



## Eleanor Roosevelt, Vol. 1: 1884-1933

By *Blanche Wiesen Cook*

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Eleanor Roosevelt (1884-1962), wife of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, is the most important woman in American political history, and in this definitive biography, ten years in the making, Blanche Wiesen-Cook re-creates her in all of her roles - as a visionary, an activist, a political wife, and a woman, far more independent than we knew. The author's access to new archives, her insights, and her respect for her subject contribute a new perspective not just on Eleanor Roosevelt but on the world of politics in which she thrived.

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### Editorial Review

#### From Publishers Weekly

This highly readable, well-researched work of feminist scholarship erases the image of the young Eleanor Roosevelt (1884-1962) as a long suffering, repressed wife and presents her as a strong, ever-evolving individual who overcame an emotionally impoverished childhood to become a champion of social justice and a woman deeply involved in enduring love relationships. Cook ( *Crystal Eastman on Women and Revolution* ) notes that although her subject felt compelled by the tenor of the times to act the role of dutiful wife, daughter-in-law and mother, she early on transformed herself from a dependent female into a social activist, writer and teacher. Her work with feminist friends during the 1920s on the League of Nations and the World Court is fully covered, as is her involvement in FDR's political campaigns. The author is forthright about her subject's private life. As much anguish as her husband's affair with Lucy Mercer caused her, it also liberated her to forge her own erotic relationships. For the first time adequate coverage is given of Eleanor Roosevelt's possible affair with Earl Miller, a New York state trooper who became her bodyguard, and her enduring passionate relationship with reporter Lorena Hickok. An outstanding first installment of a projected two-volume study of a major 20th-century figure. Photos not seen by PW. First serial to Mirabella; author tour.

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#### From Library Journal

Continuing a major biography.

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#### From Kirkus Reviews

From Cook (History/John Jay; The Declassified Eisenhower, 1981, etc.)--the first volume of a massive biography of Eleanor Roosevelt, which, in seeking redress for its subject, is flawed by its own (feminist) biases. Long overshadowed by the achievements of FDR, Eleanor Roosevelt's own extraordinary life deserves wider attention. The poor little rich girl who was born into one of New York's wealthiest and most distinguished families was unkindly called ``Granny'' by her beautiful but cold mother; lost both her parents before she was 12; was taken in by relatives who made her always feel an outsider; and, once married, had to contend with a tyrannical mother-in-law and a philandering husband. And yet, Cook tells us, there were triumphs and periods of fulfillment-- schooldays in London; ventures into politics and civic activities; and the golden interlude of the 1920's, when ER led her own life independent of FDR, becoming a sought-after speaker, activist, and commentator. Cook conscientiously records the achievements and the many unhappinesses--not just the discovery of FDR's affair with Lucy Rutherford--as well as the consolation of friends, mostly women (though Cook believes that ER had an affair with Earl Miller, one of the Roosevelts' security guards). The volume ends with FDR's election to the presidency, an achievement about which, for FDR's sake, ER was ``sincerely glad''--but which also led her to comment, ``Now I shall start to work out my own salvation.'' In less-than-luminous prose, ER gets her uncritical due while FDR becomes the typical male villain--duplicitous, weak, and owing everything to a good woman. Informative but not definitive. (Sixteen pages of b&w photographs--not seen.) -- *Copyright ©1992, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

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**Carolyn Livingston:**

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**Cheryl Estrella:**

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