

# **What It Takes By Richard Ben Cramer**

## **What It Takes by Richard Ben Cramer: An Engaging Look into the Heart of Political Ambition**

Every now and then, a topic captures people's attention in unexpected ways. Richard Ben Cramer's seminal work, *What It Takes*, is one such topic that continues to resonate with readers interested in the raw realities of American presidential politics. This comprehensive book delves into the lives and psyches of the candidates who ran for the 1988 Republican and Democratic presidential nominations, offering an intimate portrayal that goes far beyond the typical political biography.

### **A Window into the Minds of Political Titans**

Richard Ben Cramer spent years researching and interviewing, crafting a narrative that humanizes figures like George H.W. Bush, Bob Dole, Michael Dukakis, and others. The book reveals their motivations, fears, and the personal challenges they face while striving for the highest office in the United States. Through meticulous storytelling, readers gain a sense of what it truly

takes to seek the presidency â€” perseverance, sacrifice, and an unyielding drive.

## Unparalleled Depth and Narrative Style

*What It Takes* stands out due to its novelistic approach. Cramer doesnâ€™t simply list facts or political achievements; he weaves a compelling story filled with vivid character studies and dramatic moments. This style has made the book a must-read for political enthusiasts, journalists, and anyone fascinated by leadership and ambition. It provides insights not only into the candidates but also into the political system that shapes them.

## Why This Book Matters Today

In an era where political discourse is often reduced to soundbites and social media posts, *What It Takes* offers a refreshing, in-depth perspective. It reminds readers that behind every campaign trail are complex individuals grappling with personal and political challenges. The bookâ€™s timeless themes of ambition, resilience, and the human cost of politics continue to offer lessons relevant to contemporary elections and leadership studies.

## Key Takeaways from the Book

1. **Ambition and Character:** The book explores how personal ambition intertwines with character and moral choices.
2. **The Political Journey:** It highlights the grueling, often

unseen aspects of running for president.

3. **Humanizing Leaders:** Cramer's detailed portraits challenge readers to see politicians as nuanced human beings.
4. **Impact on Political Journalism:** The work set a new standard for political biographies and campaign coverage.

For anyone seeking to understand the complexities of presidential politics through a deeply human lens, Richard Ben Cramer's *What It Takes* remains an essential and richly rewarding read.

## **What It Takes by Richard Ben Cramer: A Deep Dive into Political Ambition**

Imagine a world where political leaders are not just figures on a screen but individuals with dreams, flaws, and relentless ambition. Richard Ben Cramer's "What It Takes" offers a raw and unfiltered look into the lives of six presidential candidates, revealing the human side of politics. This book is not just a chronicle of political campaigns; it's a story of ambition, perseverance, and the relentless pursuit of power.

### **The Candidates: A Closer Look**

Cramer's book delves into the lives of George H.W. Bush, Michael Dukakis, Gary Hart, Bob Dole, Joe Biden, and Jesse Jackson. Each candidate is portrayed with a level of detail that makes them relatable and human. Cramer's narrative style is engaging,

making the reader feel as if they are part of the campaign trail.

## **Themes of Ambition and Perseverance**

The central theme of "What It Takes" is ambition. Cramer explores how each candidate's ambition drives them to seek the highest office in the land. The book also delves into the perseverance required to navigate the treacherous waters of political campaigns. Cramer's detailed accounts of the candidates' struggles and triumphs provide a nuanced understanding of what it truly takes to run for president.

## **The Human Side of Politics**

One of the most compelling aspects of "What It Takes" is its focus on the human side of politics. Cramer's portraits of the candidates are not just about their political careers but also about their personal lives, their families, and their inner demons. This human element makes the book a compelling read for anyone interested in politics or human behavior.

## **Critique and Analysis**

While "What It Takes" is a masterful piece of journalism, it is not without its critics. Some argue that Cramer's focus on the personal lives of the candidates detracts from the political analysis. However, this critique misses the point of the book. Cramer's goal is not to provide a dry political analysis but to offer a human story of ambition and perseverance.

## Conclusion

"What It Takes" by Richard Ben Cramer is a must-read for anyone interested in politics or human behavior. The book's detailed portraits of the candidates, its exploration of ambition and perseverance, and its focus on the human side of politics make it a compelling and insightful read. Whether you are a political junkie or simply someone who enjoys a good story, "What It Takes" is a book that will captivate and inspire you.

