

the pro-Kennedy Northerners, with the national average well over 50 percent.

Therefore flight was impossible. Every hatch was battened down, every roadblock impassable. An entire nation was trapped in grief. "What has happened," a network commentator said a half-hour after the Oswald shooting, "has been too much, too ugly, and too fast." The velocity of transmission, moving at the speed of light; the surfeit of horror; and the sense of shared sorrow bound the American people together more closely than any other nation since the beginning of man. . . . The average American, whatever his race, religious convictions, or politics, was gaping, anesthetized by what after two full days he still felt could not be happening. . . .

Drums are muffled by loosening the tension on each drumhead, thus deadening the resonance. The two bass and sixteen snare drummers had completed this task before falling in outside the White House, and had been holding their sticks with practiced ease when Mrs. Kennedy shepherded her children into the limousine outside the portico. Accompanying them were Attorney General Kennedy, the new President and Mrs. Johnson on the jump seats, and, somewhere in the back seat, a small and astonishingly mobile pair of white gloves. The gloves belonged to John F. Kennedy, Jr. . . .

Down the long drive they moved beneath the naked trees, and the fifty colorful state flags, ranged on either side, dipped in homage to the simple caisson. . . .

"Oh Lyndon," Mrs. Kennedy said suddenly, breaking for the first and last time her vow never again to call him by his first name, "what an awful way for you to come in."

. . . [T]he entire area from Justice to the Treasury had become black with straining people. The mob was the quietest ever to break a police line, and the break was so quick and effortless that none of the riders up ahead suspected anything unusual. The spectacle was, in fact, spectacular; climbing the equestrian statue opposite the National Archives, three of the routed policemen attempted to estimate the size of the multitude. Their best guess was that John Kennedy was being followed by a hundred thousand "Other Mourners." . . .

Now Lyndon Johnson stepped forward for the ritualistic wreath-placing by the President of the United States. His floral tribute was huge, brilliantly green with red and white carnation, mounted on a stand held from behind by a lanky Army sergeant 1st class. As Johnson faced it and glided forward, the soldier retreated, matching his steps with the President's. The odd two-man waltz ended; the sergeant swiftly departed. Johnson paused in momentary prayer and returned to his place. Except for the muted sobbing of the sergeant—two colonels were leading him to an anteroom—the great rotunda was silent. The plans had ended here. The fourteen-minute ceremony was over, and suddenly Mrs. Kennedy who had felt faint and was swaying slightly, realized everyone was waiting for her to leave first.

She wasn't quite ready. Facing Robert Kennedy she asked softly, "Can I say good-bye?" He nodded once, and she took Caroline by the hand. . . . Eyes closed, they leaned over to brush their lips against the flag. Caroline's small gloved hand crept underneath, to be nearer, and in that single instant an entire nation was brought to its knees.

From *THE DEATH OF A PRESIDENT* by William Manchester.
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1. How does this excerpt indicate the enormous effect the death of President Kennedy had on the American people?
-What event in your lifetime has affected so many people? Describe the event and its impact.
 2. List three images of those five days in November that you think stuck with people that lived through JFK's death. Why do you think people would remember those images?
 3. The *Death of a President* was over 700 pages long, and yet it was a bestseller for many months. Why do you think it was such a popular book despite its length?
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