life, career, personal and public character, talents, and shortcomings of the Cuban leader, written by a psychiatrist and former U.S. government official.

Fidel Castro , Ellen Butts, Joyce R. Schwartz, Jan 1, 2005, Juvenile Nonfiction, 112 pages. Presents the life and leadership of the Communist dictator of Cuba who has denied his people the right to vote and has imprisoned, executed, or banished those against his policies..

Fyodor Dostoevsky , Robert Bird, Feb 15, 2013, Biography & Autobiography, 237 pages. Crime and Punishment, The Brothers Karamazov, Demons, The Idiot—the complex and prolific Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821–1881) is responsible for some of our greatest literary works and

The Real Fidel Castro , Leicester Coltman, Oct 1, 2008, Biography & Autobiography, 352 pages. Rhetoric during and after the Cold War years has painted starkly contrasting portraits of Cuba's Fidel Castro: an unblemished idealist on the one hand, a ruthless dictator on

John Berger , Andy Merrifield, Feb 15, 2013, Biography & Autobiography, 224 pages. With a career in literature and art spanning more than sixty years, John Berger is characterized by an independent and anti-institutional approach to creativity. Working in a

Castro and the Cuban Revolution , Thomas M. Leonard, 1999, , 188 pages. The most up-to-date reference on Castro and the Cuban revolution..

Fidel Castro An Unauthorized Biography, Petra Press, Jul 1, 2000, Biography & Autobiography, 56 pages. A biography of the president of Cuba, Fidel Castro, discussing his childhood, family, revolutionary activities, and role as leader of his country since 1959..

William S. Burroughs , Phil Baker, Jul 15, 2010, Biography & Autobiography, 224 pages. Along with Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs (1914-1997) is an iconic figure of the Beat generation. In William S. Burroughs, Phil Baker investigates this

Fidel Castro , Warren Brown, Mar 1, 1994, Biography & Autobiography, 128 pages. Describes the rise to power of the revolutionary leader opposed to the corruption and violence of the Batista regime, and the many strands of his more than thirty years of rule..

Mahatma Gandhi , Douglas Allen, Nov 15, 2011, Biography & Autobiography, 191 pages. The idea of nonviolent resistance is still as essential and almost as radical today as it was when Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) first pioneered in India the protest of political

Fidel Castro , Clive Foss, 2007, Biography & Autobiography, 156 pages. Summarizing the life of the dynamic and charismatic leader who has lead Cuba through successes and failures since 1959, this work provides a quick biographical sketch of Fidel

Fidel Castro , Adam Woog, Mar 1, 2003, , 112 pages. Profiles the life of the Cuban leader, including his upbringing, his education, his political influences, his role in the Cuban revolution, and his government of the island nation..

Whiskey A Global History, Kevin R. Kosar, Oct 15, 2010, Cooking, 160 pages. A Manhattan or a Sazerac; neat, on the rocks, or with a splash of soda - no matter how it's served up, whiskey is synonymous with the poet's inspiration and the devil's spirit

Fidel Castro Leader of Communist Cuba, , Jan 1, 2006, Juvenile Nonfiction, 112 pages. A biography profiling the life of Cuban leader, Fidel Castro. Includes source notes and timeline..

Fidel Castro Cuban President and Revolutionary, Katie Marsico, Sep 1, 2010, Juvenile Nonfiction, 112 pages. An introduction to the life and career of Cuban President Fidel Castro..

Fidel Castro A Biography, Thomas M. Leonard, Jan 1, 2004, Biography & Autobiography, 151 pages. Describes the life of the leader of Cuba, outlines the four stages of the Cuban Revolution, narrates his successes and failures, and includes a timeline extending from 1926

The Cuban Revolution , Earle Rice, 1995, History, 112 pages. Describes events leading up to the Cuban revolution, the rise of Fidel Castro, and the state of the troubled country today.

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corruption, human rights abuses, and dictatorship never ceased during his long career.

The Cuban revolutionary Fidel Castro is one of the most written-about men in the world today. Most approaches to his life are either glowing hagiographies, or critical rants in which he is portrayed as a dictator who has kept the island of Cuba under his heel. By contrast, Nick Caistor brings together personal details and a discussion of the ideas driving Castro throughout his life; his ultimate aim is to give readers the opportunity to judge for themselves whether or not, as Castro himself once said, "history will absolve me";.

