



The American Revolution: A History (Modern Library Chronicles)

Gordon S. Wood

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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.

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