



# **Adopted Son: Washington, Lafayette, and the Friendship that Saved the Revolution**

*David A. Clary*

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## **Adopted Son: Washington, Lafayette, and the Friendship that Saved the Revolution** David A. Clary

They were unlikely comrades-in-arms. One was a self-taught, middle-aged Virginia planter in charge of a ragtag army of revolutionaries, the other a rich, glory-seeking teenage French aristocrat. But the childless Washington and the orphaned Lafayette forged a bond between them as strong as any between father and son. It was an unbreakable trust that saw them through betrayals, shifting political alliances, and the trials of war.

Lafayette came to America a rebellious youth whose defiance of his king made him a celebrity in France. His money and connections attracted the favor of the Continental Congress, which advised Washington to keep the exuberant Marquis from getting himself killed. But when the boy-general was wounded in his first battle, he became a hero of two countries. As the war ground on, Washington found in his young charge the makings of a courageous and talented commander whose loyalty, generosity, and eagerness to please his Commander in Chief made him one of the war's most effective and inspired generals. Lafayette's hounding of Cornwallis's army was the perfect demonstration of Washington's unconventional "bush-fighting" tactics, and led to the British surrender at Yorktown.

Their friendship continued throughout their lives. Lafayette inspired widespread French support for a struggling young America and personally influenced Washington's antislavery views. Washington's enduring example as general and statesman guided Lafayette during France's own revolution years later.

Using personal letters and other key historical documents, *Adopted Son* offers a rare glimpse of the American Revolution through the friendship between Washington and Lafayette. It offers dramatic accounts of battles and intimate portraits of such major figures as Alexander Hamilton, Benedict Arnold, and Benjamin Franklin. The result is a remarkable, little-known epic of friendship, revolution, and the birth of a nation.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

## **Adopted Son: Washington, Lafayette, and the Friendship that Saved the Revolution** **Details**

Date : Published January 30th 2007 by Bantam (first published 2007)

ISBN : 9780553804355

Author : David A. Clary

Format : Hardcover 592 pages

Genre : History, Military History, American Revolution, Biography, Nonfiction, North American Hi..., American History

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## **From Reader Review Adopted Son: Washington, Lafayette, and the Friendship that Saved the Revolution for online ebook**

### **Sarah says**

I would almost give it four stars, but this is one of those books wherein the author tries a little too hard to make everything fit his central thesis, and in doing so, detracts from his own writing. If he'd written a little more naturally, instead of trying to fit everything into a box labelled "Lafayette as Washington's adoptive son", it would have made for a better book.

Don't get me wrong, I enjoyed this one, and it had its moments of charm, but then the author would sabotage himself by pushing too hard fit everything under the banner of his thesis. It still had a lot of good information, fairly well presented, but it could have been a much better book.

I wonder at the fact that I have yet to read a truly excellent Lafayette biography; perhaps there is something about him defies modern feeling.

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### **Anita says**

This book provided a new perspective on one of my favorite periods in history, the American Revolution. A thorough telling of Lafayette's life, as well as the little-known personal bond he had with Washington.

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### **Craig Bolton says**

"Adopted Son: Washington, Lafayette, and the Friendship that Saved the Revolution by David A. Clary (2008)"

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### **Zeddy says**

Excellent book. Highly recommended.

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### **Gelen says**

Gelen

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### **Tom Lowe says**

As an historian, I have always been fascinated by the adopted father-son relationship between Generals

Washington and Lafayette. This incredible book by David Clary explores, in minute detail, all facets and angles of that relationship that gave birth to the United States and to Revolutionary France. Not only does the author explain all that has to be explained, but he makes the reader comprehend and understand the deep love these two historical giants felt for one another. This book is extremely well-researched, and after I finished it, I walked away knowing that the connection was described in the best possible way. Little did I know when I started the book, that this relationship between the two had such an enormous impact on world history. I love this book.

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### **Robert Krenzel says**

Adopted son is a readable and well-researched account of the life of Lafayette, one of the best-known but least appreciated generals of the American Revolution.

The author clearly did his work in sorting out the background that enabled Washington and Lafayette to come together and develop a life-long bond that shaped both the American and French Revolutions. His insights are fascinating.

The book suffers a bit from the heavy reliance on letters between Washington and Lafayette. While they do offer insights into the writers' frames of mind, they get a bit tedious. I also felt the book found itself adrift after Washington's death; the theme of Lafayette doing what he thought Washington would do gets worn a bit thin.

There are a few negatives, but this is certainly a book worth reading for anyone interested in the American Revolution. I certainly came away with a better appreciation for the critical role played by Washington's Adopted Son.

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### **Lauren says**

Okay, this is one of my favorite historical relationships of all time, and two of my favorite figures, and I'm trying not to let my emotions about them overshadow me objectively reviewing the book. So.

