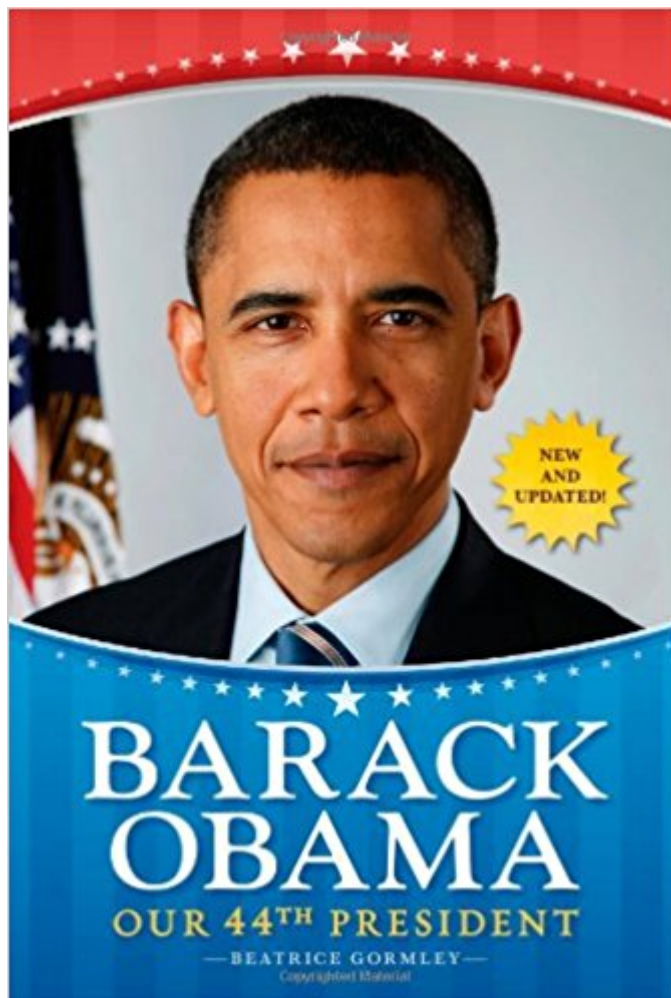


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Barack Obama: Our 44th President



Synopsis

>President Barack Obama's election in 2008 energized the United States and the world. And though the last few years haven't been easy, this president has spent a lifetime overcoming obstacles. President Barack Obama's early involvement with politics was inspired by his mother's interest in the controversial social issues of her times—a passion that she passed on to her son. As the first African American editor of the , the first African American presidential nominee of a major political party, and eventually the first African American president of the United States, Barack Obama has consistently shattered barriers—barriers that some people thought could never be overcome. However, President Obama's life has had its challenges. Born to a Kenyan father and an American mother, Barack grew up in Hawaii and Indonesia, where he faced discrimination and struggles with his own racial identity. Despite these obstacles, Barack persevered and had a successful political career even before his historic win in the 2008 presidential election. Containing vital and current information, this biography will bring you up to date with all the latest from the Oval Office, and much more!

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> has written a number of books for young readers, including several titles in the Childhood of Famous Americans and Childhood of World Figures series, as well as biographies of George W. Bush and Laura Bush. She lives in Ossining, New York.

Barack Obama 2> 2> ON AUGUST 4, 1961, A baby boy was born at Kapiʻolani Medical Center in Honolulu, Hawaii. He weighed eight pounds, two ounces. His parents, Ann and Barack, named him after his father, Barack Hussein Obama, but they called their child "Barry." Barack Obama Sr. was a foreign exchange student from Kenya, a country in east-central Africa. He was twenty-five years old, studying on a scholarship at the University of Hawaii. He was the very first African student at the school. Barack was tall and charming, with a voice "like black velvet," as his mother-in-law Madelyn Dunham described it, "with a British accent." He had come from a poor family, herding goats as a boy. His father, of the Luo tribe, had been a domestic servant for the British colonials. Now Kenya was on the brink of gaining independence from Britain. Barack was determined to accomplish great things, both for himself and for his country. It was a great honor for a youth from his humble background to study at American schools and earn an advanced degree in economics. But he also had a heavy responsibility to his people, and he intended to return to Kenya and help lead the country into a brighter future. Ann Dunham was an eighteen-year-old freshman at the University of Hawaii in 1960 when she met Barack in a Russian class. A quiet but independent-minded girl, she had dark curly hair and dark eyebrows like her father's. She read serious books about reforming society, and she eagerly spent hours in long, earnest discussions with her friends. Ann lived with her parents, Stanley and Madelyn Dunham, in a rambling house near the university campus. Stanley was a furniture salesman, while Madelyn worked for a bank. Both Stanley and Madelyn had grown up in Kansas, but after they married, they lived in several states before settling in Hawaii. When Ann first brought Barack home for dinner, her parents, especially Madelyn, were uneasy. They had never met anyone from Africa before. But Barack quickly won them over with his charm, and they were impressed with his brilliant mind and his confidence. However, the Dunhams were unpleasantly surprised in February 1961, when Ann and Barack eloped to the island of Maui and came back married. Stanley and Madelyn were disappointed that Ann, so bright and inquisitive of mind, was dropping out of college after only one semester. Madelyn also feared that the cultural differences between their American daughter and this African young man were too great. Barack's father, Hussein Onyango Obama, who lived in Kenya, was also surprised and very upset at the news. He threatened to get Barack's travel visa canceled, so he had to return

