



The American Revolution: A History

Gordon S. Wood

Download now

Read Online →

The American Revolution: A History

Gordon S. Wood

The American Revolution: A History Gordon S. Wood
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

“An elegant synthesis done by the leading scholar in the field, which nicely integrates the work on the American Revolution over the last three decades but never loses contact with the older, classic questions that we have been arguing about for over two hundred years.”—**Joseph J. Ellis, author of *Founding Brothers***

A magnificent account of the revolution in arms and consciousness that gave birth to the American republic.

When Abraham Lincoln sought to define the significance of the United States, he naturally looked back to the American Revolution. He knew that the Revolution not only had legally created the United States, but also had produced all of the great hopes and values of the American people. Our noblest ideals and aspirations—our commitments to freedom, constitutionalism, the well-being of ordinary people, and equality—came out of the Revolutionary era. Lincoln saw as well that the Revolution had convinced Americans that they were a special people with a special destiny to lead the world toward liberty. The Revolution, in short, gave birth to whatever sense of nationhood and national purpose Americans have had.

No doubt the story is a dramatic one: Thirteen insignificant colonies three thousand miles from the centers of Western civilization fought off British rule to become, in fewer than three decades, a huge, sprawling, rambunctious republic of nearly four million citizens. But the history of the American Revolution, like the history of the nation as a whole, ought not to be viewed simply as a story of right and wrong from which moral lessons are to be drawn. It is a complicated and at times ironic story that needs to be explained and understood, not blindly celebrated or condemned. How did this great revolution come about? What was its character? What were its consequences? These are the questions this short history seeks to answer. That it succeeds in such a profound and enthralling way is a tribute to Gordon Wood’s mastery of his subject, and of the historian’s craft.

From the Hardcover edition.

The American Revolution: A History Details

Date : Published (first published January 1st 2002)

ISBN :

Author : Gordon S. Wood

Format : Kindle Edition 224 pages

Genre : History, Nonfiction, North American Hi..., American History, Military History, American Revolution, American Revolutionary War

 [Download The American Revolution: A History ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The American Revolution: A History ...pdf](#)



Download and Read Free Online The American Revolution: A History Gordon S. Wood

From Reader Review *The American Revolution: A History* for online ebook

Greg Brown says

A brilliantly compact general survey of the American Revolution, starting with the factors that led up to it and ending with the ratification of the constitution. Speaking as someone whose elementary, middle, and high schools covered it mostly on a military and mythic level - with the historiography stalled out somewhere in the 19th century - the book did an amazing job of illustrating the true variety of causes and contexts that this seminal event held. I know most readers come at this subject through the biographies of various Founding Fathers, but if you're going to read one book about the American Revolution, this should be it.

Plus the bibliography is probably the most badass bibliography I have ever read, essentially a roadmap to what you should read if you're interested in any specific facet of the subject.

Matt says

This is a short book. It isn't about the Revolutionary War (although the war is part of it). It's about all the revolutions in government, economics, culture, and society that we ordinary folk clump together and misinterpret when we refer to the American Revolution. The Revolution was anything but a military revolution; in fact, it was a revolution in just about everything but that. And the author does a fantastic job of revealing just how revolutionary the Revolution was.

It's a quick read and a great introduction for those who wouldn't be able to give a 2 minute talk about the Revolution if our lives depended on it.

Pete Stevenson says

This is the best American Revolution review book there is. It does not go into depth on any one subject, but it explains everything very easily, and is very short (~200 pages).

James M. says

A short (very), concise (extremely) survey of all aspects - economic, political, philosophical, military - of the Revolution which, several times, made me think that I was reading a school textbook because of its reach. Nevertheless, I'm always able to find interesting nuggets of hitherto unknown (to me, at least) information even from a survey. A good read.

Jenni Lithgow says

I should preface this review by saying, the only history books I read are biographies. I find them completely absorbing, so I thought I'd enjoy some "overall history" books. But, either history books just aren't as great as biographies, or this book was sort of total crap.

More specifically. . .

I felt like it was way too much information crammed in to way too short of a volume (only 166 pages). Clearly, the goal here was to give a brief overview, but instead of being a scratch-the-surface sort of a deal, it felt more like a bajillion and one tedious details all smashed together - and not in consecutive order, either, which I always think makes things more confusing than they need to be. I felt like this should-be-interesting topic was made a bit dry and boring, and on top of that, I kept getting the feeling that I was reading a high school term paper.