## Analyzing 'What It Takes' by Richard Ben Cramer: A Deep Dive into Political Ambition and Leadership

Richard Ben Cramer's *What It Takes* offers an investigative examination into the personalities and dynamics underlying the 1988 U.S. presidential campaign. Through exhaustive research and extensive interviews, Cramer dissects not only the public personas but also the private struggles and motivations of key candidates. This journalistic approach reveals critical insights into leadership, ambition, and the political processes that shape American democracy.

## Contextualizing the 1988 Presidential

## **Campaign**

The backdrop of the 1988 election was a pivotal moment in U.S. politics, with an incumbent Republican president, Ronald Reagan, concluding his tenure. The campaign introduced a variety of characters, each embodying distinct political ideologies, personal histories, and ambitions. Cramer's work places these individuals within the broader socio-political context, showing how their backgrounds influenced their strategies and appeal.

## **Cause: The Drive Behind Political Ambition**

Cramer explores the intrinsic and extrinsic factors fueling the candidates' ambitions. From family legacies to formative personal experiences, the book illustrates how these forces shaped their desire for power. For example, George H.W. Bush's extensive political and diplomatic background contrasts with Bob Dole's rise from a war-injured veteran to a political heavyweight, highlighting diverse pathways to leadership.

## **Consequences of the Pursuit**

The analysis extends to the consequences of such high-stakes political pursuits. Cramer details the personal sacrifices, public scrutiny, and ethical dilemmas faced by the candidates. The book implicitly critiques the political system that demands such relentless dedication, often at great personal cost. It raises questions about the sustainability of such leadership models and

the psychological toll on individuals.

## **Impact on Political Journalism and Biography**

*What It Takes* revolutionized political biography by blending narrative storytelling with investigative rigor. Its impact is evident in subsequent political coverage and literature, setting a benchmark for depth and nuance. Cramer's method underscores the importance of understanding the human dimension behind political power and decision-making.

## **Conclusion: Broader Implications for Leadership Studies**

Beyond the immediate political sphere, Cramer's work invites reflection on leadership qualities and the complex interplay of personality, ambition, and circumstance. It challenges readers and scholars to consider what qualities are genuinely essential for effective leadership and how political systems can better support those who serve. *What It Takes* remains a critical resource for anyone studying political science, leadership psychology, or American history.

## **What It Takes by Richard Ben Cramer:**

# **An Investigative Analysis**

The political landscape is often seen as a stage where ambitious individuals vie for power, each with their own strategies, strengths, and weaknesses. Richard Ben Cramer's "What It Takes" offers an unparalleled look into the lives of six presidential candidates, providing a deep dive into the mechanics of political ambition. This book is not just a narrative of political campaigns; it's an investigative analysis of the human drive for power.

## **The Candidates: A Detailed Examination**

Cramer's book focuses on George H.W. Bush, Michael Dukakis, Gary Hart, Bob Dole, Joe Biden, and Jesse Jackson. Each candidate is examined in detail, with Cramer providing a nuanced understanding of their motivations, strategies, and personal lives. The book's investigative approach reveals the complexities of political campaigns, from the strategic decisions to the personal sacrifices.

## **Themes of Ambition and Strategy**

The central theme of "What It Takes" is ambition. Cramer explores how each candidate's ambition drives them to seek the presidency. The book also delves into the strategic aspects of political campaigns, revealing the intricate web of decisions and maneuvers that go into running for office. Cramer's detailed accounts provide a comprehensive understanding of the political

process.

## **The Human Element**

One of the most compelling aspects of "What It Takes" is its focus on the human element of politics. Cramer's portraits of the candidates are not just about their political careers but also about their personal lives, their families, and their inner struggles. This human element adds a layer of depth to the book, making it a compelling read for anyone interested in political analysis.

## **Critique and Analysis**

While "What It Takes" is a masterful piece of investigative journalism, it has faced criticism for its focus on the personal lives of the candidates. Some argue that this detracts from the political analysis. However, this critique misses the point of the book. Cramer's goal is to provide a holistic understanding of the candidates, including their personal motivations and struggles.

## **Conclusion**

"What It Takes" by Richard Ben Cramer is a must-read for anyone interested in political analysis. The book's detailed examination of the candidates, its exploration of ambition and strategy, and its focus on the human element make it a compelling and insightful read. Whether you are a political analyst or simply someone who enjoys a deep dive into human

behavior, "What It Takes" is a book that will captivate and inspire you.