to Kenya. He pointed out that Barack already had family responsibilities: a wife and two children in Kenya. Also, he warned his son, an American wife wasn't likely to be understanding about the Kenyan custom of a man having more than one family. Furthermore, Onyango wrote Stanley Dunham a long, angry letter. As Barry's mother told him years later, Barack's father "didn't want the Obama blood sullied by a white woman." Barack refused to obey his father, and the Dunhams accepted their daughter's choice. For two years Barack and Ann lived with their baby in a small white house near the university campus. Then in 1963, Barack graduated from the University of Hawaii and won a scholarship to study economics at Harvard University in Massachusetts. The scholarship didn't allow enough money to bring Ann and their son with him, but Barack felt he couldn't pass up the chance to study at such a prestigious university. In the end, he left Hawaii for Massachusetts by himself. Barack Sr. intended to eventually take his wife and son back to Kenya, after he had earned his PhD in economics. But Ann decided that this marriage would not work. Barack might love her and Barry, but his wife and son were not as important as his fierce ambition or his commitment to Kenya. Besides, it did matter to Ann, as Barack's father had predicted, that Barack had a wife and children in Kenya. In January 1964, she filed for divorce. During his first years, Barry didn't wonder why his father was missing. Family pictures show him happily riding his tricycle or perched on a fence with his mother's arm around him. In another picture from those days, Barry frolics in the surf with his grandfather Stanley (whom Barry called "Gramps"). A boisterous, outgoing man, Stanley was delighted to have Barry to play with and show off to friends and neighbors. Madelyn Dunham was more practical and sensible, but she too doted on their grandson. She told him to call her "Tutu," Hawaiian for "grandmother," and the name got shortened to "Toot." Barry's mother and grandparents talked to him about his father, but they never criticized Barack Sr. to Barry. Ann especially must have felt pain and anger over the failed marriage, but she didn't say anything to Barry about that. The worst thing she said about Barack Obama was that he was a terrible driver. Ann told Barry that he had a wonderful father "fiercely intelligent, with a deep baritone voice and a way of commanding people's attention. She showed him pictures of Barack Sr., a dark-skinned man with glasses. She told him his father loved him very much. Although Barry wouldn't realize it for many years, his mother was just as remarkable as his father. Her full name was Stanley Ann Dunham, because her father had wished for a son. Growing up, she didn't like having a boy's name, but feeling different from other children may have made her more independent as well. Once, when the Dunhams were

living in Texas, Ann brought a black friend home to play. That would have been fine with Ann's parents, but the neighborhood children taunted the girls with racial slurs, driving the black girl away. Even more disturbing, the adult townspeople blamed the incident on the Dunhams. Instead of scolding their own children, they advised the Dunhams not to let Ann associate with black playmates. When Ann was in the eighth grade, the family moved to Seattle, Washington. Stanley was offered a better job in a furniture store there, and they were all glad to leave Texas. Madelyn found a job in a bank. In 1956, the Dunhams bought a house on Mercer Island, near Seattle, so that Ann could attend the new high school there. Ann was an idealistic and curious girl, with a mind of her own. Some of her high school friends were surprised that she didn't feel any need to fit in with other young people. She didn't seem to have the usual interest in dating or eventually getting married and having children. What did interest Ann were current events and the controversial ideas set forth by her English and philosophy teachers. These teachers angered many in the community by questioning religion, the U.S. political system, and other parts of the American way of life. Some of the thought-provoking books they assigned were Vance Packard's *The Hidden Persuaders*, about the power of advertising; George Orwell's *1984*, a novel about a grim future in which the countries of the world are always at war and the government controls citizens' minds with lies and violence; and William Whyte's *The Organization Man*, which described big American corporations as controlling every aspect of their employees' lives. Ann and her friends had long discussions on such topics after school in coffee shops. She spent much of her free time reading. She was fascinated with other cultures, and she was idealistic about how people's lives could be improved. Toward the end of her high school career, Ann applied to the University of Chicago and received early acceptance. The University of Chicago, with its reputation for intellectual excitement, in the middle of a big city, appealed to Ann's sense of adventure. However, Stanley Dunham didn't want his daughter living on her own, far away from home, at such a young age. After Ann's graduation from high school, in 1960, Stanley heard that a new opportunity was opening up in the furniture business in Honolulu. Always ready for a new adventure and hopeful for a better life somewhere else, he decided to move the family to Hawaii. Ann resented her father for running her life, and she was reluctant to leave Seattle. But Hawaii wasn't such a bad place to be: a land of warm, sandy beaches and transparent blue water, of steep rain forest-covered hills with waterfalls and ginger flowers. Also, in Hawaii, Ann encountered people with an interesting mix of backgrounds: Japanese, Filipino, Polynesian. Ann enrolled in the University of Hawaii to study anthropology. She soon fell in with a group of students who shared her interest in politics and world

