



1776

By David McCullough

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America's beloved and distinguished historian presents, in a book of breathtaking excitement, drama, and narrative force, the stirring story of the year of our nation's birth, 1776, interweaving, on both sides of the Atlantic, the actions and decisions that led Great Britain to undertake a war against her rebellious colonial subjects and that placed America's survival in the hands of George Washington.

In this masterful book, David McCullough tells the intensely human story of those who marched with General George Washington in the year of the Declaration of Independence—when the whole American cause was riding on their success, without which all hope for independence would have been dashed and the noble ideals of the Declaration would have amounted to little more than words on paper.

Based on extensive research in both American and British archives, *1776* is a powerful drama written with extraordinary narrative vitality. It is the story of Americans in the ranks, men of every shape, size, and color, farmers, schoolteachers, shoemakers, no-accounts, and mere boys turned soldiers. And it is the story of the King's men, the British commander, William Howe, and his highly disciplined redcoats who looked on their rebel foes with contempt and fought with a valor too little known.

Written as a companion work to his celebrated biography of John Adams, David McCullough's *1776* is another landmark in the literature of American history.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Esteemed historian David McCullough covers the military side of the momentous year of 1776 with characteristic insight and a gripping narrative, adding new scholarship and a fresh perspective to the beginning of the American Revolution. It was a turbulent and confusing time. As British and American politicians struggled to reach a compromise, events on the ground escalated until war was inevitable. McCullough writes vividly about the dismal conditions that troops on both sides had to endure, including an unusually harsh winter, and the role that luck and the whims of the weather played in helping the colonial forces hold off the world's greatest army. He also effectively explores the importance of motivation and troop morale--a tie was as good as a win to the Americans, while anything short of overwhelming victory was disheartening to the British, who expected a swift end to the war. The redcoat retreat from Boston, for example, was particularly humiliating for the British, while the minor American victory at Trenton was magnified despite its limited strategic importance.

Some of the strongest passages in *1776* are the revealing and well-rounded portraits of the Georges on both sides of the Atlantic. King George III, so often portrayed as a bumbling, arrogant fool, is given a more thoughtful treatment by McCullough, who shows that the king considered the colonists to be petulant subjects without legitimate grievances--an attitude that led him to underestimate the will and capabilities of the Americans. At times he seems shocked that war was even necessary. The great Washington lives up to his considerable reputation in these pages, and McCullough relies on private correspondence to balance the man and the myth, revealing how deeply concerned Washington was about the Americans' chances for victory, despite his public optimism. Perhaps more than any other man, he realized how fortunate they were to merely survive the year, and he willingly lays the responsibility for their good fortune in the hands of God rather than his own. Enthralling and superbly written, *1776* is the work of a master historian. --Shawn Carkonen

The Other 1776

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Bestselling historian and two-time Pulitzer winner McCullough follows up *John Adams* by staying with America's founding, focusing on a year rather than an individual: a momentous 12 months in the fight for independence. How did a group of ragtag farmers defeat the world's greatest empire? As McCullough vividly shows, they did it with a great deal of suffering, determination, ingenuity—and, the author notes, luck. Although brief by McCullough's standards, this is a narrative tour de force, exhibiting all the hallmarks the author is known for: fascinating subject matter, expert research and detailed, graceful prose. Throughout, McCullough deftly captures both sides of the conflict. The British commander, Lord General Howe, perhaps not fully accepting that the rebellion could succeed, underestimated the Americans' ingenuity. In turn, the outclassed Americans used the cover of night, surprise and an abiding hunger for victory to astonishing effect. Henry Knox, for example, trekked 300 miles each way over harsh winter terrain to bring 120,000 pounds of artillery from Fort Ticonderoga to Boston, enabling the Americans, in a stealthy nighttime advance, to seize Dorchester Heights, thus winning the whole city. Luck, McCullough writes, also played into the American cause—a vicious winter storm, for example, stalled a British counterattack at Boston, and twice Washington staged improbable, daring escapes when the war could have been lost. Similarly, McCullough says, the cruel northeaster in which Washington's troops famously crossed the Delaware was both "a blessing and a curse." McCullough keenly renders the harshness of the elements, the

rampant disease and the constant supply shortfalls, from gunpowder to food, that affected morale on both sides—and it certainly didn't help the British that it took six weeks to relay news to and from London. Simply put, this is history writing at its best from one of its top practitioners.
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From School Library Journal

Adult/High School—McCullough concentrates on George Washington's role in the creation of the Continental Army, starting with his appointment in 1775 to lead the rather amorphous army of the united colonies and continuing through his successes with that army at Trenton and Princeton as 1776 turned into 1777. He introduces readers to the 1776 that Washington experienced: one of continual struggle both to create a working army and to defeat the British. The victories that he met outside Boston were soon followed by defeat and near ruin around New York and gave rise to the realization that 1776 might easily have become the worst year in the history of America. McCullough not only provides readers with some of his best work yet, but also presents an important look at one of the most crucial moments in the history of the United States. Black-and-white and color photos are included.—*Ted Westervelt, Library of Congress, Washington, DC*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Leigh Grayer:

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