WINNING INDEPENDENCE

THE DECISIVE YEARS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR, 1778-1781

JOHN FERLING

CONTINUE
Bernard Lavallee - Great book. Another great book by Ferling on the American revolution. Read this book after almost a miracle, you wii love then both.

Michael J Williamson - very good. Item is of stunning quality! Delivery was prime. Packaging was unrivaled. Wish all sellers were this peerless.

Benjamin A. Burditt - New information, Amazing Story, This is the main Act of the American Revolution! I learned so much, I couldn't put it down, one of the best books I have read in the last ten years and boy did I learn a lot and I have read many many books about the American Revolution. What a tour de force to put this book together. I am feeling so very lucky to have found it and read it.

Russell Clunan - Colonial history at it's best. Seriously, I think this might be his best book - and given his previous works that is saying something. Sit back in a comfortable chair, open this book and be transported 200+ years. Enjoy.

Deborah L. Jones - Gift that was truly appreciated. Bought this for my boss for Christmas since he is a history lover and he said it was one of his favorite books on the subject. He loved this author.

Jon - About time. This new history takes on a much covered topic and makes it fresh. By placing the emphasis on the tactics and strategies of the generals in the American Revolution, most notably Clinton and Washington, the author ably shows how was are won and lost: by mixture of boldness and caution, great Intel and lost information, luck and patience. Nobody here is a genius, and there are few fools. Everybody has a pretty good ego, and is usually willing to give a few ribs to keep that ego intact. Battles are often won by who has the better retreat. And yes, the battle for " hearts and minds" is two and a half centuries old. And it is an excellent reminder that the enemy always had a vote on your plans. While mentioned, I would have loved to understand more on how the American army kept improving, yet the British, notably Germaine remained stuck in preconceptions. With an expansion to more thoroughly cover pre-1778, this could serve as a text. But as is, it should serve as a great start to a better balanced view of this war.

Kindle Customer - Long paragraphs but I learned a lot. Wordy at times but I learned a bunch of things so overall worthwhile. I liked the verbatim excerpts from letters the most.

William J. Bahr - Clinton Acclaimed: The other side of the story!. Ferling's thoughtful, well-documented, and well-written book focuses upon the British “Southern Strategy” (to retake South Carolina and Georgia) and the second half of the Revolutionary War. Showing much potential for success, the Southern Strategy was Lord George Germaine's idea. Unfortunately for Germaine, the author blames him, George III, and Cornwallis for mucking up Clinton's implementation. In the process, Ferling elevates Clinton from the Revolutionary War's incompetent schmuck to the star-crossed hero on the wrong side of the Revolution. Giving example after example of Clinton's talents as a strategist/planner and executive, Ferling succeeds admirably in more or less a “first of a kind" Clinton rehabilitation. Washington On the subject of George Washington, however, be prepared if you're a big George Washington fan. The book is pretty much a downer for him as Ferling again shines a light on Washington's
warts, making up for the praise he gave him in some of his previous books. What could Washington do? Ingloriously block Clinton, only attacking when a win was possible and otherwise waiting out the war until the British gave up. Also, work in concert with the French, not crossing them or Congress to work as a loyal and trustworthy partner to engender (and not lose) further support. While Ferling gives supreme credit to Rochambeau for orchestrating Yorktown with DeGrasse, realize Washington didn’t speak French and didn’t have the same access to French Admiral DeGrasse as did Rochambeau, but did orchestrate the duplicity and secrecy that allowed the rebels to slip off to Yorktown without alerting the British, and to set up a logistical masterpiece of getting the troops to their destination. Ferling gives General Charles Lee much credit as a strategist and criticizes Washington for not using him more. However, Lee was known to be a longstanding Washington critic and was non-responsive to Washington when asked to return men to Washington’s command for the eventual assault on Trenton, and became so careless that Lee found himself captured by the British. There was also suspicion that Lee possibly disclosed American plans to the British after his capture, with some hinting that he had continued working with them after his release.

P 27: “Washington unwisely opted to leave a bit more than three thousand Continentals garrisoned in Fort Washington, a post that overlooked the Hudson River in the rural northwestern reaches of Manhattan. It was an absurd decision.” But, according to Wikipedia: "Washington had considered abandoning Fort Washington, but he was swayed by Nathanael Greene [Ferling’s ‘master strategist,’ aside from Clinton and Rochambeau], who believed the fort could be held and that it was vital to do so. Greene argued that holding the fort would keep open communications across the river and might dissuade the British from attacking New Jersey. Magaw and Putnam concurred with Greene. Washington deferred to Greene and did not abandon the fort.”

