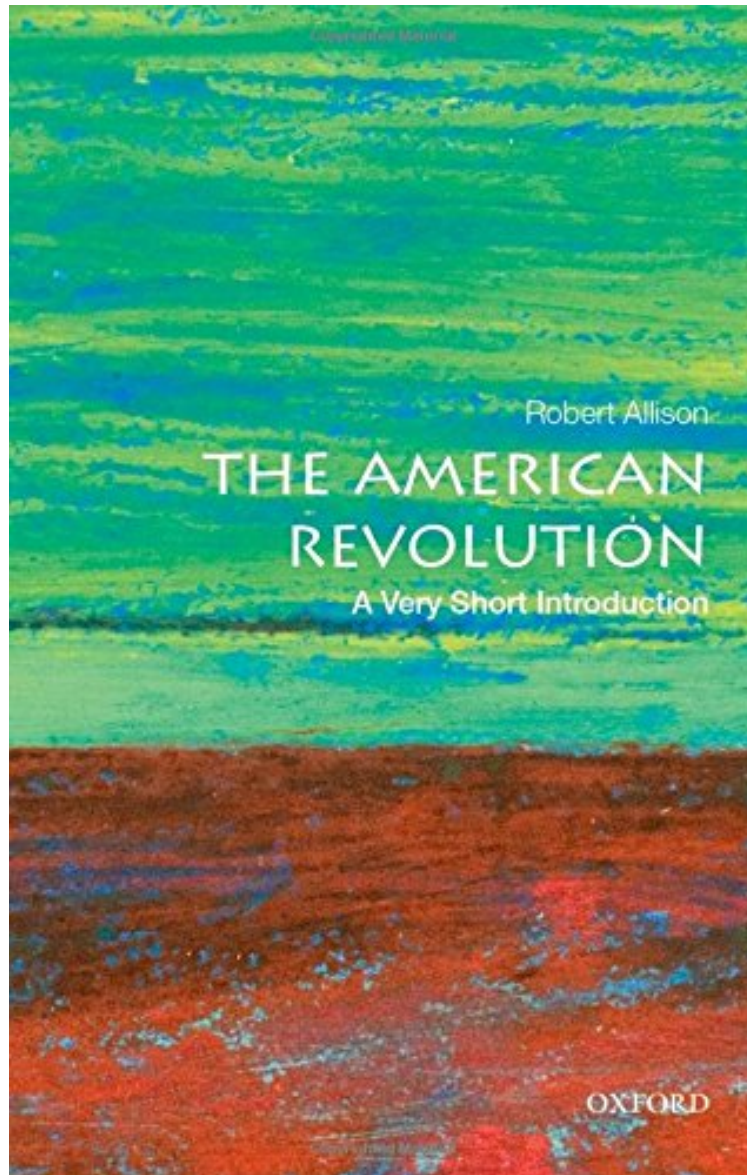


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## The American Revolution: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)

*Robert J. Allison*

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**Robert J. Allison : The American Revolution: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The American Revolution: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Compare "The American Revolution: A Concise History" By Macs Perkins Please note that Robert Allison's "The American Revolution: A Very Short Introduction" (Oxford UP, 2015) is, in fact, the REVISED edition of his 2011 book "The American Revolution: A Concise History" (from the same publisher). Not only that, but at least as of this writing it actually costs less than the earlier edition. A word to those who already have the "Concise History" or are debating which of the two volumes to purchase.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Ashcalm Excellent Synopsis on the American Revolution. Good to read if you want to brush up on your skills.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. The American Revolution in the Very Short Introductions Series By Robin Friedman The Very Short Introduction series of Oxford University Press offers the opportunity to learn many new things in accessible, brief volumes. I was glad to learn of this new volume in the series, "The American Revolution" (2015) by Robert Allison, Professor of History at Suffolk University. When I read the volume, I found that it was essentially a reissue of a title Oxford University Press published in 2011, "The American Revolution: A Concise History". I had read and reviewed the book here on when it came out. The book is an excellent introduction to the American Revolution, but I was slightly disappointed in that I was expecting a new study. It is always valuable to have a number of perspectives even in an introductory text. I found much to learn on my rereading. In the intervening five years since reading the first edition of this book, I have read several other works about the American Revolution, including the two volume Library of America set "The American Revolution: Writings from the Pamphlet Debate 1764 -- 1776" and the Library of America collection of the writings of George Washington. It helped me learn more from Allison's book to return to it with a broader understanding gleaned from additional reading. Still, upon rereading my original 2011 review, I decided that there was nothing I wanted to change upon rereading the book upon its incorporation into the "Very Short Introductions" series. Accordingly, the remainder of this review consists of my October 1, 2011 review of the first edition of this book, titled, appropriately enough, "A Short Introduction to the American Revolution".

