

# Dark Money Summary

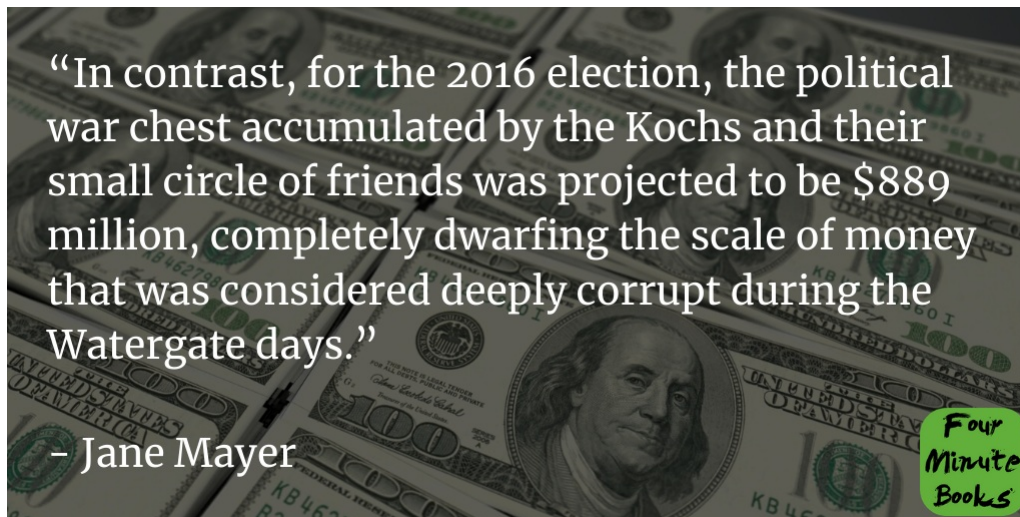
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**1-Sentence-Summary:** *Dark Money* dives into the depths of the greed and corruption in the American political system by revealing the story of the Koch brothers who have been enabling the ultra-wealthy to influence political decisions for decades.

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



“Follow the money” seems like a pretty common phrase in movies these days. But did you know that it actually came from Deep Throat, the FBI informant who identified a way to find corrupt politicians?

Although that was almost 40 years ago, we still have to worry about money’s influence on government officials today.

The reason? Charles and David Koch, who have changed the face of politics with their access to massive financial assets. And they’ve been at it for decades. You’ll learn all about their origins, methods, and impact in Jane Mayer’s *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right*.

Although I recommend taking everything you hear from this with a grain of salt, you’re in for a wild political ride!

Here are the 3 most surprising things I learned from this book:

1. The Koch brothers created a network of nonprofits to enable the ultra-wealthy to control the political system anonymously.

2. A movement that these brothers put into place made it seem like the political changes they were pushing for came from the public.
3. America is very close to becoming a place where money rules, not the people.

Put on some gloves because we're about to get dirty with a dive into US politics!

## **Lesson 1: The ultra-wealthy control the political system anonymously because of the network of nonprofits set up by the Koch brothers.**

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The Koch brothers grew up with a father who influenced them with his libertarian political views. This included ideas like keeping the government small, having low taxes, and maintaining the free market, just to name a few.

Wanting to spread their ideas, one of them ran for office in 1980 but failed miserably. But then these two brothers realized that a politician was just a voice. It's their ideas that have the power to control nations.

Thus began their long-term effort to get their ideas out. The easiest way they could do this without much fanfare was to use the cover of philanthropy. They began multiple non-profit organizations, which don't need to disclose their details to the public, in order to stay hidden.

Even their donors and the amounts they gave could stay anonymous. Nobody knows where the money comes from or where it goes. This set up also provided a way for the brothers to invest in their favorite causes without paying taxes on things like their inheritance.

**Their network has grown so much and entangled itself into so many facets of the political realm that it's now known as the "Kochtopus."** Officials like Chris Christie and Ted Cruz and donors like Charles Schwab and Richard DeVos have even become associated with it.

As of 2013, the brothers had control of 100,000 of these secret organizations. And with total funds exceeding \$800 billion, it's a given that their effect on politics is massive.

## **Lesson 2: Not all political movements are as "grassroots" as you might think.**

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Prior to 2009, much of the Koch brother's work was focused solely on preparing for a political movement. But once it was all ready, they unleashed their quiet influence.

Just one of the payoffs of their efforts was the Tea Party movement as it finally brought libertarian ideas to the forefront.

If we look back to the 1980s we can see the origins of this revolution. Richard Fink, a friend of the Koch brothers, wrote *Structure of Social Change*, identifying the ways to begin a proper political movement.

**He outlined the way that information should proceed from think tank groups into the minds of politicians.** Once that happened, the time to send the message out to the public was at hand.

And in the 90s and early 2000s, the Koch brothers system made this happen. With money, they could do anything, even engineer fake uprisings that appeared to be from the people. Everyone believed this message was authentic in its origins, which the Koch brothers wanted so that it could take hold.

Even parts of the media fanned the flame of their movement. One exchange between Rick Santelli and Wilbur Ross Jr that was made to look like a criticism of President Obama. And with millions of dollars, they persuaded media personalities to read their influencing content on the air.

### **Lesson 3: The people are dangerously close to losing control over America because it's slipping into the hands of the rich.**

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We love the idea of the American Dream, that anyone from any background can reach their dreams. But according to the author, the Koch brothers have made economic inequality worse. This makes it harder for “anyone” to make their dreams happen.

With the rich getting richer, it's only getting harder to stand up to them. And, according to the author, the influence of the wealthy has completely overtaken the Republican party.

If a member of the GOP falls out of rank, the Koch brothers will quickly put them back into line. This happened to John Boehner when he stood up to them. The author says that other Republicans pretty much forced him to resign not long afterward.

With all of this control by the wealthy, it's seeming like America is becoming more of an oligarchy, or a country ruled by the wealthiest citizens only.

And if this isn't enough to convince you that this is true, just think about the number of wealthy people at the Koch's retreat in 2010. **Eleven or more of the individuals at the party were on the Forbes 400 Wealthiest Americans list.**

This is a slap in the face to the widely-believed democracy that the US is typically so proud of upholding. It's time to stand up in the face of corruption and do whatever we can to call it out where we see it. Only then can we take back America's position as the “Land of the

Free.”

## Dark Money Review

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Dark Money isn't that great to be completely honest. For one, I really didn't like feeling like they were lumping entire groups with these greedy selfish jerks. But also the awfulness of what they've done and are doing is unbelievable and makes me wonder how much of an agenda the author has. There are always two sides to every story, and this looks to be only one side.

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## Who would I recommend the Dark Money summary to?

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The 61-year-old who loves politics, the 22-year-old who is in a political science class and thinks they might want to major in the subject, and anybody that doesn't believe that politicians are corrupt.