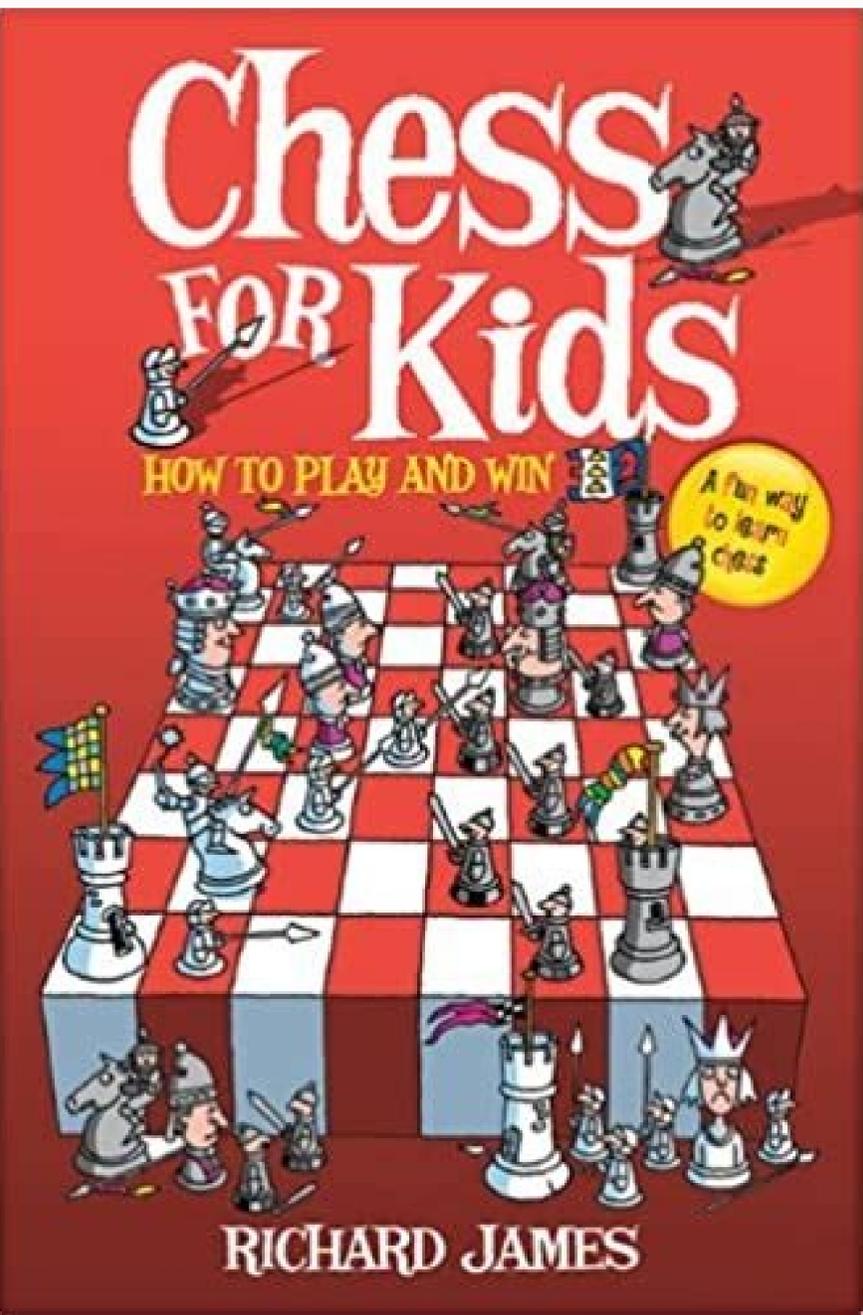
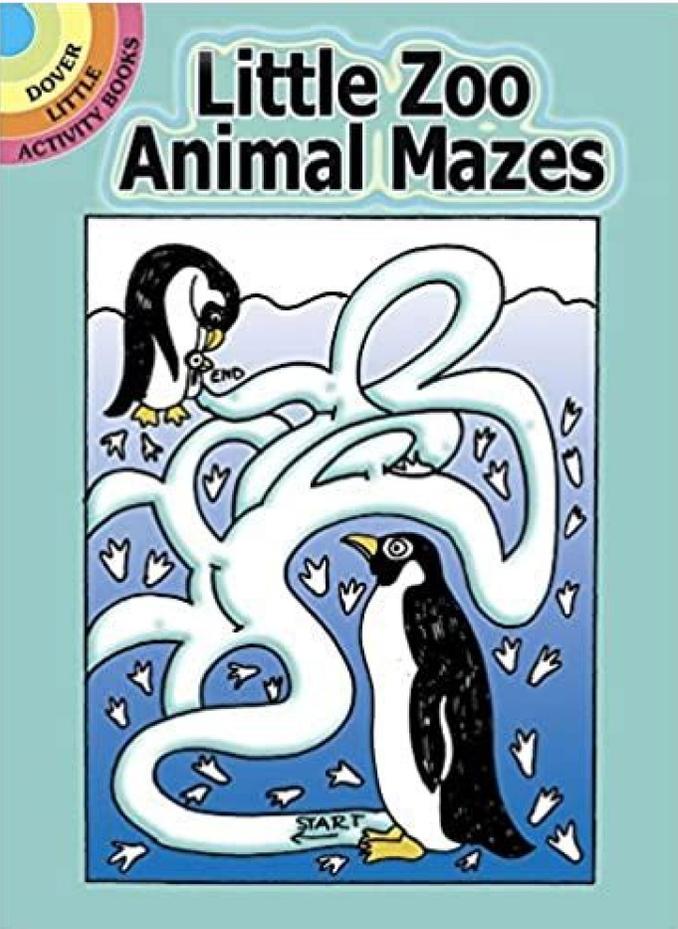
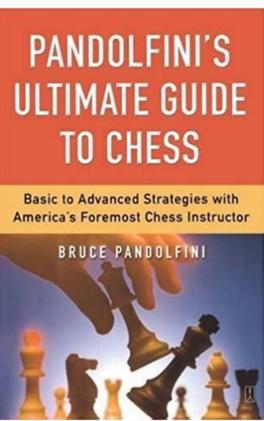
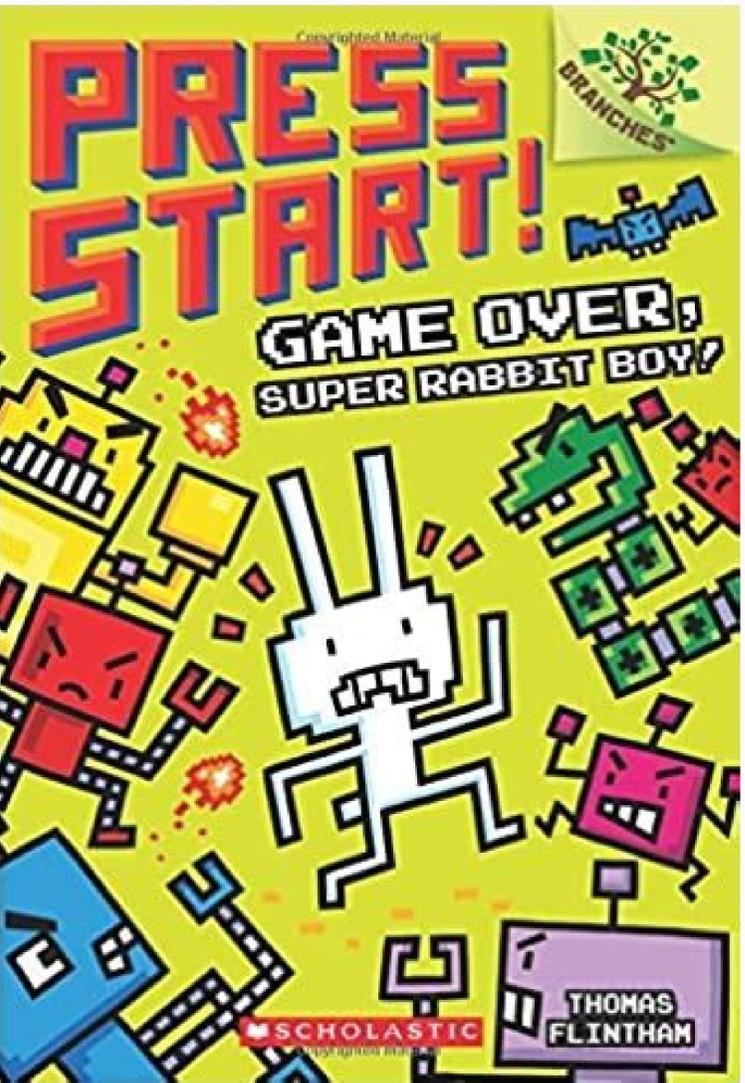
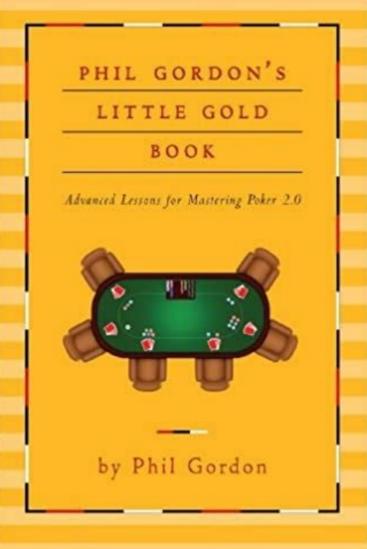


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Bush, Barack Obama and Mitt Romney all invoked similar memories of home and family. Which brings us to one of Trump's most important assets: He is the beneficiary of a steady erosion of illusions about the presidency. Why doesn't anyone seem to care? Unlike past presidents, whose deepest flaws did not emerge until after they took office—or in some cases, years later—Trump voters knew the kind of man they were voting for. The New York Times' Maggie Haberman tweeted that Woodward's book "does not paint a different picture of the early Trump White House than the one that has already emerged from credible news organizations in daily reporting on President Trump." But we knew who Trump was well before January 20, 2017. Oh, by the way, here is a to-do list for further reporting and we're publishing it. There is a strong sense here of the clock ticking. It was years after John Kennedy's martyrdom that we learned that the pictures of his idyllic family concealed a reckless sexual appetite that included White House pool orgies, and that subjected him to blackmail by the FBI director. I can still see her clearly tonight through the eyes of a 3-year-old, kneeling at the railroad station and weeping as she put me back on the train to Arkansas with my grandmother." In subsequent acceptance speeches, George W. Thanks to Jennifer Flowers, the Clintons went on "60 Minutes," where Bill acknowledged "causing pain in my marriage." It was an unprecedented confession, yet it was also consistent with a sea change in what we have come to know—and even expect—about presidential intimacy. I wish "Fear" had other points to make. We know so much more about the behavior of our presidents than we once did, and that knowledge has protected Trump from accountability for his breathtakingly disqualifying flaws. While JFK's campaign celebrated his heroics in World War II, the candidate spoke not a word about them when he accepted the Democratic nomination for president. Bush said to a Navy steward on duty in the West Wing, "Ferdie, I want a hamburger." Woodward keeps the scene-setting to a minimum. What we did know before then, of course, was Clinton's reputation for extracurricular behavior. John M. About Melania Trump, Bannon says: "Behind the scenes she's a hammer." Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner are seen by nearly all parties as pointless. No one coming to terms with the Trump presidency has any reason to be surprised by what they're seeing." And herein lies the key to why Fear will have little if any impact on Trump's political support. Simple arithmetic reveals that millions of people voted for Trump believing he was neither qualified nor honest and trustworthy. "He had not put a team of political rivals or competitors at the table." Woodward vividly quotes Priebus on the chaos of the White House's decision making. We knew things were bad. "Fear" picks up little narrative momentum. When FDR gave his 1932 acceptance speech, he did not speak of his struggles with polio. It's pointless to try to convince him of anything. "When you put a snake and a rat and a falcon and a rabbit and a shark and a seal in a zoo without walls, things start getting nasty and bloody. One of these would have withdrawn the United States from a crucial trade agreement with South Korea. No WASP elitist he! Four years later, Clinton, confronting resistance to his Oxford-Yale Law School background, told the Madison Square Garden audience. "I never met my father. Why then did James Comey, then the F.B.I. director, also introduce the so-called Steele dossier?" It would be as if I had reported and written one of the most serious, complex stories for The Washington Post that I had ever done," Woodward writes, "and then provided an appendix of unverified allegations. You don't need a strategy to kill people." Many insults are flung in "Fear," sometimes behind backs, sometimes right in the kisser. We have, in sum, become accustomed—even invited—to measuring our presidents by a very different standard than the larger-than-life ones we apply to conquering generals or historical leaders. "Don't worry about it. Even more striking, as president, Clinton was asked by a young inquisitor on MTV: "Boxers or briefs?" And he answered the question. It's as if he wants to make a statement that, at this historical juncture, simple factual pine-board competence should suffice. The critic Clive James once complained that Woodward "checks his facts until they weep with boredom." Well, fact-checking and boredom seem sexy again. We're in crazytown. "Bob Woodward arriving at Trump Tower in New York in 2017. Credit...Pool photo by Albin Lohr-Jones/Mike Pence, the vice president, comes off as a glorified golf caddy who doesn't want to rock the boat lest Trump tweet something mean about him. There was a time when presidents and would-be presidents shared little of their inner lives with voters. It's a slow tropical storm of a book, not a hurricane. That's why Woodward's readers, especially those who hold the political power to bring him to account, aren't barking either. Woodward obtained 25 never-seen personal letters exchanged between Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, who describes the bond between the two leaders as out of a "fantasy film." Trump insists to Woodward he will triumph over Covid-19 and the economic calamity. When Dwight Eisenhower gave his 20 years later, he did not share his hope and fears on the eve of D-Day. But the book's title is from a quote Trump delivered