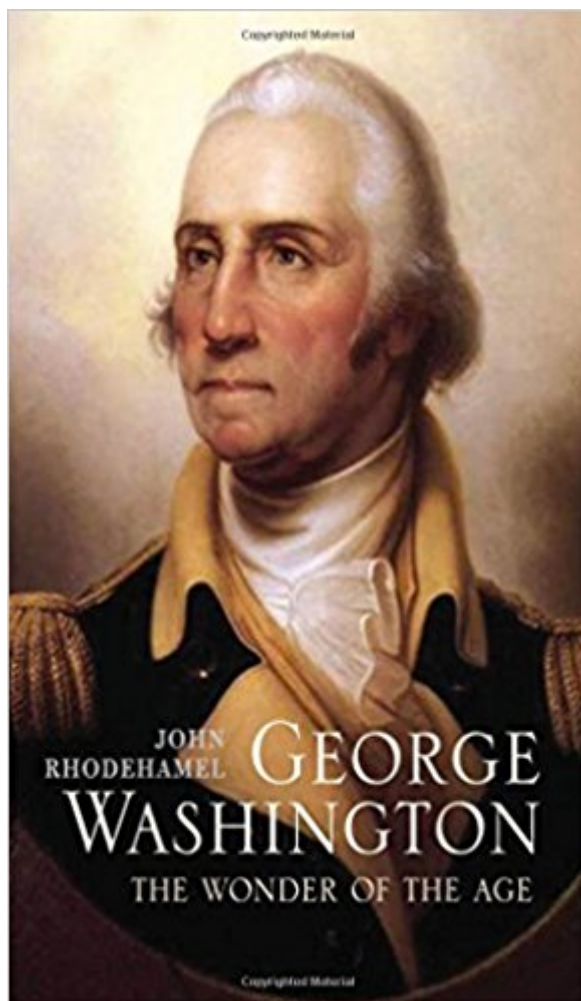


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George Washington: The Wonder Of The Age



Synopsis

“The only Washington biography you need.” —Wall Street Journal As editor of the award-winning Library of America collection of George Washington’s writings and a curator of the great man’s original papers, John Rhodehamel has established himself as an authority of our nation’s preeminent founding father. In this “crisply written, admirably concise, and never superficial” biography (Fergus M. Bordewich, Wall Street Journal) Rhodehamel examines George Washington as a public figure, arguing that the man “who first achieved fame in his early twenties” is inextricably bound to his mythic status. Solidly grounded in Washington’s papers and exemplary in its brevity, this approachable biography is a superb introduction to the leader whose name has become synonymous with America.

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Customer Reviews

"The only Washington biography you need. . . . [Rhodehamel’s] sympathetic, though not uncritical, account of the first president’s journey from minor Tidewater gentry to mythic statesman is crisply written, admirably concise, and never superficial. As a brief account of Washington’s life, it is unlikely to be surpassed for many years.” —Wall Street Journal "In his new biography of Washington, John Rhodehamel eloquently describes the founding father’s deliberate creation of the public character that gave him the moral authority to lead the quarrelsome collection of former colonies into sturdy nationhood.” —Bret

Stephens, Wall Street Journal"[George Washington]Ã  stands out for its rich prose, . . . [and] RhodehamelÃ   s jaunty writing makes for a highly entertaining book. . . .

WashingtonÃ   s story benefits from a vigorous telling. The powdered wig, the silly pants, the poker face staring out from crumpled dollar bills: All serve to separate us from our founding father. RhodehamelÃ   s urgency of prose restores the connection. He also showcases his experience as the former archivist of Mount Vernon by bringing manuscript sources directly to the reader."Ã     •Michael OÃ      Donnell, New York Times Book Review"George Washington: The Wonder of the Age, by John Rhodehamel, is a masterpiece, a concise, fluidly written and well-grounded biography. Rhodehamel, who edited two highly acclaimed books for the renowned Library of America series of great American writers (one, naturally, of Washington's writings and the other of writings from the American Revolution), has executed an accurate and revealing portrait of a man who, more than any other, made possible the creation and subsequent success of the United States."Ã     •Steve Forbes, Forbes magazine"[A] brief and balanced, yet stirring, look at Washington's life in under 400 pages."Ã     •Edward Achorn, Weekly Standard"John Rhodehamel, who has written many books about George Washington, here conveys his deepest and most enduring view of the man. In strong, straightforward prose, he tells WashingtonÃ    s extraordinary story, without bravura flourishes or exaggerations. It is a memorable reading experience."Ã     •Thomas Fleming, author of The Great Divide: The Conflict Between Washington and Jefferson That Defined a Nation "A splendid single-volume biography of Washington. Rhodehamel captures him and his accomplishments as well as anyone can. A smooth and interesting read."Ã     •Mark Ã     Mastromarino, former editor, The Papers of George Washington, University of Virginia"The interpretation is profound, clear and well-stated, and the author is certainly an expert on George Washington, worthy of tackling the problem of writing a short biography of the long, complicated, and monumental life of the most important founder of the United States."Ã     •Douglas Bradburn, Founding Director, The Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington. Mount Vernon, Virginia"John Rhodehamel has written an authoritative and well-rounded biography of the great man and made him and his very different world clearly accessible to us."Ã     •Gordon Wood, Professor of History Emeritus, Brown University,Ã     GSW

John Rhodehamel is the former archivist of Mount Vernon and curator of American historical manuscripts at the Huntington Library. He is editor of George Washington: Writings and The American Revolution: Writings from the War of Independence.

