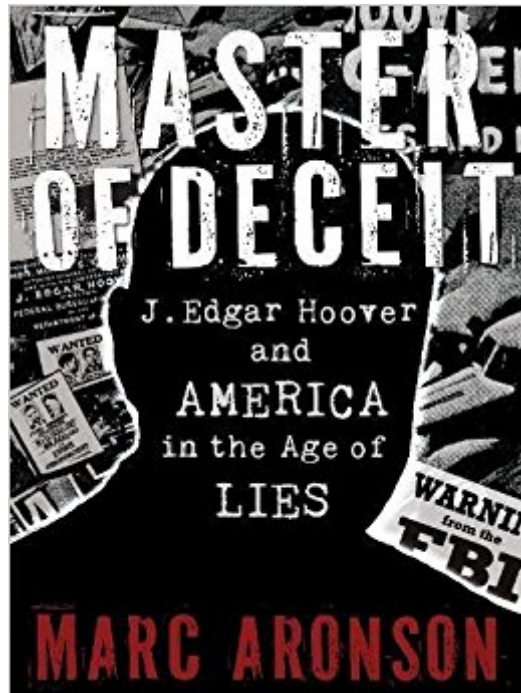




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# Master Of Deceit: J. Edgar Hoover And America In The Age Of Lies



## Synopsis

A fascinating and timely biography of J. Edgar Hoover from a Sibert Medalist. "King, there is only one thing left for you to do. You know what it is. . . . You better take it before your filthy, abnormal, fraudulent self is bared to the nation." Dr. Martin Luther King received this demand in an anonymous letter in 1964. He believed that the letter was telling him to commit suicide. Who wrote this anonymous letter? The FBI. And the man behind it all was J. Edgar Hoover, the FBI's first director. In this unsparing exploration of one of the most powerful Americans of the twentieth century, accomplished historian Marc Aronson unmaskes the man behind the Bureau- his tangled family history and personal relationships; his own need for secrecy, deceit, and control; and the broad trends in American society that shaped his world. Hoover may have given America the security it wanted, but the secrets he knew gave him—and the Bureau—all the power he wanted. Using photographs, cartoons, movie posters, and FBI transcripts, *Master of Deceit* gives readers the necessary evidence to make their own conclusions. Here is a book about the twentieth century that blazes with questions and insights about our choices in the twenty-first.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Gr 9 Up-The life of FBI director J. Edgar Hoover is explored in Marc Aronson's fascinating non-fiction offering (Candlewick, 2012). To learn about Hoover is to learn about 20th-century American history. World War I, gangsters, the Lindbergh kidnapping, World War II, the Cold War, and the civil rights movement-Hoover was there for it all. The author does a tremendous job of

separating fact from fiction, and the result is a balanced portrait of a complicated man. Hoover's vision of law enforcement was to gather scientific information in well-organized files and use a team of experts to catch criminals. Aronson delves deeper, asking listeners to consider the price of safety. He makes parallels between Hoover's (often illegal) cold war tactics and post 9/11 methods of dealing with America's enemies. Narrator Luke Daniels turns in a strong, straightforward performance that keeps listeners interested. The bonus disc includes intriguing photos that teachers will find useful. A valuable addition to nonfiction collections-Tricia Melgaard, formerly Broken Arrow Public Schools, Tulsa, OK

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Marc Aronson has written a powerful and thought-provoking book. His devastating, but nuanced portrait of the life and career of J. Edgar Hoover captures the impact of the long-term FBI director on American politics and thought. His is a cautionary tale of the costs of secrecy and of the fears engendered by blind fears over hyped security threats.

•Athan Theoharis, professor emeritus at Marquette University, expert on J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI

MASTER OF DECEIT is simply outstanding. Marc Aronson explores the intersection of personality and history in a way that not only records the times and events, but actually illuminates them.

•Walker Dean Myers, a three-time finalist for the National Book Award and author of MONSTER, winner of the first Michael L. Printz Award

A powerful book that serves its title well. Aronson untangles the complex history of a master (J. Edgar Hoover) who created, manipulated, and guarded the nation's "truth." This is an important book, not just for its subject matter but also for its approach. Aronson skillfully shows that history is more than fact; history is a location: it's where the reader positions himself or herself and what the "masters" do with the facts. A riveting read.

•Susan Campbell Bartoletti, author of HITLER YOUTH, a Newbery Honor Book and a Robert F. Sibert Honor Book

MASTER OF DECEIT is a masterpiece of historical narrative, with the momentum of a thrilling novel and the historical detail of the best nonfiction... This is as much about how history is written as it is about Hoover and his times... Written with the authority of a fine writer with an inquiring mind, this dramatic story is history writing at its best.