Fidel Castro not only brought revolution to Cuba, but also wielded power there almost unchallenged for nearly 50 years; finally stepping down at the age of 81, due to ill health, in February 2008. Broadcaster and journalist Nick Caistor has interviewed a huge variety of those who have known Castro at different times in his life, and who range from bitter opponents to his staunchest allies. Their stories and opinions in this book enliven the debate about the Cuban leader's choices, strengths and weaknesses.

For those interested in learning more about Cuban history and the man behind the cigar-smoking, bearded icon, Nick Caistor's new biography *Fidel Castro* should be of interest. It's brief, flows smoothly through six decades, and outlines the development of Castro's political consciousness and official ideology, from Nationalism to Communism and back again. [The Coffin Factory Review](#)

History's verdict on Castro is yet to come, but Caistor has done a fine job laying out the arguments both for and against his longstanding claims to absolution. A fascinating, highly readable, and extremely well-balanced account; Jon Lee Anderson, staff writer at *The New Yorker* and author of *Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life*

It might be surprising to learn that the man who banned the Catholic Church from an entire country was educated by Jesuits. Castro says they taught him his "strict organization, discipline, and values." The most telling characteristic of Castro's personality is his belief in predestination. He declared that his group would overthrow Batista, that he would lead Cuba, and that Cuba would defy the U.S. It's easy to write these prophecies off as hind-sight, but two of the biography's photographs seem to support Castro's sense of predestination. One was taken when Castro was a law student in the 1940s. A baby-faced Castro is in the center of eight other clean-cut Cubans, but he's the only one wearing a tie and black leather jacket, outward signs that show he's clearly the leader. The other, more famous photo was taken in May 1955, after Castro was released from prison. Again he's in the center of eight other pre-revolutionaries, yet he's the only one not carrying a suitcase, and due to the perspective, he seems twice as large as everyone else.

At this time, Castro was calling for economic independence, as Cuba was essentially a colony of the U.S., but he was not yet ideological. He criticized the government as being corrupt, but was well aware that the real master of Cuba, like all of Latin America, was United Fruit. Similar to most so-called Communists, like Mao, Ho Ch Minh, and Pol Pot, Castro was essentially a nationalist. Even after taking power, Castro's land reform policies were aimed at justice and equality for Cubans, and did not contain class-conflict rhetoric. His subsequent nationalization of all industries was also pro-Cuban, not anti-capitalist. It was only after American oil companies refused to refine Soviet crude that the U.S. placed an embargo on Cuba, thereby pushing Castro into the arms of the Soviets. Dependent on the U.S.S.R., and privy to Ernesto "Che" Guevara's passionate Marxist ideology, Castro gradually became Marxist.

There are appealing glimpses into Castro's relationships that readers will enjoy, especially his support by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, but unfortunately there isn't much revelation about Castro's personal life—the word milkshake is only mentioned once, even though Castro ritually drank one every afternoon. For those already familiar with the Cuban revolution, the relationship between Castro and Che Guevara, and 20th century U.S. imperialism, Caistor's biography will seem lacking. Not only is it too shallow in its swift scan of Castro's life, it too often veers into an

impersonal Cuban history, rather than anchoring itself in the mind that was steering it.

It is surely too soon to issue a definitive verdict on the reign of Fidel Castro, but this preliminary effort well sums up the current assessment of most centrist Cuba observers: Castro was a gifted leader who engineered social improvements that benefited most Cubans, a statesman who placed Cuba at the center of world politics, and a masterful tactician who outlasted ten hostile U.S. presidents -- but he should have transferred power to a successor generation much earlier on. In his prime, Castro was remarkably intelligent, energetic, and resilient, filled with self-righteous anger, a heightened sense of honor and dignity, and boundless self-confidence. For many Cubans, Castro is George Washington (independence warrior and first president), Abraham Lincoln (the towering liberator), and Franklin Roosevelt (the fearless social reformer) all wrapped up in one giant man. But Castro is also a tragic figure, seemingly unaware of his own limitations: arrogant and stubborn, unable to adjust to the post-Soviet world, and utterly unwilling to imagine Cuba without himself at the helm. Caistor's monograph is a smoothly crafted and balanced rendition, although a bit too dispassionate to fully convey the intensity of the times.

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