I have to start by saying I was a history major in college, so I've had my fair share of academic reading. But, my emphasis was not in early American History, so I had very little in-depth knowledge beyond textbook summarization. This book reads like one part historical theory & one part contemporary biography. There's a straight forward notion that key moments in Washington's life shaped his views on being a Virginian with freedom to prosper. That liberty that existed in the colonials was beyond that of simple British gentry. Eventually these beliefs, paired with how British officers treated Washington as an inferior during his earliest military experience, made Washington into who he would become. This building of the self-made man, then being stripped of importance, is of profound consequence. The first half of the book is staged here with fascinating side notes to the historical landscape unfolding around. The second half is mostly the suggestion that the notion of Washington & the meaning of being "American" were hand & hand. Washington embodied the earliest ideals that shaped the nation. This being said, the author points out all of the obstacles that present themselves to the early transition of self-governance as well as Washington's own notion of accepting his place in that new found system. I have read only brief surveys of Washington before this work. And I can say, this was an eye-opening account of many things I was way too uninformed of. Washington is a man & a myth in our modern word. This book points out dozens of times the so called "myth" is more real than the greater public knows. And further, the set-in-stone-facts are way more gray than we learned as kids. If you are looking for insight into what made Washington who he is today, then this is a fantastic read. The reading can be daunting at times, especially if you haven't read academia before. But, stick with it. The side-tracking of some non-chronological details & quotes can be distracting. But, the overall organizational style is still chronological. I truly enjoyed this book cover to cover. I'm not sure casual readers of history would find this as fascinating, but the narrative is quite a read nonetheless. If you have any desire to learn about Washington in depth, this a great choice. I would give this 4.5 out 5 stars, rounded to 5.

John Rhodehamel has written a concise biography of one of the most legendary and monumental figures in history George Washington: The Wonder of the Age. A revolutionary figure for a quarter of a century that continued to lead when his tenure closed so did the end of the reign and government-by-birth. Despite that fact, a new one was on the rise, Washington as the myth, god-like and king-like that began as his election as general of the Continental Army of 1775. Rhodehamel suggests this was the beginning of an age where it was possible that the common man may emerge with the ability to rule. Based on his experience editing the Library of America collection of and

overseeing the original papers and writings of George Washington, Rhodehamel revisits the periods that gave rise to who would become the first president of the United States. *The Wonder of the Age* provides readers a good perspective of George Washington as a man that experienced adversity during times of victory but also in times of defeat that never ceased his leadership. It was in times of defeat or pitfalls where Washington gained the skills and training that he and his soldiers of men acquired during the American Revolution; as a colonel he became aware and recognized the differences with how the government and military operated, especially during the French and Indian War where he enhanced his leadership. Gradually, Washington developed as a soldier to a statesman who honed his skills in the fields. First as a surveyor within the frontier and wilderness and later on the front lines, and at times allied with British officials that trusted him. Although it may sound cliché, Washington followed the age old adage of leading by example, in demeanor with every person he encountered at all level of rank, and by attire. When he became General of the American Army in 1775 he adopted the distinct uniform that adorned the colors of buff and blue. And so gave birth to the symbolic figure that would be displayed in narratives and portraits. After reading these well known traits, having read a tremendous array of historical figures Washington did indeed stand out and would become that model to many to close cohorts in his age and leaders that rose centuries after, especially in wars fought in the 20th century. There is no doubt, the battles that Washington fought and led from the 1750s to the 1770s that are mentioned in each chapter that Rhodehamel chronologically narrates are legendary in their own respect as well, but of course leading each one from Williamsburg to crossings along the Delaware and Hudson rivers and Valley Forge to Monmouth would forever change the face of America of how it would be governed. After reading the book, comparisons to other parts of history and leaders that may have long passed, but may continue to ring true are the legacies they left. Each one are constant historical reminders and George Washington became the first during a time of monarchical rule and gained prominence as the leader of the land.

When you ask people what is the first thing that comes to mind when you think George Washington some will say "father of our country" while others will make reference to the iconic rendering of him crossing the Delaware. More will make reference to the dollar bill, sales, cutting down a cherry tree and of course wooden teeth. This book is a serious look at the first president as he navigated colonial times first as an ambitious and occasionally audacious young man to his final years as a seasoned statesman. I did learn much about his background that I did not know but the focus is on his political career. The challenge with most life stories is providing enough detail without losing

track. There are tidbits I would have liked to see more developed. For instance, although a slave owner who numbered many among his possession, Washington was conflicted about the issue and recognized the inherent wrongness of the practice. Although he chose not to sell or buy any more and actually had a plan to end it in a way that would provide a living for the former slaves and not decimate Southern economics, his plan did not come to fruition. I would have liked to see more development of this topic and others including his complicated relationships with other notables of the time. The portrait on the cover is riveting but the writing is a tad pedantic. the book is well researched and provides a broad overview. It reads like a history text favoring accuracy over a sense of time and place. still a good introduction to a compelling figure who sadly has been reduced in modern times to a cartoon.

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