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1776, by David McCullough, Simon & Schuster, 2005

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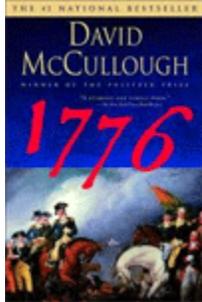
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Recommended Readings



1776

by David McCullough, Simon & Schuster, 2005

Reviewed by Richard McGowan

While I was reading the Pulitzer prize-winning *1776*, I remarked to my wife, "I'm on page 268 [of 294 text pages] and cannot see how America won the Revolutionary War." The remark, in and of itself, suggests why the book is worth reading. It is nothing short of miraculous that the United States did not remain a British colony.

The miracle was constituted in roughly equal parts by the "rabble in arms" and by its leader, George Washington. Indeed, the book could have been sub-titled *The Luck and Hard Times of America's First General*. Washington did free Boston from British grasp, moving artillery and forces into place under cover of dark and through concealment by hay bales, but only after he had suggested a frontal assault on the well protected and fortified British troops.

His officers talked him out of it. On several occasions, only the weather saved the Continental Army.

Yet, Washington was dogged and resolved. He also was a good judge of character and employed it well. McCullough does Americans a kindness by relating stories of those who won that war: Henry Knox bringing cannons from Fort Ticonderoga (NY) to Boston; Nathanael Greene, a Quaker made a general at thirty-three; the fearless and popular Israel Putnam; Major Leitch and Colonel Knowlton, "whose deaths were a heavy blow to the army" and the latter's death, the "greatest loss" to Washington.

The book's last sentence provides an apt summary, in that America prevailed-"the outcome seemed little short of a miracle."

- Richard McGowan is an instructor of business ethics at Butler University.