

What Happened

By Hillary Rodham Clinton
(Simon and Schuster, 2017)
494 pages

It will come as no surprise to those who know me best that I am an avid watcher of politics. I follow every election and have since I was old enough to vote (and even for a time before)!

In the last election cycle, I must confess that I was absolutely dumbfounded. I followed the polls; I watched the talking heads; I witnessed all three debates (and most of the Democratic and Republican primary debates as well). I stayed up late on election night listening to the commentary and observing the results.

I must confess that I was surprised.

I entered the night thinking that Hillary Clinton was going to be elected as the first female president in our country's history. The question in my mind was not IF she was going to win but by how many electoral votes she would win. Apparently, I wasn't the only one who was surprised. It seemed every politician, news commentator, late night comedy host and even the candidates themselves were shocked.

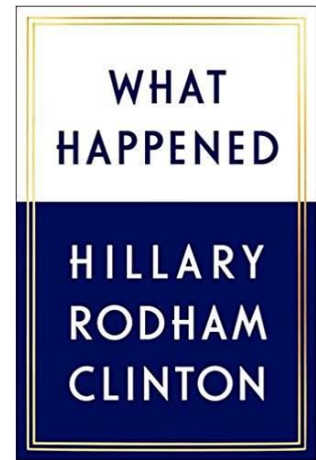
The book *What Happened* is candidate Hillary Rodham Clinton's tome seeking to explain the loss of the election. Many have commented that she has blamed everyone but herself – but I did not see that in this book. She identified many reasons for the surprising results but she also repeatedly took ownership of her flaws as a candidate.

In the book, there is excellent transparency about her emotional shock at the loss and the feelings she has had in light of the current turmoil in the Trump administration. She spends extensive time contrasting how her plans would have been significantly different than the person who eventually won the electoral college. She also mentions numerous times (and with some justification) the fact that she won the popular vote while the electoral college voted in favor of her opponent.

She assesses the impact of the Bernie Sanders campaign and the result of those who sought to push the party to the left. It left many voters from the democratic primary disaffected, and eventually some of those voters voted for Trump or one of the third-party candidates.

She addresses some of the systemic issues connected with women in politics and the cultural prejudices that are still present toward "powerful" women who assert themselves in the public square. She makes a persuasive case that there is still quiet hostility toward those women who voice strong opinions in a male-dominated world.

There is also a persuasive argument made that the impact of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) announcements had a profoundly negative impact on the outcome. When James Comey announced that there would be no charges filed in the email investigation, but then castigated



Clinton as someone who was reckless and careless, Clinton's image was damaged. Then when the FBI director announced that there was a reopening of the investigation, with only ten days left in the campaign, it was a warning sign to millions of voters not to vote for her because of potential charges. In the end, no charges were leveled, and she was ultimately cleared of criminal wrongdoing in the matter.

Obviously, there were issues with Russia trying to influence the outcome of the election. She does not argue that there was collusion, but there is ample evidence throughout the book that the Russians sought to change the election in ways unfavorable to the Democratic candidate. She addresses this quite thoroughly in the book.

The book humanized her to me in ways that she hadn't been before. She adores her daughter and grandchildren. She is committed to her husband. She has been devoted to children's causes.

I'm glad I read the book. I think I understand what happened in ways that I may not have before reading.

Though, I am still with her in asking the question, "What happened?"