I'm a bit disillusioned with this genre of books as a result of reading this one, and am less excited about the other three I've bought and was thinking of reading soon. . .

Amanda says

After my undergraduate history degree focusing on the American Revolution, this book is a nice overview now that I am 3 years out of college. It's an easy read without too many names and dates to make your eyes glaze over. He does lean heavily towards Ben Franklin, but that is only natural as he has done biographies on the man. Rather than get caught up in the details of the Revolution, the reader sees the big picture and how the events relate to one another.

Lona Manning says

I've had some depressing encounters on Twitter lately with people who think that "Oh yeah? Slavery!" or "Oh yeah? Indians!" is all you need to say to shut down any praise of the Founders, as well as with people who fault the Founders because they didn't establish a Scandinavian-style social democracy with universal suffrage.

It's sent me back to the bookshelf for another round of reading. I intend to read more of what the Founders actually wrote because a lot of people now living in the nation they established seem to believe they had pretty selfish motives. And remember that writing was a laborious process back then, dipping the quill pen in the ink, working by candlelight. So it seems odd that the Founders spent so much time writing about liberty, and how to protect and preserve the republic, and the threat of tyrannical government and how to limit government from taking over our lives, when, according to their modern-day critics, they only cared about making money and oppressing poor people.

This book gives the big picture, the American Revolution at 20,000 feet, so to speak. It discusses the events of the Revolution and more importantly the progress and the evolution of the thinking that produced the Revolution and the Constitution that followed. It lays out the arguments made by the people who rebelled against King George III, and gives an explanation of what they hoped to accomplish. I found myself highlighting passage after passage.

Many countries have had revolutions and all too often, a tyrant (Robespierre, Napoleon, Lenin, Mao, Castro,

Mugabe) takes over and destroys the egalitarian dream of the people who supported the revolution. They throw off one tyrant to find themselves under a new tyranny. But because we had Washington, Jefferson and Madison, etc, that didn't happen in the USA. As the book notes, Washington drew world-wide acclaim and wonder for stepping down and returning to his plantation at the end of his presidency.

Wood also discusses the changes the Revolution brought about in education, the fifth estate and charitable organizations. "Unlike liberals of the twenty-first century, the most liberal-minded of the eighteenth century tended to see society as beneficent and government as malevolent." Its pretty much reversed today. So it's very worthwhile to review what the Founders actually said and believed.

Nick Smith says

At a little less than 170 pages, this volume on The American Revolution is perfect for any amateur historian. Not only does it describe the calamitous war which broke out first at Lexington and Concord, but it also painstakingly details the contentious array of events which impelled the American people to their separation with Great Britain. Drawing on a number of decades as a professor of history, Wood is able to be what he is: an expert on the Revolutionary period. Wood then goes on to describe the way Americans, once the British were defeated, gradually came to solve the bigger problem of how they would be governed. After Shays' rebellion and the period of time when state governments became corrupt in ways, the general consensus of lawmakers was to drastically change the Articles of Confederation, scrapping it, and outline their plan of republican government. Wood is quick to note that although the Federalists did get their way in some of the reforms, ultimately it was the Anti-Federalists who came to dominate American politics in the following generation. And with this point, he proves that American politics is unpredictable, that if you think you know what's going to happen, you might wind up dead wrong. Along with a copious bibliography, the book is perfect and concise enough to manage in a week. I highly recommend it! Five stars.

Paul says

I was looking for a brief overview of the American Revolution, and I found it. It is hard to believe that so much information and insight can be found in just 165 pages.

Gordon S. Wood's The American Revolution: A History summarizes the events surrounding the revolution, and places them in a context that you do not get in K-12 education. Many of the details are not given. For example, why a certain battle was not won, etc. Those are details for other books. What I found here was the societal and theoretical context through which to understand the revolution itself.

What I found most fascinating, perhaps, is just how modern the issues of the 1770-1780s seem in relation to the issues of today. We often have a sense that 200 or 250 years ago, people were less advanced or more naive than today. But for a ocean of difference in technology, there really is not much difference. We still grapple with the issues of state sovereignty versus federal authority, and with a class system that seems to dominate elected offices. Issues of race and equality were not misunderstood, though they were often ignored or distorted.