•Kirkus Reviews (starred review)

Aronson's stimulating questions and his occasional use of first- and second-person, will wake up readers accustomed to less in-your-face historical narratives. The book does an excellent job of creating parallels between America's anticommunist efforts and the current fight against terrorism as it questions the price of security and the media's roles in keeping secrets. Period

photographs, movie posters, cartoons, and FBI documents supplement a biography abounding in historical context. — Publishers Weekly (starred review) Relying on wide reading and vast research, Aronson paints a nuanced and evenhanded portrait of a man who was complicated, almost certainly neurotic, and who had an iron will to control — both himself and others. Thoroughly discussing the FBI's role in law enforcement, the McCarthy witch hunts and HUAC, campaigns against Dr. King and civil rights, and comparing the egregious violations of individual rights and due process committed by the agency to the conduct of post-9/11 containment and treatment of Arab Americans, this book is a must for high school students. — School Library Journal (starred review)

Unfortunately our most publicized former FBI Chief was more of a publicity-seeker than a law enforcement executive. Hoover was mainly interested in promoting himself, often at the expense of others, and in so doing he hurt many people, including Melvin Purvis, one of his best agents.

"Master of Deceit" is well written & organized. He provides a laconic overview of his childhood, early family life & education. The main thrust of the book is Hoover's career & how it evolved. His government service begins in WWI & does not end until his death in the early seventies. Although I was familiar with some of the history, the book is rich in detail & analysis. Aronson dispels the myths that prevailed during Hoover's life as well as those that surfaced after his death. J. Edgar Hoover was the first director of the FBI & carefully choreographed its image as this well organized & efficient crime fighting organization that was protecting America. This image was tarnished by the FBI's sloppy investigation it conducted for the Warren Commission that was charged with investigating the assassination of President Kennedy. The FBI's reputation continued to decline as revelations of Hoover's support of McCarthyism, his secret files & programs such as Cointelpro became known to the public. The book reveals a disturbing pattern of lies, deceit & manipulation of the truth to protect himself & promote the image of the FBI in his quest to maintain power. The Constitution & the bill of rights lay in shambles by the time of his death. The only criticism I had for the book is the author avoided a full description of Hoover's role in the investigation of the Kennedy assassination & his true beliefs on what happened. Otherwise, I thoroughly enjoyed this book.

Didn't care for the book!

This book was in excellent condition. It was very informative and I learned much about J. Edgar

Hoover that I never knew before. My book club will be discussing it at the end of this month.

great product!

Aronson's portrait of J. Edgar Hoover during his 40 year reign as the head of the FBI was riveting and to quote the author, "scary." I didn't really know much about Hoover and I was sickened by his tactics. Hoover blackmailed "everyone" by keeping secret files; he poisoned his staff with his directives and took advantage of his position whenever he felt the inclination. There was meticulous period research but this did not read like a history book but a superb thriller you can't put down. This period in US history was certainly tainted with the likes of J. Edgar Hoover and Joseph MacCarthy. As I rooted for those "few" who took on J. Edgar Hoover with right and might; I cried for the many like the Rosenbergs, the Scottsboro Boys and Martin Luther King. Illustrated and Includes bibliographical references (p. 198-219) and index. Highly recommended for high school students.

In his effort to put the story of J. Edgar Hoover and his FBI into historical context and to address multiple points-of-view about Hoover's legacy, author Marc Aronson has included some truly half-baked political and personal theories about Hoover that have been neither thoroughly documented nor substantiated by sufficient additional research on his part. That's why I found "Master of Deceit" thin, shallow, and more of a political polemic than a scholarly work. And it's truly scary that this is being represented as a book for high school students, because it's primarily point-of-view writing rather than incisive historical research and reporting. Aronson himself even seems prematurely defensive about what he's written, including a lengthy addendum to the book ("How I Researched and Wrote this Book") that all but admits his biases ("I live in a world of liberals and leftists, in which there is tacit agreement to see Senator Joseph McCarthy and J. Edgar Hoover as terrible men and to speak passionately about the victims of their witch hunts.") The five commenters included in the "advance praise" flyleaf of this book are all presented as simply unattached names (with no affiliations to establish their credibility to praise and critique this book). I fear that in the zealous effort to decry the excesses of J. Edgar Hoover's FBI and its smearing of political and social opponents, "Master of Deceit" engages in a form of smear tactics itself by engaging in much historical revisionism and tenuous linkages to other social forces at work in America in that era. While this book may prove interesting popular reading for those who wish to

engage in political "parlor games," such as speculation on Hoover's race and sexuality, it isn't scholarship and it certainly doesn't teach high schoolers to exercise critical thinking in their research. This could have been a popular and high-readable book if only the author had parked his point-of-view and followed the facts, rather than trying to score political points.

Here's the thing: Aronson cannot help but insert his far leftist liberalism into almost every page. If you seek objectivity, you'll have to look elsewhere.

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