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## Questions & Answers About what it takes by richard ben cramer

| No | Question                                                           | Answer                                                                                                                                                   |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | What is the central theme of Richard Ben Cramer's 'What It Takes'? | 'What It Takes' centrally explores the ambition, character, and personal struggles of candidates vying for the U.S. presidency during the 1988 election. |

|   |                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2 | How does Richard Ben Cramer approach storytelling in 'What It Takes'?      | Cramer employs a novelistic narrative style that blends detailed character studies with dramatic storytelling to humanize political figures.                         |
| 3 | Which presidential candidates are featured prominently in 'What It Takes'? | The book prominently features George H.W. Bush, Bob Dole, Michael Dukakis, and several other candidates from the 1988 Republican and Democratic primaries.           |
| 4 | Why is 'What It Takes' considered influential in political journalism?     | 'What It Takes' set a new standard for political biography by combining investigative journalism with storytelling, influencing how political campaigns are covered. |
| 5 | What personal challenges faced the candidates in 'What It Takes'?          | Candidates faced sacrifices such as intense public scrutiny, ethical dilemmas, and the psychological toll of relentless campaigning.                                 |
| 6 | In what ways does 'What It Takes' remain relevant to modern readers?       | The book's exploration of ambition, leadership, and the human cost of politics continues to offer insights applicable to current political landscapes.               |
| 7 | How long did Richard Ben Cramer research and write 'What It Takes'?        | Cramer spent several years conducting interviews and research before publishing 'What It Takes', reflecting the book's depth and detail.                             |
| 8 | What lessons about leadership can be drawn from 'What It Takes'?           | The book suggests that effective leadership involves resilience, integrity, and self-awareness amid the pressures of political life.                                 |

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|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9  | Does 'What It Takes' cover the outcomes of the 1988 presidential election? | While focused on the campaigns and candidates, the book also discusses the election outcomes and their implications for American politics.                                                                                                                   |
| 10 | Can 'What It Takes' be recommended for readers outside political science?  | Yes, its rich storytelling and human insight make it valuable for anyone interested in leadership, psychology, or American history.                                                                                                                          |
| 11 | What is the central theme of 'What It Takes' by Richard Ben Cramer?        | The central theme of 'What It Takes' is ambition. The book explores how each candidate's ambition drives them to seek the presidency, providing a detailed look at the personal and political struggles they face.                                           |
| 12 | Who are the six candidates profiled in 'What It Takes'?                    | The six candidates profiled in 'What It Takes' are George H.W. Bush, Michael Dukakis, Gary Hart, Bob Dole, Joe Biden, and Jesse Jackson.                                                                                                                     |
| 13 | How does Richard Ben Cramer portray the candidates in 'What It Takes'?     | Cramer portrays the candidates with a level of detail that makes them relatable and human. He focuses on their personal lives, families, and inner demons, providing a nuanced understanding of their motivations and struggles.                             |
| 14 | What is the significance of the human element in 'What It Takes'?          | The human element in 'What It Takes' adds a layer of depth to the book, making it a compelling read for anyone interested in political analysis. It provides a holistic understanding of the candidates, including their personal motivations and struggles. |

|        |                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1<br>5 | What are some of the criticisms of 'What It Takes'?                              | Some critics argue that Cramer's focus on the personal lives of the candidates detracts from the political analysis. However, this critique misses the point of the book, which is to provide a holistic understanding of the candidates.              |
| 1<br>6 | Why is 'What It Takes' a must-read for anyone interested in politics?            | 'What It Takes' is a must-read for anyone interested in politics because it offers a detailed examination of the candidates, explores the themes of ambition and strategy, and focuses on the human element of politics.                               |
| 1<br>7 | How does 'What It Takes' differ from other political books?                      | 'What It Takes' differs from other political books in its focus on the human element of politics. Cramer's detailed portraits of the candidates provide a nuanced understanding of their motivations and struggles, making the book a compelling read. |
| 1<br>8 | What can readers expect to learn from 'What It Takes'?                           | Readers can expect to learn about the personal and political struggles of presidential candidates, the strategic aspects of political campaigns, and the human drive for power.                                                                        |
| 1<br>9 | How does 'What It Takes' contribute to the understanding of political campaigns? | 'What It Takes' contributes to the understanding of political campaigns by providing a detailed examination of the candidates, exploring the themes of ambition and strategy, and focusing on the human element of politics.                           |

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|----|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 20 | What makes 'What It Takes' a compelling read? | 'What It Takes' is a compelling read because of its detailed portraits of the candidates, its exploration of ambition and strategy, and its focus on the human element of politics. |
|----|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

1988 presidential election, american politics, bob dole, gary hart, george h.w. bush, human element in politics, jesse jackson, joe Biden, michael dukakis, political ambition, political biography, political campaigns, political strategy, presidential candidates, richard ben cramer, what it takes

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