P 40: “It was delusional to think that Howe could take Philadelphia and thereafter transport his army to Albany. The advance on Philadelphia would be a time-consuming undertaking, followed by a campaign certain to face worthy resistance by rebel defenders.” But Howe had expected to quickly march to Philadelphia, which would have allowed him to later help Burgoyne. It was Howe’s discovery that Washington was blocking his land march at Middlebrook Encampment that caused Howe to be delayed by having to take the sea route, leading to his later inability to rescue Burgoyne.

P 48: “Washington fibbed to Congress that the enemy had gotten across because of the poor intelligence he had received.” But, Ferling doesn’t say why Washington was fibbing.

P 95: “Despite the exaggerations of the two commanders, the engagement [Monmouth] was a standoff that had no immediate impact on the course of the war.” Well, except for proving to the rebels (and the British) that they could stand up and fight the British and especially for sending General Lee to his retirement!

P 98: Ferling touts an invasion of Canada as an attractive strategic option. However, Lafayette, to his credit, smoked out the suggested option as a ruse that would get him out of the way of supporting Washington, saddled with insufficient men and equipment to make the invasion successful. The idea was rightly abandoned to most everyone’s satisfaction.

P 113: In pinpricking Washington’s reputation, Ferling doesn’t mention much of Gates and the Conway Cabal or Gates’ likely involvement in the Newburgh Conspiracy. This “cabal” so frustrated and embittered Washington that, contrary to Ferling’s intimations, he indicated that he would resign from the army if his performance continued to be brought into question: “Congress does not trust me. I cannot continue thus.”

P 290: Washington was not 27, as Ferling asserts, when he married Martha, but 26 (over six weeks short of 27). He was also likely not 6 four; tallest measurement of six feet 3 and ¾ inches only by Washington’s undertaker, when
Washington’s feet were pointed downward. By my calculations, averaging a number of assessments throughout Washington’s life, he was six feet 2 and ¾ inches tall. As Ferling mentions, Washington was shorter than DeGrasse, who by some accounts was said to be six feet four inches (depends upon if larger than English-scale French measurements were used).

P 301: “Reports and letters aside, there is no evidence that Washington read anything other than an occasional newspaper.” Other historians have found that Washington frequently consulted his military books, and friends inundated him with political tracts, sermons, and newspapers. Quite possibly, he was also reading journals on architecture and agriculture to improve Mount Vernon., further prompting his estate improvement suggestions sent home to Lund Washington.

P 509: “So why did America win the war?” From his ordered list, Ferling seems to imply Washington is way down on the list of credits. Between the two men and their mastery of the art of war, Ferling strongly tilts towards Clinton over Washington, especially in spectral linguistic nuances (e.g., me steadfast; you stubborn?). Along these lines, Ferling asserts Clinton was “not unscrupulous” for allowing rebel towns to be put to the torch, while Washington seems to suffer a stream of slams as “disingenuous,” “fibbing,” etc.

Cornwallis P 368: Ferling reports Cornwallis purposely fired on his own men at Guilford Courthouse. Historians Babits and Howard and John R. Maass contend this was a myth created by not-quite-at-the-scene Lighthorse Harry Lee in his decades-later memoirs. For clarification, while associated with Cornwallis’ plan to move to North Carolina, the battles of Kings (no apostrophe) Mountain and Cowpens are in South Carolina. The final battle of the foray, Guilford Courthouse, was in North Carolina.

Another Assessment: Cornwallis was upset that Clinton was not retiring to England, per Clinton’s previously expressed wishes, so that Cornwallis could not ascend in command. Others P 434: “Like Balfour, Rawdon was tall and strapping, but behind his back some limned him the ugliest man in England. That cruel and tasteless barb was unwarranted. Portraits by Joshua Reynolds and Thomas Gainsborough captured a figure who was plain rather than handsome, but not unsightly.” But portrait artists were not paid to make their patrons look ugly! Note: Admiral Rodney shouldered some of the blame for not informing Clinton about DeGrasse’s progress. It should be pointed out that, due to the British Admiralty’s policy of rewarding admirals and captains with a percent of booty captured, Rodney was taking his time on St. Eustatius, also with expressed concern that the people were hiding wealth they would use to assist America. As well, he was plagued with severe prostate problems. Note: Ferling mentions only the rebels and Tarleton (who would have ridden to Ferguson’s aid at Kings Mountain had he not been stricken) as having problems with yellow fever. Ferling also says Phillips died of typhus; other reports say malaria. As many other Brits likely contracted yellow fever as well, it is strange that Ferling does not mention the role mosquitoes played in the American Revolution. One respected report says, “Reading the evidence in contemporary accounts, it is hard to escape the conclusion that the microbes [especially via mosquitoes] may have done more than the patriots to ensure an American victory.” For those curious, the first (little known) Fort Lafayette was located at Verplank’s point, across from Stony Point. Subsequent (one at a time) Fort Lafayettes were located in Pennsylvania and NYC. Overall assessment In conclusion, the book is a very worthy summary and recounting of the second half of the American Revolution, albeit, IMHO, with assertions sometimes hard to reconcile with conflicting accounts. Nevertheless, it effectively lays out the myriad pros and cons of the combatants’ strategic options. In doing so, Ferling makes a very substantial contribution to justifiably rehabilitating General Clinton’s reputation. Not to miss being mentioned, the maps and portraits Ferling provides are excellent. Bottom-line, I highly
recommend this book! Of possible interest:

George Washington's Liberty Key: Mount Vernon's Bastille Key – the Mystery and Magic of Its Body, Mind, and Soul

, a best-seller at Mount Vernon. “Character is Key for Liberty!” and

Strategy Pure and Simple: Essential Moves for Winning in Competition and Cooperation

Publisher: Bloomsbury Publishing; 1st edition (May 11, 2021)
Publication date: May 11, 2021
Language: English
File size: 68129 KB
Text-to-Speech: Enabled
Screen Reader: Supported
Enhanced typesetting: Enabled
X-Ray: Enabled
Word Wise: Enabled
Print length: 725 pages
Lending: Enabled
early 1781, Washington, and others, feared that France would drop out of the war if the Allies failed to score a decisive victory that year. Sir Henry Clinton, commander of Britain's army, thought "the rebellion is near its end." Washington, who had been so optimistic in 1778, despaired: "I have almost ceased to hope." Winning Independence is the dramatic story of how and why Great Britain—so close to regaining several southern colonies and rendering the postwar United States a fatally weak nation—ultimately failed to win the war. The book explores the choices and decisions made by Clinton and Washington, and others, that ultimately led the French and American allies to clinch the pivotal victory at Yorktown that at long last secured American independence.

Editorial Reviews
Review "Impeccably researched... the book is a must-read for any student of Revolutionary history. Yet another excellent work of early American history from one of its best practitioners." Kirkus Reviews

"Writing with his usual verve and imagination, Ferling demonstrates that the second half of the Revolutionary War possessed as much pathos, drama, and intrigue as the first part of the conflict. Winning Independence will undoubtedly appeal to both scholars and the general public. It's political and military history at its finest." Stephen R. Taaffe, author of Washington's Revolutionary War Generals

"A mesmerizing historical adventure. Focusing on the southern campaigns of 1778-1781, Ferling luminously unravels the story of how the American colonists finally beat the odds and gained their independence from Great Britain. Certainly one of the most engaging books I've had the pleasure of reading in years." James Kirby Martin, author of Benedict Arnold, Revolutionary Hero

"Extraordinary... Ferling's observations on the rival commanders are genuinely thought-provoking and challenging. Deeply researched, impartial, and elegantly written, Winning Independence is nothing short of an instant classic—one of the truly essential works on America's founding struggle." Mark Edward Lender, author of Cabal! The Plot Against General Washington

"Deeply researched and well-argued... Readers will gain fresh insight into how thin the line between victory and defeat was for both armies." Publishers Weekly

"Thoughtful... impressively researched... accessible and engaging... Ferling's lengthy, comprehensive, and essential work has staying power and should become one of the leading resources on the Revolutionary War." Library Journal (starred review)

"This well-researched, densely written history rewards patient readers... Ferling's research is meticulous, his prose methodical, and his conclusions measured." The Washington Independent Review of Books

Full of deep research and dramatic character portraits, a crowning achievement from one of the best historians of the period. Christian Science Monitor—This text refers to the hardcover edition.

About the Author
John Ferling is Professor Emeritus of History at the State University of West Georgia. A leading authority on American Revolutionary history, he has appeared in many documentaries and has written numerous books, including Almost a Miracle: The American Victory in the War for Independence, Adams vs. Jefferson: The Tumultuous Election of 1800, The First of Men: A Life of George Washington, Setting the World Ablaze: Washington, Adams, and Jefferson in the American Revolution, and the award-winning A Leap in the Dark: The Struggle to Create the American Republic. This text refers to the hardcover edition.

The book by John Ferling has a rating of 5 out of 4.6. 73 people have provided feedback.