in a 2016 interview with Woodward and his Washington Post colleague Robert Costa: "Real power is—I don't even want to use the word—fear." If this book has a single point to drive home, it is that the president of the United States is a congenial liar. "Don't testify," he is quoted as saying. While some may have denied it, many more did not. You turn the pages because Woodward, as he accumulates the queasy-making details, delivers on the promise of his title. Another would have pulled the country from the North American Free Trade Agreement. Describing one of these moments, Woodward writes: "The reality was that the United States in 2017 was tethered to the words and actions of an emotionally overwrought, mercurial and unpredictable leader. Woodward is here, like a state trooper knocking on the door at 3 a.m., to update the sorry details. Some of these details, at first glance, are amusing. He does describe how Ivanka got her father to talk to Al Gore about climate change. Robert S. It was in Bill Clinton's second term that we learned of his behavior with a White House intern—along with on-the-record accusations of predatory behavior by three women. "Don't worry about it, Bob. It was five years after Nixon's election—when the White House tapes were released—that we saw a president not only determined to cover up misdeeds, but a foul-mouthed one as well. He's gone off the rails. He was killed in a car wreck on a rainy road three months before I was born ... After that, my mother had to support us, so we lived with my grandparents while she went back to Louisiana to study nursing. "Obviously," Holmes concludes, "the midnight visitor was someone whom the dog knew well." The Donald Trump of Woodward's book is a Trump we already know all too well. There is no moment like the one in "Bush at War" (2002) in which George W. George H.W. Bush's 1988 acceptance speech, focused on rebutting the notion that he was the son of wealth and privilege, was preceded by a film capturing his near-death experience during World War II. In the Sherlock Holmes story "The Adventure of Silver Blaze," the identity of the horse thief is revealed by the fact that a guard dog did not bark in the night. Dowd, Trump's former lawyer, does not think Trump is mentally capable of testifying to the special counsel. Beyond a considerable boost to the profit margins of Simon & Schuster, Bob Woodward's Fear has had all the impact of what Senator Everett Dirksen described as "a snowflake upon the bosom of the Potomac River." The response in Washington from President Donald Trump's allies, and even from his longtime critics, has been a virtual shrug. He said to Porter about Priebus: "He's like a little rat. In 17 on-the-record interviews with Woodward over seven volatile months—an utterly vivid window into Trump's mind—the president provides a self-portrait that is part denial and part combative