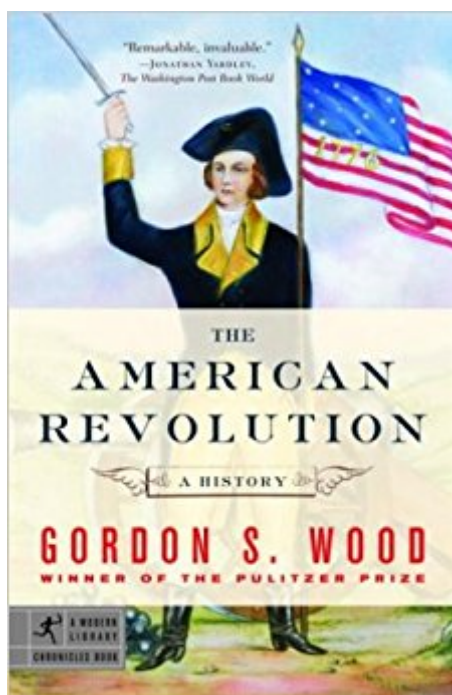


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# The American Revolution: A History (Modern Library Chronicles)



## Synopsis

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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## Customer Reviews

Gordon S. Wood's *The American Revolution*, part of the Modern Library Chronicles series, is an erudite, concise summary of the events and circumstances surrounding the seminal conflict, both physical and philosophical, in American history. The Modern Library Chronicles are accessible-but-serious works of scholarship, meant to serve as introductions (or refresher courses) on large subjects for interested readers. *The American Revolution* is an excellent case in point. Wood deftly describes seeds of the Revolution, most notably disgruntlement on the colonists' part brought about by increasingly maladroit and fiscally punishing British policies. He then follows the course of actual warfare and its aftermath, most interestingly the fraught, bitter battle to draw a governing blueprint for the new country. Wood breaks little new interpretive ground himself, here, but as a synthesizer (and amiable, skillful narrator/guide) he stands on high ground. --H. O'Billovitch  
--This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A famed historian sums up his life's work; his first book since winning the Pulitzer Prize. Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Short overview of the American revolution that reads like bullet points. It's a good starting point if you want a wiki-style high-level overview of the time period, but don't expect any detail or heavy analysis.

Fantastic explanation of the attitudes and actions that contributed to the American Revolution. It is an easy read for those with a background in history, but laypeople will probably have to google a few of the topics mentioned. WONDERFUL book.

This 166-page book introduces us to the American Revolution, with an emphasis on its causes and effects--economic, political, legal, social, racial, and religious. The writing style is a bit too factual

and dry for me, perhaps because Wood is just briefly covering the topic, but I would have liked to see more details on the leaders and events to "bring them to life." For example, Wood writes that "it was mob violence that destroyed the Stamp Act in America," but there is little given us about the violent acts themselves, and the people who instigated them. Also, few details are presented about the battles of the Revolutionary War. (Read A. J. Langguth's *Patriots* to learn more about Samuel Adams, George Washington and others, as well as about most of the military campaigns.) Wood's book is particularly useful for its discussion of the effects of the war: on the class structure, slaves, indentured servants and the Indians, monetary inflation, education, governments, and on the role of women. Wood summarizes some surprising trends: For example, he points out that wealth was distributed more unequally after the Revolution even though Americans believed that society was more egalitarian. He also gives us some fascinating details, such as that some women objected to the use of the word "obey" in the vows taken at their weddings in the last quarter of the 18th century. This is a good overview of the American Revolution, although it is not written in the most exciting style. In addition, there is a good list of other sources of information, with comments about them at the end of the book.

A good overview of what happened and why. Relatively easy to read. As someone who never really liked boring history books, I got through it no problem and learned a lot. Only wish for would be to incorporate more maps and timelines into the story so it's easier to follow what's being described.

With less than 200 pages of text, you may well think that Wood's *THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION* is no more than historical Cliffs Notes. It rises above that level as a decent read and a refresher for general readers who have not revisited this part of history since school. As Wood notes in his preface, there is a tendency among some contemporary revisionists to downplay the significance of the American Revolution, to challenge its revolutionary stature because it did not fully achieve the full equality of humankind at the one time. In clean, practical fact-driven prose, he ably responds with a picture of an extraordinary coalescence of intellectual, social and political change that forged not only a new nation and way of governance, but one that quickly emerged as a world leader. Wood deftly sorts out the origins and spurs that produced the tensions in the colonies and in Britain, reviews the highlights of the war, and then visits the newly formed United States of America as its people try on their new identity and begin to build a new way of being. It ends with the production of the Constitution and Bill of Rights. The central engine of the book is based in the ideas, particularly of the Enlightenment, that drove the Revolution. Only the most significant players make

appearances, such as Patrick Henry, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and King George III. This is not the book to go looking for Betsy Ross or Nathan Hale. What struck this reader most of all were the issues that America faced as it took on the mantle of freedom. Many of the original tensions are still with us, and probably always will be given how democracy embraces diverse people and agenda. Wood's calm rendering of this period inspires wonder at what was in fact achieved.

One of the best general histories of the American Revolution that I have read to date. It explores the causes leading up to the Revolution and the leading personalities. It also talks about the ideas behind the revolutionary movement. It also discusses the unusual transition from the Articles of Confederation to the strong Federalism of the new U.S. Constitution produced by the Philadelphia Convention in 1787. It really lays the foundation for understanding how our country was established and the traditions that were established that still affect us today in modern times. Great Read about the American Revolution - both about the war and the creation of the American Republic.

Despite the short length of this book, Wood was able to cover various different aspects of the American Revolution in a satisfying way. Wood walks the reader through the origins of the revolution, through the revolution, to the establishment of the Federalist constitution. What I found to be the most interesting is the rather big emphasis that Wood put on the nature of politics during and after the revolution, and how the revolution transformed the entire nature of politics. The only drawback I can think of is the neglect of the military history part of the revolution. But taking into account the length of the book, and since the political and ideological aspects were covered so thoroughly, this can be understood. Overall, if you're looking for a highly readable and very comprehensive introduction to the American Revolution, this book will serve you just fine.

good textbook.

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