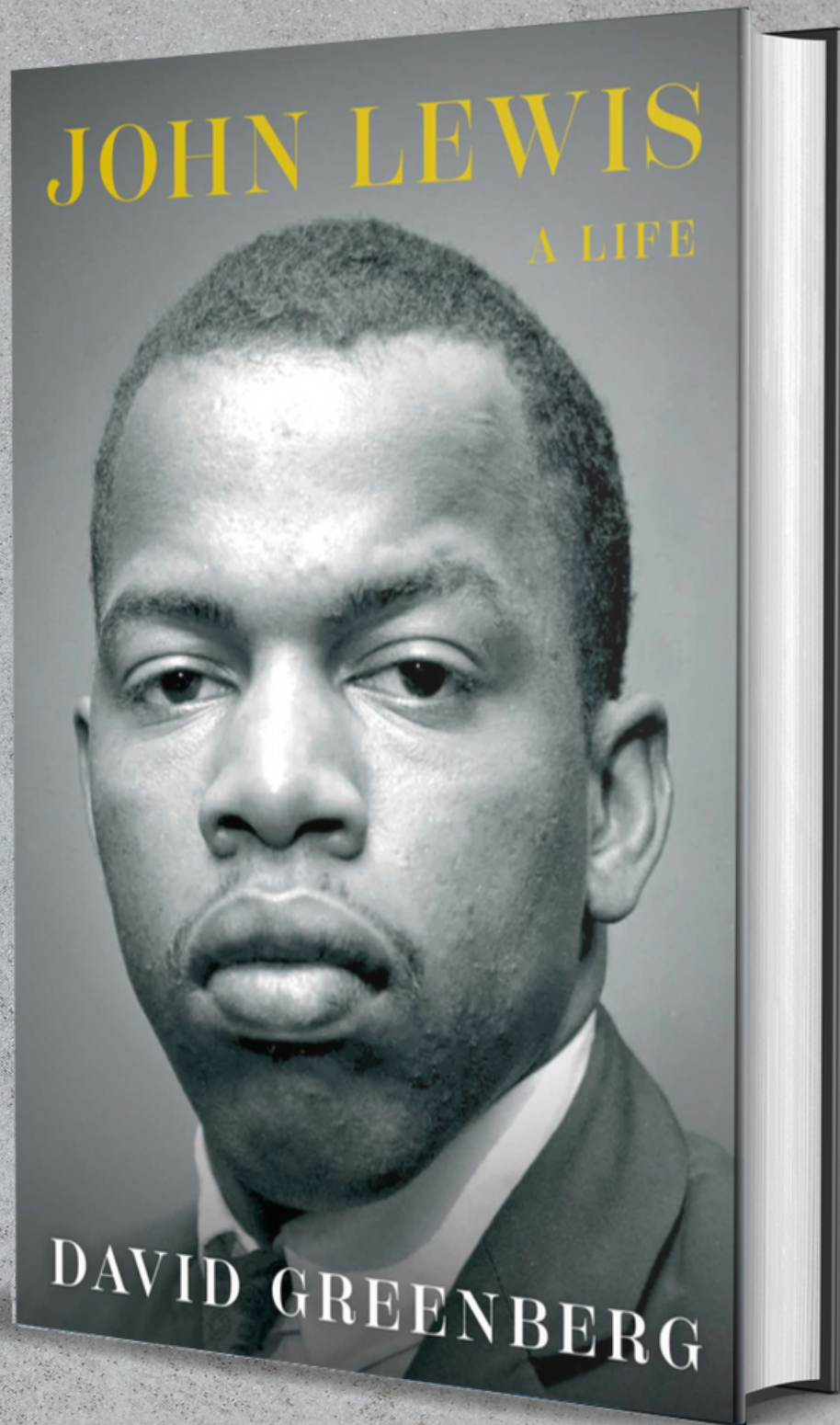


JOHN LEWIS: A LIFE



BOOK CLUB KIT

DAVID GREENBERG is a professor of history and of journalism and media studies at Rutgers University and a frequent commentator on historical and political affairs. He is the author or editor of several books on American history and politics including *Nixon's Shadow: The History of an Image* and *Republic of Spin: An Inside History of the American Presidency*. Formerly acting editor of *The New Republic* and then a columnist for *Slate*, Greenberg now writes regularly for *Politico*, *Liberties*, *The New York Times*, and *The Washington Post*. His work has also been featured in *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, *Foreign Affairs*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and numerous academic journals. In support of this book Greenberg won awards from the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Cullman Center of the New York Public Library, and the Leon Levy Center for Biography. He holds a PhD in history from Columbia University and a BA from Yale and lives with his family in Manhattan.



