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978-1-107-04810-2 - The Cambridge Companion to: John F. Kennedy

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John F. Kennedy remains central to both the American and the global imagination. Featuring essays by leading literary critics, historians, and film scholars, *The Cambridge Companion to John F. Kennedy* addresses such topics as Kennedy's youth in Boston and his time at Harvard, his foreign policy and his role in reshaping the U.S. welfare state, his relationship to the civil rights and conservative movements, and the ongoing reverberations of his life and death in literature and film. Going beyond historical or biographical studies, these chapters explore the creation and afterlife of an icon, a figure who still embodies – and sparks debate about – what it means to be American.

Andrew Hoberek is Associate Professor of English at the University of Missouri. He is also the author of *The Twilight of the Middle Class: Post–World War II American Fiction and White-Collar Work* and *Considering Watchmen: Poetics, Property, Politics*. Hoberek has published in *Modern Fiction Studies*, *Modern Language Quarterly*, *Studies in American Fiction*, *American Literary History*, and *Contemporary Literature*. He currently serves as the book review editor for *Twentieth-Century Literature*.

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ANDREW HOBEREK

University of Missouri



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Transnationalism in Practice: Essays on American Studies, Literature and Religion (Edinburgh University Press, 2010). His most recent book is *Antipodean America: Australasia and the Constitution of U.S. Literature* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

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MARY ANN WATSON is a Distinguished Professor of Electronic Media and Film Studies at Eastern Michigan University, where her primary research area is media history. She is the author of *The Expanding Vista: American Television in the Kennedy Years* (Duke University Press, 1994) and *Defining Visions: Television and the American Experience in the 20th Century* (Blackwell Press, 2008). Watson has written extensively on postwar broadcasting, including the chapter "Television and the Presidency" in *The Columbia History of American Television*. She has been a consultant to several museum exhibitions and appeared in the documentary *JFK: Breaking the News*, which aired on all PBS stations.

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CHRONOLOGY OF KENNEDY’S LIFE

- 1917 John Fitzgerald Kennedy is born to Joseph Kennedy Sr. and Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy on May 29 in Brookline, Massachusetts. He will become the first U.S. president to be born in the twentieth century.
- 1920 Kennedy contracts scarlet fever and is hospitalized for more than two months at Boston City Hospital.
- 1927 The Kennedy family moves to Riverdale, the Bronx, New York, where John attends the Riverdale Country School.
- 1931–35 Kennedy attends the Choate Boarding School in Connecticut.
- 1934 Kennedy is hospitalized at Yale–New Haven Hospital, then admitted to the Mayo Clinic, where he is diagnosed with colitis.
- 1935 Kennedy travels to England with his parents and sister, but he cuts the trip short because of health problems. He enrolls at Princeton but drops out shortly thereafter after becoming ill.
- 1936 Kennedy transfers to Harvard.
- 1937 President Franklin Roosevelt names Joseph Kennedy Sr. ambassador to Great Britain.
- 1938 Kennedy accompanies his father and his elder brother Joseph Kennedy Jr. to England.
- 1940 Kennedy graduates from Harvard University. He publishes his senior thesis as the book *Why England Slept*. Kennedy attends business school at Stanford.
- 1941 After health problems prevent him from joining the army, Kennedy enlists in the U.S. Navy.

CHRONOLOGY OF KENNEDY'S LIFE

- 1942–43 Kennedy serves on a series of torpedo boats in the South Pacific, eventually rising to command several. A Japanese destroyer rams his boat PT-109 in August 1943. Despite suffering injuries that aggravate his chronic lower back condition, Kennedy performs bravely in leading his crew to their eventual rescue. He is awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal and the Purple Heart.
- 1944 Joseph Kennedy Jr. dies on August 12 when his plane explodes during a mission in Europe. The *New Yorker* publishes John Hersey's article "Survival," based on JFK's experience with PT-109, in May; *Reader's Digest* prints a condensed version (at the urging of Joseph Kennedy Sr.) in August.
- 1945 Kennedy is discharged from the navy and becomes a correspondent for the Hearst newspapers.
- 1946 Kennedy runs for Congress and is elected representative for Massachusetts' Eleventh Congressional District.
- 1947 While on a trip to England, Kennedy is diagnosed with Addison's disease, although the public will not learn of his condition until after his election to the presidency.
- 1948 Kennedy's sister Kathleen dies in a plane crash. JFK is elected to a second term in the House.
- 1950 Kennedy is elected to a third term in the House.
- 1952 With his younger brother Robert as his campaign manager, Kennedy defeats the incumbent, Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., to become a Massachusetts senator.
- 1953 Kennedy marries Jacqueline Bouvier.
- 1954 Kennedy undergoes spinal surgery to address his chronic back pain.
- 1956 Kennedy publishes *Profiles in Courage*, written with his speechwriter, Theodore Sorensen. At the Democratic National Convention, Tennessee Senator Estes Kefauver defeats JFK to become Adlai Stevenson's running mate in the upcoming presidential election.
- 1957 Kennedy is awarded the Pulitzer Prize for *Profiles in Courage*. His daughter, Caroline, is born. He obtains positions on