The book is easy to read and fluid. I found the writing to be erudite without being stuffy and boring. The larger context of what England was doing before the revolution and why the colonists rebelled is well explained, along with descriptions of England's reactions and efforts to make peace. I learned many things

about England's response to the revolution here that I didn't learn in school (or I have forgotten).

What I liked about the book is that it has encouraged me to read more about the era. I plan to read other books to fill in details that were just skimmed in this summary. I'm not sure you can ask for more from a brief and concise survey work.

James Smith says

Great primer for someone whose high school education took place in Canada; probably a good refresher for others. Succinct overview from pre-Revolutionary background to ratification of the Constitution by a scholar who wrote one of the definitive histories. I learned more than I care to admit. ;-)

Chad Manske says

Part of our National War College Domestic Context course reading, this Pulitzer Prize winning book from renowned Constitutional scholar Wood takes the reader on a whirlwind tour beginning with the roots of the Revolution all the way through the Federalist/Anti-Federalist debates. A portable and worthy read!

Brian Willis says

This the deepest concise version of the American Revolution out there, not simply a rehashing of the facts but rather a profound analysis of the reasons and the causes and the effects of the colonial rebellion.

If you ask the person on the street, they will most likely respond with the shallowest reasons for the rebellion: "freedom", "tyranny", and the like. These terms betray a profound misunderstanding of the revolution: what exactly were loyal English subjects rebelling against? It turns out, according to Wood, that the rural, remote American rebelled against concentrations of power outside of their sphere that dominated their lives. This rebellion is traced by Wood through its progressions in taxation, armed rebellion, and finally the establishment of American government with the US Constitution. Other books will give a deeper analysis and more thorough investigations but that is not Wood's job here. This is a superb book for those who want a quick overview of the Revolution, a brief refresher course, or simply Wood's own acclaimed take on its importance: the radicalism of the farming class rejecting remote financial power centers that stretched into the pockets of the working class.

J says

A masterful synthesis of the scholarship on the era. The prose is clear and concise, driving a narrative that is not only enjoyable but that carefully guides the reader through complex ideas. Wood paints a vivid portrait of the interconnected web of people, ideas, and events that comprise the American Revolution. If you want a quick but nuanced look at the Revolution, this is the book you need to read.

SJ Loria says

The most concise, bang for your buck, and informative history of the American Revolution. Each chapter is meticulously researched, wonderfully presented and careful to provide multiple perspectives. This is the kind of history book with no "filler" text or unnecessary rambling. It's almost as if you could underline every sentence because each has so much to offer. This book is outstanding.

Jason says

Professor Wood, considered by many to be one of the better historians of the American Revolution, has written perhaps the classic summary of the conflict that founded one nation, ended the first empire of another and has changed the world. What sets this book, at less than a 170 pages, is its conciseness and ability to sum up many and large complicated issues well.

Wood does a wonderful job of explaining how a struggle between 13 of Britain's 21 North American colonies was virtually inevitable due to many circumstances that were surely incomprehensible at first, and to hard to untangle afterwards when the issues were of the present day, until all at once, individuals who would rather not, were forced to choose sides. The unusual thing about the American Revolution, is that both sides were choosing between two different types of traditionalism, and were forced to fight a contemporary battle among issues that had divided English speaking peoples since early Norman times, over 600 years in the past. As Wood easily explains, a series of disputes over trade acts and taxes hardly seems like the justification to start the world anew, especially considering that the Revolution saw a huge proportion of military and civilian deaths, leading to economic destruction and civil war in many of the colonies.

Wood only spends 14 whole pages on direct discussion on the military conflict proper, though a reader will not come away with misunderstandings about how the conflict developed or why it was concluded the way it was. The strategic limitations of the British military, not least of which was that were told to wage general war on people most of their office class considered to be as much their countrymen as a Scotchman or Welshman, in the fast American frontier, are explained crisply.

Along the way, Wood does a fine job of explaining why the culture of the American colonies was more united than they gave themselves credit for, why it was overwhelmingly optimistic, with a bent on radical equality of the sort that British people had not hoped for in over 400 years. Wood quotes a British traveler in America from 1759 who writes of the American urgency to rise to the point where the American British reached their destiny to write the laws of the rest of civilization. From that frame of reference, of a new American nation, built with the best of British hopes of tradition, law and religion is how Wood has framed the story of the American Revolution. The book is recommended in the highest way.
