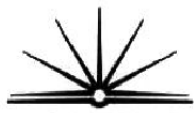


## John F. Kennedy

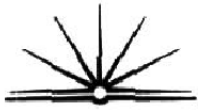
The main historical debate surrounding the presidency of John F. Kennedy tends to tackle two main areas. Historians seek to understand the history of JFK through analysis of his public and private life - the Man and myth - and the effect of this on his Presidency; as well as his diplomatic actions, particularly in relation to the Cuban Missile Crisis. Interpretations have changed as historical thinking has evolved and these can be summed up in the Camelot School, the Revisionist history and the Post-Revisionist representation.

The Camelot School of thought written by Schlesinger and



Strenuous, sought to glorify the image of JFK. In opposition to Bickertons suggestion that understanding the past required tackling accepted interpretations, these historians aimed to retain the image that had dominated JFK's presidency. They reflect him as the laureate, model American. "His youth, modernity and profound vitality" were emblematic of the contemporary man. This whole heartedly encapsulates the positive sentiment of the time as his assassination left the ~~image~~ legacy of a slain hero.

The sources used by the Camelot school of thought were largely

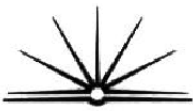


oral material and they both used little archival ~~to~~ evidence and thus the understanding they reflect is largely questionable.

Both Schlesinger and Sorenson were friends of JFK and this is reflected in the narrative account that appeals to audiences due to its obvious emotional connection.

Their purpose was to retain JFK's positive image and subsequently they neglected <sup>or manipulated</sup> information that would hinder this perception.

They suggest that Kennedy's adulterous affairs did not impede on his presidency and are thus not important historical information. Further they omit information about the influence of his dominance



Letter Joe Kennedy and as well as his extensive health problems. The Camelot School create a hagiographic representation and their purpose may not have been to understand the past. Schmeiser admits that his work is a personal memoir whilst Sorenson suggests that his work is what Kennedy would have written himself if he had not died - consequently Bickerton's view does not apply to the Camelot school's history.

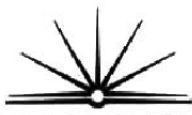
The Revisionist history sought to decipher the historical 'myth' created by the Camelot school. Renowned revisionist historian Thomas Reeves does 'fackle the accepted interpretation' of JFK

in order to ~~then~~ portray his Presidency accurately. Reeves' representation directly applies to Bickerton's view in his analysis of both the public man and private life of JFK. Reeves charges Sorenson and Schlesinger by claiming that "evidence critical of Kennedy was either manipulated or ignored" and this is a demonstration of Reeves supporting Bickerton's view.

Reeves argues ~~that~~ <sup>the</sup> Camelot myth, by looking into the floors of JFK's personality. Reeves' historical objectivity is brought into question when he ~~argues~~ begins to judge Kennedy on moral grounds - "he was

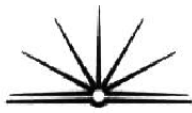


pragmatic to the point of amorality." Reeves asserts that the real man, was very, reckless, selfish and lecherous. Unlike the Camelot School, Reeves 'tackles' issues of JFK's father when he quotes ~~Reeves~~ Eleanor Roosevelt saying "he was little more than an extension of his father's ego." In a similar mentality he suggested that Kennedy's affair risked national security as they were "reckless in the extreme" and "demeaned the nation's highest office." Despite Reeves' thoroughly researched material, use of archival evidence, and numerous interviews he suggests that it's impossible to understand the past and the Kennedy



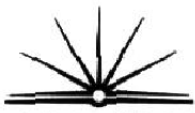
family releases ~~all~~ the secret files. ~~Her~~ Reeves's representation directly sought to juxtapose the myth created by the Camelot school. In doing so, his purpose is misguided, ~~as~~ by his desire to reveal the 'real man'.