interchange mixed with surprising moments of doubt as he glimpses the perils of the presidency and what he calls the "dynamic behind every door." A key decision points, Rage shows how Trump's responses to the crises of 2020 were rooted in the instincts, habits and style he developed during his first three years as president. Woodward has never been a graceful writer, but the prose here is unusually wooden. If you are old enough to remember the ennobling myths of past presidents—young George Washington saying to his father, "I cannot tell a lie," or young Abe Lincoln walking 6 miles to return a 3-cent overcharge—it may seem unnerving to realize what kinds of presidential conduct are no longer universally judged as incapacitating. It was a nervous breakdown of the executive power of the most powerful country in the world. "Trump rarely realizes when things go missing, Woodward suggests. Trump has always been thus. "They were like a posse of second-guessers, hovering, watching," Woodward writes. All of the character traits—the ignorance, the bullying, the delusions, the dissembling—were, as Wall Street stock analysts put it, "priced in" to Trump. In dramatic detail, Woodward takes readers into the Oval Office as Trump's head pops up when he is told in January 2020 that the pandemic could reach the scale of the 1918 Spanish Flu that killed 675,000 Americans. Long before Trump, however, our would-be leaders began to strive to convince us not of their heroic stature, but their human dimensions. I wanted more context, more passion, a bit of irony and certainly more simple history. If this were a first-person novel, he would be its narrator. Rage draws from hundreds of hours of interviews with firsthand witnesses as well as participants' notes, emails, diaries, calendars and confidential documents. Even weeping is making a comeback. Woodward dispenses in "Fear" with most of the small human details that brightened his earlier books. Revisiting the earliest days of the Trump presidency, Rage reveals how Secretary of Defense James Mattis, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats struggled to keep the country safe as the president dismantled any semblance of collegial national security decision making. Jump to sidebar section Summer Reading Suggestions Coming in May Critics' Review Editors' Choice Continue reading the main story Books of The Times Credit... Sony Figueroa/The New York Times Nothing in Bob Woodward's sober and grainy new book, "Fear: Trump in the White House," is especially surprising. Most are from Trump. As Trump biographer Tim O'Brien wrote in Bloomberg Opinion: "The broader picture of life inside the Trump White House corresponds very closely to life inside the Trump Organization over the last few decades and life inside the Trump presidential campaign just two and three years ago. Mueller III's investigation rattles Trump