



Valiant Ambition: George Washington, Benedict Arnold, and the Fate of the American Revolution

Nathaniel Philbrick

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"May be one of the greatest what-if books of the age—a volume that turns one of America's best-known narratives on its head."

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"Clear and insightful, it consolidates his reputation as one of America's foremost practitioners of narrative nonfiction."

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From the *New York Times* bestselling author of *In The Heart of the Sea* and *Mayflower* comes a surprising account of the middle years of the American Revolution, and the tragic relationship between George Washington and Benedict Arnold.

In September 1776, the vulnerable Continental Army under an unsure George Washington (who had never commanded a large force in battle) evacuates New York after a devastating defeat by the British Army. Three weeks later, near the Canadian border, one of his favorite generals, Benedict Arnold, miraculously succeeds in postponing the British naval advance down Lake Champlain that might have ended the war. Four years later, as the book ends, Washington has vanquished his demons and Arnold has fled to the enemy after a foiled attempt to surrender the American fortress at West Point to the British. After four years of war, America is forced to realize that the real threat to its liberties might not come from without but from within.

Valiant Ambition is a complex, controversial, and dramatic portrait of a people in crisis and the war that gave birth to a nation. The focus is on loyalty and personal integrity, evoking a Shakespearean tragedy that unfolds in the key relationship of Washington and Arnold, who is an impulsive but sympathetic hero whose misfortunes at the hands of self-serving politicians fatally destroy his faith in the legitimacy of the rebellion. As a country wary of tyrants suddenly must figure out how it should be led, Washington's unmatched ability to rise above the petty politics of his time enables him to win the war that really matters.

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