ABOUT THE BOOK

A comprehensive, authoritative biography of Civil Rights icon John Lewis, "the conscience of the Congress," drawing on interviews with Lewis and approximately 275 others who knew him at various stages of his life, as well as never-before-used FBI files and documents.

Born into poverty in rural Alabama, Lewis would become second only to Martin Luther King, Jr. in his contributions to the Civil Rights Movement. He was a Freedom Rider who helped to integrate bus stations in the South, a leader of the Nashville sit-in movement, the youngest speaker at the 1963 March on Washington, and the chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which he made into one of the major civil rights organizations. He may be best remembered as the victim of a vicious beating by Alabama state troopers at the foot of the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, where he nearly died.

Greenberg's biography traces Lewis's life through the post-Civil Rights years, when he headed the Voter Education Project, which enrolled millions of African American voters across the South. The book reveals the little-known story of his political ascent first locally in Atlanta, and then as a member of Congress. Tapped to be a part of the Democratic leadership in Congress, he earned respect on both sides of the aisle for the sacrifices he had made on behalf of nonviolent integration in the South and came to be known as the "conscience of the Congress."

Thoroughly researched and dramatically told, *John Lewis: A Life* is the definitive biography of a man whose heroism during the Civil Rights movement helped to bring America a new birth of freedom.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did John Lewis's upbringing in rural Alabama shape his character and his commitment to the Civil Rights Movement?
2. What were the key influences in Lewis's early life that led him to become an activist at such a young age?
3. Discuss the significance of John Lewis's involvement in the Freedom Rides and the Nashville sit-ins. How did these early actions help define the trajectory of his life?
4. What were the major risks and challenges that Lewis faced during the Civil Rights Movement, and how did he overcome them?
5. How does Greenberg portray Lewis's relationship with other leaders in the Civil Rights Movement, such as Martin Luther King Jr.?
6. How does the book convey the importance of the Selma march and "Bloody Sunday" in the history of the Civil Rights Movement?
7. What was the impact of the severe beating Lewis received during "Bloody Sunday" on both his personal life and the broader movement?
8. How did John Lewis transition from civil rights activism to a long political career? What challenges did he face in this shift?
9. Discuss Lewis's contributions to Congress and how he continued to advocate for civil rights within the political arena.
10. What does Greenberg suggest about the significance of Lewis's bipartisan efforts, such as his work with Dick Cheney on the Smithsonian African-American Museum?
11. How does the book explore John Lewis's relationships with other key figures, such as Julian Bond and George Wallace? What do these relationships reveal about his character and political philosophy?
12. Discuss the complexities of Lewis's friendship with Julian Bond, especially in light of their congressional race. How did this race shape their legacies?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

13. What new insights does Greenberg provide through his access to never-before-used FBI files and other unique sources?
14. How do the revelations about Lewis's life, such as his reconciliation with George Wallace and his role in the Obama-Clinton endorsement debate, add to our understanding of his legacy?
15. What does it mean to be the "conscience of Congress," and how did John Lewis embody this role?
16. How did Lewis's approach to politics differ from other leaders of his time, and what lessons can be learned from his style of leadership?
17. How does *John Lewis: A Life* contribute to our understanding of Lewis's legacy in the context of the Civil Rights Movement and American history?
18. In what ways does the book inspire readers to reflect on the ongoing struggle for civil rights and social justice in America?
19. How can John Lewis's life and work serve as a model for current and future generations of activists and leaders?

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Historical Context

Research the key events in the Civil Rights Movement that are highlighted in the book, such as the Freedom Rides, the March on Washington, and the Selma march. Discuss how John Lewis's contributions to these events shaped the movement.

Reflect on "Good Trouble"

John Lewis often spoke about the importance of making "good trouble." Reflect on what this means in today's context and how individuals and groups can continue to make "good trouble" in the fight for justice.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Reviews

- [Kirkus](#)
- [Booklist](#)
- [Associated Press](#)
- [The New York Times](#)
- [The New Yorker](#)

Video

- [5 Things You Didn't Know About John Lewis](#)
- [John Lewis's Devotion to Nonviolence](#)
- [The Creation of the National Museum of African American History and Culture](#)
- [John Lewis's Experience During Bloody Sunday](#)

Recommended Reading

- *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement* by John Lewis
- *His Truth Is Marching On: John Lewis and the Power of Hope* by Jon Meacham
- *The Children* by David Halberstam
- *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years 1954-63* by Taylor Branch

If you decide to adopt *John Lewis: A Life* for your book club, we would love to hear about it! Please let us know by emailing us at marketing@simonandschuster.com or post on social media using the hashtags **#SimonBooks** and **#JohnLewis**.

Thank you for your consideration.

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