to his core in "Fear." Woodward suggests that the president is right, at least in one regard, to be aggrieved. The intelligence report from the C.I.A., the National Security Agency, the F.B.I. and others about Russian interference in the 2016 election was an airtight document, he says. Those he does set tend to be around policy disputes over North Korea, Afghanistan, tax reform, trade and tariffs, and the Paris climate agreement, among other issues. Woodward's subjects have always been able to trade access for spotlight and some sympathy in his books. Trump lamented when Twitter, the social media platform on which he dispenses Pez-sized pellets of discourtesy, raised the maximum size of an individual tweet from 140 to 280 characters because, he is quoted as saying, "I was the Ernest Hemingway of 140 characters." Somewhere in heaven, Papa is wondering if he can't self-destruct all over again. It is stranger still to learn that Trump orders his most popular tweets printed out, so that he can study them. Sure, cable news has struck a tone of continual hysteria—Red alert! DEFCON 1! Summon the panels!—but that is decidedly normal in Trump's Washington. That his most effective tweets are often the most uninged. That's what happens. "President Donald Trump at a roundtable discussion with state leaders in August. Credit...Tom Brenner for The New York Times "Fear" is a typical Woodward book in that named sources for scenes, thoughts and quotations appear only sometimes. You'll find I was right." Continue to article content Jeff Greenfield is a five-time Emmy-winning network television analyst and author. But the combination of decades of disillusion, along with decades of Trump's behavior hiding in plain sight, go a long way to explaining why Woodward's merciless account has changed so little. Surely Woodward, of all people, has worthwhile comparisons to make between Trump and Richard Nixon. But this is not Woodward's way. "Trump had failed the President Lincoln test," he writes. He is shocked at every turn by Trump's lack of knowledge and utter lack of interest in learning anything at all. Fundamentally, because, like Sherlock Holmes' dog that did not bark in the night, the political and journalistic universe has known in general just about everything that Fear describes anecdotally. Bob Woodward's new book, Rage, is an unprecedented and intimate tour de force of new reporting on the Trump presidency facing a global pandemic, economic disaster and racial unrest. Woodward, the #1 international bestselling author of Fear: Trump in the White House, has uncovered the precise moment the president was warned that the Covid-19 epidemic would be the biggest national security threat to his presidency. And in the case of Trump, there are literally decades' worth of tabloid headlines and gossip columns that long ago told us just how human he is. Okay?" Trump told the