affairs. One of them -- the one with the most forceful, confident opinions -- was Barack Obama. After divorcing Barack in 1964, Ann went back to school at the University of Hawaii. She had no money, but she got by with food stamps and with her parents' help. While Ann was in class, Barry's grandparents took care of him. Ann soon met another foreign exchange student she liked very much, an Indonesian man named Lolo Soetoro. Indonesia, like Kenya, was a recently independent country. Lolo's father and brother had both died in the struggle against the Dutch colonialists, and the Dutch army had burned their house. Lolo was proud of his country and wanted to contribute to building a better Indonesia. He planned to teach at the university when he returned to Jakarta, the capital city. Having a much more easygoing personality than Barack Sr., Lolo got along well with the Dunhams. He enjoyed tussling with young Barry and playing chess with Stanley. Lolo wanted to remain in Hawaii until he finished his studies, but Indonesia in the mid-1960s was a country in turmoil. President Sukarno had ruled Indonesia since the declaration of independence in 1945, but there was increasing unrest against his government. In 1965 the army led a violent anti-communist purge in which hundreds of thousands died. In 1966, Lolo was ordered back to Indonesia to serve in the army. He and Ann decided to marry before he left, with the plan that she and Barry would join him several months later. Stanley was excited for Ann and Barry, moving to a place more exotic than Hawaii, with tigers and monsoons. Madelyn was worried that the country might not be safe for them, because of the political upheaval. Ann and Barry needed to get shots and passports, since they'd never left the United States before. In 1967 they boarded a plane to fly first to Japan and then to Jakarta, Indonesia, about a third of the way around the globe from Hawaii. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

My daughter loved it. Excellent facts we used it for a great Book Report! She even dressed up like him and gave out vote for me badges

Very good and informative . Easy reading and a great help for a book report that my son has to do for his class

I loved reading this book with my nine year old son. It is wonderfully thorough in describing President Obama's life from childhood to his inauguration. I was moved by his story and inspired by the possibilities...

This book was purchased to add to my book shelf for my third grade students. I've had a lot of

interest from my students about Barack Obama. This book is very well written and easily understood by third graders although the readability level is probably at the fifth grade level. I'd consider this a book that would be suitable for my above average readers.

YO A good book but got very boring at times overall pretty good so 2 stars. I used it for my book report

My son loved reading the book!

My son wanted to do a project on Mr Obama so we decided to give this book a try. There were parts that he needed help with but overall was able to handle it on his own. I purchased the Kindle version so he was really excited about that!!

I came across this book on the shelf in the 3rd grade classroom of my niece, as i was sitting in on her class one day (by her request), and i read through a good fraction of it as i waited -- and was really touched and moved by the detail. I'll admit i've been a huge fan of the Pres's personal story and arc right from the beginning, but all the details of his family life -- his Mother (the most), his grandparents, his sister, his search for roots through his father -- just blew me away. I have a much better picture of what makes this very amazing man and incredibly inspiring speaker, exactly who he is today, starting right from his birth (I have to say i only got as far as his Columbia days in the book, about 1/3 through, before the class ended and i had to leave it behind! But i'm certain i would've found the rest also quite interesting, though slightly less new to me, as i feel i know his more recent history in somewhat better detail already).Anyway, for a 'full-grown' adult like me, i rather relished this book, so i can only think it must be quite interesting for a kid also to read through, and compare their life to our current very amazing President's arc (in contradistinction to the much *less* distinguished dissolute youth and adulthood of various previous occupants of the office, and in order to not sully the positivity any further, i won't go into specifics about who and when, and readers can fill in their least favorite President here. ;->).Great book, thx for writing it, Beatrice!-Dr. XTG.

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