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Things That Matter: Three Decades Of Passions, Pastimes And Politics

CHARLES
KRAUTHAMMER

WINNER OF THE PULITZER PRIZE

THINGS THAT MATTER

Three Decades of Passions, Pastimes and Politics



Synopsis

From America's preeminent columnist, named by the Financial Times the most influential commentator in the nation, the long-awaited collection of Charles Krauthammer's essential, timeless writings. A brilliant stylist known for an uncompromising honesty that challenges conventional wisdom at every turn, Krauthammer has for decades dazzled readers with his keen insight into politics and government. His weekly column is a must-read in Washington and across the country. Now, finally, the best of Krauthammer's intelligence, erudition, and wit are collected in one volume. Listeners will find here not only the country's leading conservative thinker, offering a passionate defense of limited government, but also a highly independent mind whose views - on feminism, evolution, and the death penalty, for example - defy ideological convention. Things That Matter also features several of Krauthammer's major path-breaking essays - on bioethics, on Jewish destiny, and on America's role as the world's superpower - that have profoundly influenced the nation's thoughts and policies. And finally, the collection presents a trove of always penetrating, often bemused reflections on everything from border collies to Halley's Comet, from Woody Allen to Winston Churchill, from the punishing pleasures of speed chess to the elegance of the perfectly thrown outfield assist. With a special, highly autobiographical introduction, in which Krauthammer reflects on the events that shaped his career and political philosophy, this indispensable chronicle takes the listener on a fascinating journey through the fashions and follies, the tragedies and triumphs, of the last three decades of American life.

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Customer Reviews

I admit it: I got it wrong in my opinion of Charles Krauthammer. I thought he was just an unoriginal talking head mimicking the latest right-wing rhetoric. After reading this compilation of some three decades of his writing, I see that Krauthammer is a thoughtful intellectual. I may at times disagree with his perspective, but I can absolutely see now how he gets to said perspective. The highly personal introduction is fascinating and sets the table for the writings that follow. His sense of humor and his sense of humanity come through in many passages. At times I actually laughed out loud at his writings; at other times I was enthralled by his ability to "paint with words" (most noticeably his column of September 12, 2001). Krauthammer is generally not divisive in his politics and, in fact, has evolved some of his beliefs over time as any reasonable person often does. He also has a real knack for taking difficult and at times abstract concepts and boiling them down to a comprehensible essence. Approach this book with an open mind, you just might find yourself enjoying it.

Mr. Krauthammer's work is wonderful. His brilliance, wit, wisdom and fairness shine through in each of his marvelous yarns and they reveal the things that really do matter in life - the many aspects of love - whether in appreciation of dogs or of baseball or of political super heroes. Mr. Krauthammer is a super hero of encouragement and brilliance to the tired, old hippy that I am.

Charles Krauthammer has been a leading voice for conservatism during the Obama years, but his run as a superlative columnist stretches back to the 1980s. "Things That Matter" is a collection of Krauthammer's best columns and essays of the last few decades. Krauthammer was a liberal when he was younger, but recounts his journey across the political spectrum and his path from medicine to journalism. While he says that the topics that most captivate the human mind are not political, he reminds us that a society must get politics right if everything else is to flourish, providing Nazi Germany as an example of how demented politics can destroy a society that was advanced in so many other areas. This collection includes some of the author's most hard-hitting columns of the Obama years in which Krauthammer spells out how liberal policies are weakening America both domestically and internationally. In addition to these columns on topical issues, other columns take a wider view in examining the importance of having conservative domestic and foreign policies. Krauthammer also looks back at figures such as Winston Churchill, Franklin Roosevelt, and Martin Luther King, as well as at events such as the French Revolution and the Cold War. While

Krauthammer is known as a political columnist, he applies his superb insights into life and human nature across many other arenas as well. There are fascinating columns in this collection on chess, dogs, baseball, science, mathematics, and much more. Those who are familiar with the author's work are likely to know that he was paralyzed in an accident when he was young. The volume shows his strength of character in that he touches only lightly on the topic and asserts that one can have a very good life in spite of paralysis. Krauthammer's writing style is nothing short of phenomenal, and this superb amalgam of topical and timeless columns by one of the Right's leading voices will likely be read avidly even decades from now.

I have been impressed by Charles Krauthammer since I became aware of him; he is one of the smartest, or in his case, I can say "brilliant" talking heads and commenters I know of (I also have much respect for George Will and Steve Hays, but in a different way) -- although I don't always agree with Krauthammer. And I believe that the Bret Baier "Special Report" show, the show on which Krauthammer is a regular, is the best of its ilk on TV. So, I was quite thrilled to see a whole book by Krauthammer (and pleased for him that it is so popular -- Number One on the NY Times bestseller list, etc.). He is a remarkable man, personally (but that is another story). On the one hand, I liked the book since I just started following Krauthammer about two or three years ago, so reading his columns from back in some cases, in the 1980s, gave me some insights into his thinking. Over the years, my political leanings have moved, as have his. So, in retrospect, it is fascinating to reconsider how I thought of politics, politicians, policymaking, etc., then and now, and be reminded of certain times we lived through. After reading the book, I am even more impressed with his brilliance and insights as well as his ability to express himself. His vocabulary is exemplary, too. I didn't have any real problem with the book at all -- the only thing I guess I would have liked differently, is more original writings (since these are all columns already published). I know some people absolutely dislike Krauthammer (as evidenced by the comments that follow his Washington Post column each Friday), but judging from the comments, these people do not come close to the intelligence level of Krauthammer and do not offer alternatives to what they comment on -- they just rant (Krauthammer does not come close to ranting -- his well-thought-out comments are far superior to most). Bottom line, I recommend this book, and if you read just one chapter, make it the last one -- which makes the price of "admission," so to speak, worth it. In addition, I'd like to have one equal Liberal response to Charles Krauthammer's chapter in which he writes so eloquently, yet -- in my view -- grimly, about the diminishing of U.S. priorities and thus its (our!) position as the world leader. It's getting to be a more and more scary world, and someone like Krauthammer can see right

through that and help us understand what is happening along the way ...

Charles Krauthammer is one of the most intelligent, lucid commentators and writers of our time. He is always insightful and fair. I trust his wisdom and have been looking forward for weeks for his book to come out. I downloaded it at midnight last night as soon as it was available, and started reading. It is everything I had hoped for and more. His is the voice of reason in politics and society today. Dorothy @hensrule

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