Another revisionist Seymour Hersh approaches the history of JFK even more aggressively than Reeves. The title of his book 'The Dark Side of Camelot' indicates that he is ~~showing~~ portrays the negative attributes of JFK. As a journalist, his writing is often sensationalist and populist and is emblematic of much lacking popular history. ~~He claimed~~ Lacayo



suggested that Herch "was willing to put testimony, speculation and hearsay in close proximity and declare they all ~~add up~~ add up to fact". This suggests that a lot of Herch's sources were flimsy, tenuous and unsubstantiated and thus brings into question the reliability of his wider assertions. For example Herch claimed that Kennedy offered Monroe \$60,000 to stay quiet about their affair. This was proved false prior to the release of his book and makes one wonder, if in the attempt to ~~damage~~ damage Herch's iconoclastic approach if the truth was compromised.

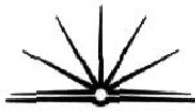




Through hindsight historians discovered that there were 2 extreme positions on Kennedy-glorifying and vilifying his image, as such the post Revisionist school arose in an attempt to portray a more balanced view.

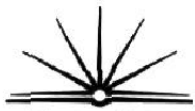
Historian Richard Reeves examines all the angles previously dismissed thus trying to root out falsifications in previous recorded histories. Bickerton's view<sup>can</sup> fundamentally be seen in Reeves work as he tries to dispell misleading information.

In examination of Kennedy's health problems, he suggests that Kennedy used his exceptional



communication skills to 'personify the hope of the American people of the time'. His spinal injuries gave the impression of 'old football injuries' and 'war injuries' and this effectively secured his public image. Further he suggests that despite his extensive health problems, the JFK radiated good health and humour and this was ~~still~~ "courageous".

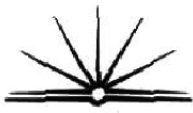
On the other hand, Reeves acknowledges that Kennedy's adulterous affair proved a problem. The Justice Department would not prosecute a notorious mobster - Cianciani as he was a friend of JFK's 'lover Judith



Campbell. Therefore as Deewes tackles the opinions ~~as~~ argued by the Revisionist historians, he also tackles the representation cemented by the Camelot School of thought and thus ~~it~~ reflects Bickerton's view in order to accurately construct a history.

Kennedy reigned in a Cold War generation, where tensions between the US and USSR were severely taught. A similar pattern of representation can be seen in the historical analysis of JFK's diplomatic decisions as in analysis of his character.

The Camelot School summarise



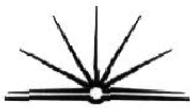
JFK's ~~the~~ diplomatic moves as a progression growing from strength to strength. They justify the disaster of the Bay of Pigs as a result of an ambitious CIA and portray Kennedy as a victim of inexperienced military advisers. However the success in the Cuban Missile Crisis is reflected "as solely the result of [Kennedy's] wisdom so brilliantly controlled. As the Camelot school was written 2 years after JFK's assassination they were able to cement and sanctify JFK's image irrespective of Bickerton's view.

The Revisionist historians namely Thomas Reeves suggest that the



Cuban Missile Crisis demonstrated "Kennedy losing control" and he only demonstrated "caution" because he wanted to avoid another "poor showing" like Vienna!

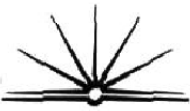
Furthermore, the Revisionist attack the Camelot myth "lead-on" by suggesting that Kennedy's diplomatic actions in Cuba were not for the greater good but rather an attempt to reestablish the Kennedy family name after the Bay of Pigs fiasco. As seen in Study of JFK's Character, the Revisionist School of Thought can be applied to Bickerton's view in that they were directly refuting the image substantiated by Schlesinger



and Sorenson.

Post Revisionist would conclude that JFK's foreign policy showed "growing maturity". From questionable decisions amidst the Bay of Pigs, Kennedy then solidified his reputation as a diplomat in the avoidance of a "nuclear holocaust" as seen in the events of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Historical evolutions have proved that ~~the~~ representations will change. Often, as seen in the Revisionist history of JFK, historians will attempt to refute previously accepted historical representations.



Chris J. Bickerton concludes that the purpose of history is for understanding of the past. all 3 historical schools of thought discussed try to attain a level of understanding in relation to JFK's presidency and often this involves ~~repudiated~~ ~~the~~ ~~accepted~~ ~~not~~ repudiating accepted histories thus making Bickerton's view relevant.