author in July. He's a focus group of one, thriving on the smell of his own sulfur. "It's either that or an orange jump suit." Trump declined to be interviewed for this book, Woodward writes in a note to readers. Stephen K. Whatever explanations account for his election—the massive unpopularity of his foe, racial antagonism, economic anxiety, a wholesale disgust with the political class—it's hard to argue that voters' view of Trump was clouded by illusions. Bannon, Trump's former chief strategist, simmers frequently in this book's background. Though he does quote him shouting, like a boy king, "Bring me my tariffs!" Cohn is in some ways this book's moral center. Cohn, Trump's former chief economic adviser, and Rob Porter, Trump's former staff secretary. There are terrifying scenes in which Cohn and Porter conspire to keep certain documents out of Trump's reach. Among the primary sources for this book are clearly Priebus; Gary D. The exit polls from election night 2016 showed that 61 percent of voters thought Trump was unqualified for the job, and 64 percent said he was not honest or trustworthy. His speech was filled with memories of his moving to Texas, raising his kids, participating in the rituals of regular middle-class life. This is a White House that has leaked from Day 1. He just scurries around. Reince Priebus, his former chief of staff, calls the presidential bedroom, where Trump goes to tweet, "the devil's workshop," and early mornings and Sunday nights, when Trump is at loose ends, "the witching hour." Some in the White House have tried to tone down the president's online effusions, but that idea seems to have been jettisoned in the havoc. What lesson has he learned? Kelly, Trump's chief of staff, is quoted as saying about the president, in a meeting, "He's an idiot. Trump's advisers are viewed in mostly pitiless terms by Woodward. It was after Lyndon Johnson left the White House that we learned that two of his top aides were independently probing the possibility of a paranoid president. It was pointless to prepare a presentation of any sort for him. Cohn and Jim Mattis, the secretary of defense, had "several quiet conversations" about what they called "The Big Problem: The president did not understand the importance of allies overseas, the value of diplomacy or the relationship between the military, the economy and intelligence partnerships with foreign governments." Trump is quoted saying feckless things like, about the war in Afghanistan, "You should be killing guys. We'll get to do another book. You don't even have to pay any attention to him." He calls Attorney General Jeff Sessions, in Porter's presence, "mentally retarded" and mocks his accent. John F. Members of his staff had joined to purposefully block some of what they believed were the president's most dangerous impulses.

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