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Speaking For Myself: My Life From Liverpool To Downing Street



CHERIE BLAIR

SPEAKING FOR MYSELF

MY LIFE FROM LIVERPOOL TO DOWNING STREET



Synopsis

Even if she hadn't married Tony Blair, Cherie's story would have been amazing. Abandoned by her actor father, she overcame obstacles to become one of the UK's most successful barristers. But when Labour took power in 1997, she faced new challenges: her husband was the first Prime Minister in recent history with a young family, and Cherie was the first PM's wife with a serious career. Now, she gives a complete account of her own life--an astonishing journey for a woman whose unconventional childhood was full of drama and who grew up with a fierce sense of justice. In her autobiography she reveals for the first time what it was like to combine life as a working mother with life married to the Prime Minister. She writes about her encounters with scores of foreign leaders and her friendships with Presidents Clinton and Bush, as well as with Hillary and Laura. And she offers inside details of her relationships with the royals, including Queen Elizabeth, Prince Charles, and Princess Diana.

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Customer Reviews

Reading this autobiography was like talking to a best friend, who just happens to be the irrepressible

Cherie Blair. There is much information, told very honestly and wonderfully openly. It is a great example of the saying that "truth is stranger than fiction". A novelist could not make this stuff up! Unlike many autobiographies, Cherie does not sugar coat anything or avoid any subject. She reveals herself completely: the wins, the losses, embarrassing but fascinating details that would make some blush. She even tells about her childhood in a way that makes it seem like a thrilling carnival, e.g., both her parents being actors, the ongoing antics of her father both funny and sad. I suppose I was expecting something at least somewhat boring, written by a Barrister and the wife of a PM, but no--this book is a real page turner! You will be LOL many times while reading this book. Cherie has well earned her 5 stars!

Enjoyed the book. Learned something about British Politics.

I thought this book was very interesting. She's a very bright lady and it shows in her writing. She desires a career, yet wants to have children as well. And, she's madly in love with her husband although she is not at all gushy about it.

After reading this book, I had more respect for her.

I didn't really have a strong opinion of Cherie Blair when I bought this book; I bought it to gain insight into the Blair years. Having read it, I find her an amazingly naive and almost simple person, particularly surprising in contrast to her brilliant and charismatic husband, former UK PM Tony Blair. Mrs Blair is not a gifted writer and the book plods along at a chronological, non-analytical pace, overly laden with minutiae of her past, starting even before her conception. While British "first ladies" have never had the prominent role of their US counterparts, Mrs Blair seems astounded that even the simplest of duties are asked of her. Nor are events given any particular emphasis in how they must have affected her life. While she isn't humorless, nor does she demonstrate much wit, usually in abundance in British books. Nevertheless, I liked Cherie; she seems an honest person, deeply in love with her husband, family and her legal practice benefiting the underprivileged. Her book falls quite short, however, in telling us about the life of one of Britain's most notable political families.

Cherie Blair's main claim to fame is her marriage to Tony Blair who was Britain's Prime Minister from 1997 to 2007. However she is also an interesting individual in her own right: the daughter of a famous actor who has had a prestigious legal career as well as having a front row seat for recent

political events. She was widely disliked in the UK, and I have to say that if you don't like Cherie Blair, this is probably not the book that will change your mind. I started reading it with an open mind, but by the end even I was getting tired of her! Having said that, I enjoyed reading "Speaking for Myself" and I recommend it (which may sound strange, but only if you think you need to like the subject of a biography to enjoy reading it). One of the things that has always intrigued me about Mrs Blair is that she is such a contrast: a high achiever with a great deal of intelligence and yet so devoid of emotional intelligence that she is oblivious to the way that she comes across. It's clear from reading this book that she is a warm and caring person, intensely loyal to her family and friends, who does a lot for charity. It's also clear that she has poor personal judgement and no idea how to read situations. Cherie grew up in working class Liverpool. Her father was largely absent from her life (she only found out that she had a new step-sister when she saw the birth notice in the newspaper). She was raised by her grandmother and mother and developed a strong sense of feminism from an early age. What's interesting is that she then chose to go into law - one of the most conservative occupations that she could have chosen - and to marry a man whose political ambitions meant that she was condemning herself to playing a support role. She makes a throwaway comment at one stage about how simple her life could have been had she chosen to marry someone else, but the fact is that she made her choices knowingly and yet proceeds to complain about the consequences at great length. It's hard to muster the sympathy that she clearly feels she deserves. Cherie also has a preoccupation with financial security, which is not attractive but nevertheless understandable given her working class background. What she doesn't seem to get however is how inappropriate it is for a woman in her privileged position to complain about being hard up. Instead it's as if she thinks that if she just explains one more time about how Tony went from earning £80,000 per annum to £20,000 per annum when he became an MP, then we'd suddenly get it and feel sorry for her. In the early days of Tony's political career, he and Cherie had a strong partnership. The dynamic between them changed when he became PM. Cherie had to accept that she didn't get to know what was going on and that Alastair Campbell would make decisions about what she could and couldn't do. She felt quite isolated in Downing Street (at one point she refers to herself as "the prisoner") and probably as a consequence she developed very close relationships with her hairdresser Andre and with her "lifestyle adviser" Carole Caplin. Nevertheless when things all fall apart with Carole, she comments that she didn't have the emotional energy to deal with Carole's misery. This section of the book is Cherie at her worst. She had gone through a miscarriage, felt financially insecure and was generally feeling sorry for herself. She is so pre-occupied with her own woes that she doesn't give much thought to the looming

conflict in Iraq and she also never admits that she made errors of judgement (the inability to acknowledge her mistakes is a recurring flaw in her character). The best parts of the book are when Cherie is talking about the places she's been and people that she's met. Her descriptions of official visits to China, Pakistan and Rwanda are fascinating, as are her observations about world players like the Clintons, President Bush, Vladimir Putin, the Royal Family and the very theatrical Silvio Berlusconi. (Putin's wife tells her that Putin has a rule that you must never praise a woman as that will only spoil her). She had a unique front row to history and she's very open about what she thinks. The book is also very amusing at times - I laughed out loud when she described sitting her driving test. She comes across as being very honest throughout, even when it's to her detriment (and it often is). The book is long and could easily have been shorter. (There's too much about her early boyfriends for example.) It's not badly written, but a better editor would also have encouraged a greater degree of self-scrutiny. She's an interesting and complex woman but this is not the book it could have been. Nonetheless, despite these criticisms, I enjoyed it very much.

I was looking for Tony Blair's book but the library didn't have it yet. So I picked up this one instead. I knew nothing about Cherie prior. The book is full of selected stories from throughout her life--she begins the book with her parents story and ends not too long ago. She offers many little stories about her life before and with Tony but no story really gets much more than 2 or 3 pages. So I was left with glimpses of what it was like to be the wife of the Prime Minister but they are just that--glimpses. However, each story is of interest--some were meaningless because I could not relate to who the people were (I live in U.S.)--and put together I concluded she is a lovely woman, happy, and in love her husband. It's a nice read.

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