CHRONOLOGY OF KENNEDY'S LIFE

- the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and on Harvard University's Board of Overseers. In July, he delivers a speech in Congress supporting Algeria in its struggle for independence from France.
- 1958 Kennedy is elected to a second term in the Senate.
- 1960 Kennedy publishes *The Strategy of Peace*. He wins the Democratic nomination for president and chooses Lyndon Johnson as his running mate. During the campaign he participates in the first-ever televised presidential debates with Richard Nixon. He telephones Coretta Scott King when her husband, Martin Luther King Jr., is jailed in Birmingham, Alabama, and Robert Kennedy works behind the scenes to obtain King's release. Kennedy defeats Nixon in a very close election. Shortly thereafter Kennedy's son, John Jr., is born. Kennedy delivers his inaugural address featuring the famous line, "My fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country."
- 1961 Shortly after being sworn in as president, Kennedy appoints his brother Robert as attorney general and establishes the Peace Corps by executive order. In April, his administration backs an attempted invasion of Cuba that ends in disaster at the Bay of Pigs when the invaders are captured by Fidel Castro's forces. In May, Kennedy sends Lyndon Johnson to meet with President Ngô Đình Diệm of South Vietnam about combating the spread of communism in Southeast Asia. Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev hold a summit in Vienna in June. Kennedy and Khrushchev clash over the status of divided Berlin, ending when Khrushchev authorizes the construction of the Berlin Wall. The United States and Latin American nations join in the Alliance for Progress, a program designed to forestall future communist revolutions such as Cuba's through development aid.
- 1962 CBS and NBC simulcast *A Tour of the White House with Mrs. John F. Kennedy* on Valentine's Day, garnering a then-record audience of 56 million viewers. In April, US Steel executives renege on an understanding, reached during negotiations with the United Steelworkers, to not raise prices in exchange for concessions from the union; Kennedy pursues a variety of strategies (including canceling government

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contracts and having the FBI harass steel executives) to win a reversal. Responding to cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin's 1961 feat of becoming the first man in space, Kennedy proposes a U.S. mission to the moon. In September, Robert Kennedy sends 400 federal marshals to the University of Mississippi to facilitate the enrollment of the black student James Meredith; JFK commits 3,000 U.S. troops when violence erupts. The Cuban Missile Crisis of October 14–28 begins when the United States obtains photos of Soviet nuclear missiles on the island. The tense stalemate between the United States and the Soviet Union ends when the Soviets agree to remove the missiles and the United States promises never to invade Cuba (and secretly agrees to dismantle some of its own missiles in Europe). Kennedy proposes cuts in income and corporate taxes to spur economic growth.

1963

In June, Kennedy gives a speech calling on Congress to enact civil rights legislation. He also during that month establishes the Advisory Council on the Arts, the forerunner of the National Endowment for the Arts, and travels to West Berlin (where he delivers his famous "Ich bin ein Berliner" speech), Ireland, and the Vatican. In August, Kennedy's son Patrick is born and dies after just two days from a lung condition. At the end of August, Martin Luther King Jr., other civil rights leaders, and 100,000 others participate in the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. In September the United States, the USSR, and the United Kingdom sign a treaty banning nuclear testing aboveground, in the air, and underwater. A November coup undertaken with U.S. approval deposes Ngô Đình Diệm. Kennedy is assassinated in Dallas, Texas, on November 22, 1963. Lyndon Johnson is sworn in as president on Air Force One, as it sits on Love Field.