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BOOK REVIEW

Stephen Maher, *The Prince. The Turbulent Reign of Justin Trudeau*. Toronto: Simon & Schuster Canada, 2024, 400p.

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With 4.6 million Instagram followers, 6.4 million Twitter followers and 8.5 million Facebook followers (as of February 2026), Justin Trudeau remains a prominent political figure and online celebrity whose influence has not waned since he stopped being Canada's prime minister in 2025. Stephen Maher's biography provides a comprehensive overview of Trudeau's life, examining both his political career and his personal life. This well-balanced book helps readers to better understand the Canadian political system during Trudeau's time in office, as well as the challenges faced by his team. The book is written in a style that aims to appeal to readers from all backgrounds, making it accessible to anyone interested in gaining a deeper understanding of Trudeau, whom Maher refers to as a fascinating Canadian prince, and one of Canada's most important leaders in modern history.

The biographer takes a nuanced look at Trudeau, incorporating interviews and conversations between him and his senior staff. Interactions between Stephen Maher and Justin Trudeau are also included, making the portrayal of Trudeau even more personal. Readers are given access to Trudeau's thoughts and ideas in more private settings, revealing aspects of his character that cannot be seen in the mainstream media. Maher occasionally includes his own thoughts and personal comments on particular topics, such as Trudeau's ban on assault-style weapons and its potential impact on rural communities following a spate of killings involving weapons brought in illegally from the United States. By combining factual information with personal insights from conversations and interviews, the book provides a nuanced perspective on Trudeau. At the same time, it shows us how complicated politics can be and how many factors can shape an electoral outcome.

The opening section of the book begins with an examination of how Trudeau, a charismatic figure, embodied optimism and progressiveness. However, it also anticipates the mistakes he would make and the hardships his government would face in the coming years. The first section of the book also provides an insight into Trudeau's formative years from 2012 to 2015, offering readers a glimpse into his life before becoming prime minister. Interesting details about Trudeau's life before he became a politician are also revealed, such as his time as a high school teacher. The book also explains why Trudeau's government was progressive: for example, the cabinet included fifteen women. The fact that Maher not only highlights the positive aspects but also acknowledges the mistakes demonstrates that the book is balanced and not one-sided. For example, while Trudeau's government was indeed diverse and comprised talented individuals from different ethnic backgrounds, Maher also highlights the inexperience of the staff.

Maher examines Trudeau's childhood and the family traumas that shaped his character, offering readers an even more intimate insight into his life and the events that defined his early years. Maher explores the events that increased Trudeau's popularity before his election, such as his promise to take in twenty-five thousand Syrian refugees after criticising the government for not being compassionate enough. The inclusion of snippets of how the international community reacted to Trudeau's election gives the biography a universal relevance. It also addresses negative attitudes towards Trudeau, such as the belief that he is a narcissist. The inclusion of embarrassing details, such as the blackface incident, which was a shameful part of Trudeau's life, makes the reading experience even more intimate. Another fascinating section details Trudeau's government's attempts to reconcile with Indigenous peoples, highlighting the setbacks and difficulties, and emphasising Trudeau's commitment to this goal. However, it also mentions his mistakes, such as spending time with his family at a luxurious retreat while supposedly in office, which made him seem hypocritical.

The book covers important events that defined the Trudeau era in Canada, such as the election of Donald Trump and the challenges it posed, particularly with regard to trade relations. Commentaries on international politics, such as the reception of four Sikh ministers in Trudeau's cabinet by Hindu nationalists like Narendra Modi, make the study even more universally relevant, showcasing Maher's vast knowledge of international politics. The book also explores the effects of Trudeau's visit to India on his reputation, brand, and Canada's global image. This demonstrates the influence that Trudeau's actions had on how an entire country was perceived globally. It also illustrates the challenges involved in handling the situation surrounding the Trans Mountain Expansion Project, which was estimated to cost $7.4 billion and was intended to connect 980 kilometres of new pipe from Edmonton to Burnaby.

One chapter that readers will find both interesting and relatable is the account of the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic. The outbreak presented Trudeau with a significant challenge, ultimately resulting in the closure of the border to foreigners. However, safety precautions were not implemented properly in the early stages, meaning Canada's response to the health issue was less effective than that of countries such as South Korea. Trudeau did not take dramatic steps early on to stop the disease from spreading. The author highlights the mistakes Trudeau made, such as delaying the introduction of travel restrictions, which he justified by declaring that he did not want to exaggerate the gravity of the situation. The book also delves into the broader impact of the disease on Canada as a whole, providing specific details such as the number of deaths. It also draws comparisons with the US, acknowledging that Canada's approach to COVD-19 was generally more effective, resulting in fewer deaths. At the same time, the account references a large-scale protest in Ottawa consisting of conspiracy theorists and anti-vaxxers who arrived with a list of demands.

Personal memories and factual information are combined seamlessly throughout the book. More specifically, the inclusion of political and historical details alongside personal insights into Trudeau's life makes the account feel particularly intimate. For example, it mentions the announcement of Trudeau's divorce from his wife, Sophie Grégoire Trudeau. The book also includes photographs of Justin Trudeau in various settings, ranging from informal to political, further expanding the scope of the biography.

One of the book's greatest strengths is its incredible attention to detail and the wealth of sources and factual information, which make it a truly comprehensive account of one of the most prominent Canadian political figures of the twenty-first century. However, this level of detail may make the book less engaging for readers unfamiliar with the Canadian political

scene. Overall, this book is essential reading for anyone seeking a better understanding of such an exceptional political figure, offering a balanced and unbiased perspective on the rise and subsequent departure of Justin Trudeau.