The pacing/timeline is a little tedious in this one. There's a lot of focus on the years Lafayette served in the American Revolution, while his early years and later years are more brushed over. I also felt the book, if it was meant to be centered around specifically the relationship between Laf and Washington, brought in too many other historical figures, which muddled things a bit. It's necessary for context, I suppose, but not every single other general needs to be mentioned by the wayside.

Washington is also skimmed over more than Lafayette- the book is simply very Lafayette-centric, which was just fine.

It gets sentimental at times, injecting emotions and terms of endearment that I'm sure the particular subjects wouldn't mind, but for the reader who likes a purely factual text this might not do it for you. I liked it, though.

This would probably be only three stars, but the last three pages were so quotable and intense that it elevated

the whole book for me. (I also appreciated the various portraits and asides throughout the book.)

*"...they were not carved monuments in real life. **They were people**, with all the strengths and weaknesses of that species. They started out as children, as we all do. They grew up, and changed, and did some amazing things, and made mistakes."*

*"Who they were cannot be measured only by how much they shook the world."*

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## **Kelsey says**

In all actuality, 3.5 stars. And I apologize in advance for this review because there is no way that I can accurately describe the love these two men shared for each other, and the way that affected me.

Ok, so even though this wasn't my favorite book of all time, I'm sad that I (finally) finished it! I'm going to miss my daily dose of the Marquis. He was just so adorable and funny. At many points I laughed out loud reading about the things he had said or done.

Anyway, to jump into the real review. This was tremendously researched, and I learned so many things about Washington, Lafayette, and the revolution that I had never known before. For example, the French flag that flies today is because of Lafayette. He was also one of the first abolitionists, and somewhat persuaded Washington to become one as well.

Clary also did an excellent job of delivering what the title promised: the relationship between Washington and the Marquis. Their relationship was one built on extreme love and devotion, and that was palpable. Clary also gave background on the two men, giving them each a chapter in the beginning to discuss their upbringings and childhoods, and what led them to the revolution in the first place. Extremely detailed and documented, I myself feel like I am an authority on Washington and the boy general.

However, there were also things that I didn't like as well. The Marquis had many mistresses, but Clary described them as something to be "conquered". He especially used this word when describing Aglaé du Hunolstein, who the Marquis had been trying to woo for years. When she did become his mistress, Clary wrote that Lafayette "had finally conquered her". Apparently, women are prizes to Clary.

Going along with this, two young women at different points, one about 17 and the other in her early 20's or so, in Lafayette's later years, became attached to him, and called him their father. Clary notes that these relationships were "strange," even though the other 451 pages are about Lafayette calling Washington his "adoptive father".

My biggest complaint though was the fact that, at the end, when Washington passed away, Clary never writes about the Marquis and how he felt. All he said was that he was in mourning. I wanted to know how the Marquis handled it! His father (basically) passed away and Lafayette couldn't be with him, or write to him ever again (and that's all he ever did, was write him letters) and we don't get any mention of how he handled this, whatsoever. I felt almost cheated by that.

Other than that, the writing was extremely dense, and multiple times throughout the book I would drift off

and would have to read an entire page again. This is understandable though, because Clary is an historian, so his writing is academic.

With all of this being said though, Clary did a great job with adding emotion to the book, and by the time I ended it, I had a few tears in my eyes. The love these two men shared was really the heart of this book, and, like Clary says at the end, even though these men are considered heroes, they really were just men who, in Washington's case, was childless and looking for a son, and found that in the young Marquis, and in Lafayette's case, he was looking for someone who could teach him and give him guidance and assurance, and he found that with Washington. Overall, I did like this book, and I recommend it to anyone wanting to know more about these two men.

\*On a side note, there needs to be tons of books written about the Marquis' wife, Adrienne. What a woman. Devoted to her husband, she never said anything about his mistresses, never complained whenever he went to America, never complained when he barely paid any attention to her, took over all the Marquis' matters with his land, and when imprisoned, fought tooth and nail to get him free. When that didn't happen, she lived in the prison with him, refusing to leave. At the end, on her death bed, all she wanted to know is if she made a good wife for the Marquis, and knowing that she did, died happy. She was a powerhouse and the world needs to learn that.

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### **Brian says**

This was a fascinating book about the lives of George Washington and the Marquis de Lafayette. I was especially interested in the life of Lafayette since I knew very little about him. I didn't realize how young he was when he came over to the New World (against the wishes of the King).

I believe that Clary did a good job capturing the personalities of both generals. Neither were perfect. Lafayette often became offended over little things and he was not good at saving his money. he adored Washington and viewed him as a father. Washington, who didn't have children of his own, saw Lafayette as his son.

I enjoyed this book and will recommend it to those who like reading about history and biographies.

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### **Robert Gray says**

Fabulous history plus much much more. Insight into management styles, both GW & Lafayette. Insight into how deep trust can go and how worthy it can prove to be when accurately placed. Juxtaposing this with study of Napoleon, which came not long thereafter, provides insight beyond what study of either individually would provide. Insight into war strategies and life strategies -- and a heart-warming book to boot.

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### **Melissa says**

Parts of this book are tremendously engrossing; parts weren't and I skimmed these. I never realized how close Washington and Lafayette were.

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## Jessica says

I found this a hard book to keep interested in. The first 100 pages or so were good but then it just dragged. My cat ended up taking many a nap on it, though. Basically it's a so-so book, but a great cat pillow.

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## Bárbara says

I can't believe it's over. I'm super emo right now. Also it's 1.17am and I'm hella tired. RTC after I've slept a bit but THIS. WAS. SO. WONDERFUL. Which, If you paid attention to my updates, you must know by now. I WILL MISS READING THIS BOOK SO FUCKING MUCH.

UPDATE APRIL 28TH

Okay. It took me almost two weeks (really, it's been that long? WOW. I mean- WOW), but I'm emotionally ready now. Why now? Because I'm currently reading one version of Lafayette's memoirs and I'm disappointed at the editor- AND IT'S MAKING ME MISS THIS BOOK SO. DAMN. MUCH. This book was wonderful. It had a certain warmth that I didn't know a historical book/ biography type could have.

Not only this book was impressively researched (and I mean BADASS research like you can't believe- don't trust me? 25% of the book IS JUST THE CITATION OF THE SOURCES FOR THE INVESTIGATION. That's right: the actual story finishes at roughly 75%), but even though it tells the story of a historical figure, it's not disgustingly glorifying of it. True, it shows SOME bias, but it's not in an ass-kissing manner. Which is fantastic.

There's one extra reason why I loved this so much though, and this is strictly due to personal fanservice (I don't know how else to call it): even though this book dealt in its majority with the relationship of Lafayette and Washington (and had some dedication to the relationships of Lafayette and other figures), I was beyond ecstatic to find lots of unexpected content about one of the most elusive (from my perspective) figures, and one I'm always growing more interested in. Eyeroll please (no, I didn't mean drumroll, I did mean eyeroll cause that's what y'all be doing when I say the name, if you haven't already guessed it- which, shame on you if you haven't cause he's all over my updates): JOHN LAURENS. I was pleasantly surprised (and even occasionally teary eyed, don't laugh!) to find him mentioned as often. He even was mentioned more often than Alexander Hamilton, mind you. So yeah.

Well, if I loved this book so damn much, how come I'm not giving it 5 stars, you'd ask. Isn't John Laurens alone worth 5 stars? You'd ask (he's worth that and so much more, and you know it- cut the stupid questions).

The reason I'm lowering the rating is a)because even though I enjoyed this a TON, I still found myself getting a bit not-so-invested when the story delved into Washington's early years- or when it went deep into detail about "secondary characters" (as much as I loved Les Mis, I didn't appreciate Hugo's tendency to devote pages and pages to things he could have solved in a paragraph or two, and this was sort of like that in certain cases).

and b) the other reason (as stupid as it may be, I don't care) is because, yes, while this book is incredibly researched and impressively well edited, there's a paragraph near the beginning where Lafayette is said to have blue eyes, and not a page later he's said to have hazel eyes or something (something \*not\* blue, definitely). So which is it? The world may never know.

Okay, mild, minor complaints aside, though, the fact remains that I LOVED this book, and that it will be the element I will always find myself measuring other books about Lafayette with.

In two words: READ. IT.

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## **Jerome says**

I enjoyed Clary's history of the Mexican-American war, and this book was just as good. Clary tells the story of the friendship between Washington and Lafayette, and how Washington became a father figure to Lafayette. The book doesn't really tell the story of Lafayette's contribution to the war effort, or at least not as well.

The book is quite lively, and the story of Lafayette, the teenage general who constantly disobeyed the orders of his French superiors in his quest for glory, is well told. Lafayette was not so much a proponent of American liberty as he was a youthful glory hunter eager for a chance to fight the British; Lafayette was always looking for a fight. Whenever there was no fighting to be had, Lafayette considered quitting. Washington, on the other hand, was not as glory-obsessed, but had a short temper and a disregard for the feelings of others, except when it came to Lafayette. The marquis was not a dedicated republican, although he later revised his early life to make it appear so.

Clary does a great job showing how much they trusted each other. Lafayette was impulsive and seeking glory, but he almost blindly obeyed Washington's orders, even when he did not know their purpose. Like Washington, Lafayette was a Freemason, and often connected with American Masonic lodges. We also get a good portrait of the love between Lafayette and his wife Adrienne who surprised many ("A French lady and fond of her husband!!!" Abigail Adams remarked).

Sometimes, Clary's focus on their friendship seems excessive, as the book is filled with mushy excerpts from letters they wrote to each other. Still, a very interesting and well-written book.

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