The American Revolution and the Civil War remain the definitive events of United States history. Students can, and have, spent lifetimes trying to understand one or the other. In an attempt to provide brief introductions or refreshers for busy people, Oxford University Press has published "concise" histories of both the Civil War and the American Revolution, with each volume consisting of about 100 pages. Louis Masur of Trinity College wrote the volume on the Civil War, while Robert Allison, Professor of History at Suffolk University, is the author of the book I am reviewing here, "The American Revolution: A Concise History" (2011). It is worth reading both books for a quick reminder of the seminal events which made the United States. Allison's book consists of 94 pages of text together with an excellent, detailed chronology of "Important Dates in the American Revolution" from 1754 -- 1826" and a good basic bibliography for further reading. In terms of time covered, the scope of this book is longer than the Civil War and probably more varied. The book begins with the founding of the colonies and the differences among them, Britain's initial neglect of the 13 Atlantic colonies in favor of the colonies in the Caribbean or India, followed by the French-Indian War and Britain's attempt to tax the colonies and play a somewhat larger role in their affairs. This is followed by an account of the rebellion, the decision for independence, and the Revolutionary War. Subsequent chapters cover the Constitutional convention and touch upon the presidencies of Washington, Adams, and Jefferson. The book concludes with an account of the Marquis de Lafayette's visit to the United States in 1824-1825, and his relationship to the nation that he had helped win independence many years earlier. The book is best and most detailed in its earlier chapters up to through the war. Allison is balanced in his presentation of the dispute between Britain and its rebellious colonies. He describes the events leading to the Revolution in terms of both economics and politics on the one hand and the power of ideas of independence and freedom on the other hand. The portions on the book on the Constitution and its aftermath are briefed and rushed. They might well have been the subject of a separate "concise history." Allison gives attention to many of the people who made the Revolution including Franklin, Adams, Jefferson, Thomas Paine, Patrick Henry, James Madison and John Dickinson among others. He also pays attention to the larger body of people, including women and African Americans, and their role. The figure receiving most attention is George Washington, as Allison praises his character, leadership skills, and inspired generalship in the Revolution against a larger, better-equipped army. Washington has been the subject of some critical, deflationary attention of late. It is valuable in this book to be reminded of his virtues and of his pivotal importance for the Revolution and its aftermath. It is difficult to sum up the importance of the American Revolution in a few words, but Allison makes a valiant attempt. He writes in his Preface: "The American protests over taxes and government produced a new kind of political system in which the majority governs, but individuals maintain their liberty." He continues: "The story of individuals protecting their rights in a system where the majority governs begins in the Revolution, when men and women set out to protect their liberty by mobilizing their neighbors and public opinion." In his final chapter titled "Was America Different?", Allison continues his reflections on the significance of the Revolution as he discusses the unique character of American religious toleration in the early days of the Republic, and the development of American constitutionalism. He discusses in particular the decision at the Constitutional Convention against including a provision restricting the right to vote to landowners. This decision permitted the rise of democracy. Allison has written a short, thoughtful book that serves its purpose of reminding readers of the nature and importance of the American Revolution. Robin Friedman

Here is a brisk, accessible, and vivid introduction to arguably the most important event in the history of the United States--the American Revolution. Between 1760 and 1800, the American people cast off British rule to create a new nation and a radically new form of government based on the idea that people have the right to govern themselves. In this lively account, Robert Allison provides a cohesive synthesis of the military, diplomatic, political, social, and intellectual aspects of the Revolution, paying special attention to the Revolution's causes and consequences. The book recreates the tumultuous events of the 1760s and 1770s that led to revolution, such as the Boston Massacre and the Boston Tea Party, as well as the role the Sons of Liberty played in turning resistance into full-scale revolt. Allison explains how and why Americans changed their ideas of government and society so profoundly in these years and how the War for Independence was fought and won. He highlights the major battles and commanders on both sides--with a particular focus on George Washington and the extraordinary strategies he developed to defeat Britain's superior forces--as well as the impact of French military support on the American cause. In the final chapter, Allison explores the aftermath of the American Revolution: how the newly independent states created governments based on the principles for which they had fought, and how those principles challenged their own institutions, such as slavery, in the new republic. He considers as well the Revolution's legacy, the many ways its essential ideals influenced other struggles against oppressive power or colonial systems in France, Latin America, and Asia. Sharply written and highly readable, *The American Revolution: A Very Short Introduction* offers a concise introduction to this seminal event in American history.

About the Series: Oxford's Very Short Introductions series offers concise and original introductions to a wide range of subjects--from Islam to Sociology, Politics to Classics, Literary Theory to History, and Archaeology to the Bible. Not simply a textbook of definitions, each volume in this series provides trenchant and provocative--yet always balanced and complete--discussions of the central issues in a given discipline or field. Every Very Short Introduction gives a readable evolution of the subject in question, demonstrating how the subject has developed and how it has influenced society. Eventually, the series will encompass every major academic discipline, offering all students an accessible and abundant reference library. Whatever the area of study that one deems important or appealing, whatever the topic that fascinates the general reader, the Very Short Introductions series has a handy and affordable guide that will likely prove indispensable.

"[Authors] have produced centuries of works on this subject, but none of the comprehensive descriptions are as surprisingly crisp as Robert J. Allison's version...Allison's organization of the book is excellent...Only outdone by his excellent organization is Allison's experience with this subject, which is qualitatively displayed throughout the book...Allison is an expert writer, and has produced a summary that captures most prevailing historical accounts in good form." --*Army History*"Robert Allison's volume serves as an ideal introduction to the American Revolution. All the central events and participants come alive in this brisk narrative that illuminates the origins and meaning of the War for Independence." --Louis P. Masur, Trinity College"Anyone looking for a compact, highly conceptualized, readable history of the American Revolution and its aftermath needs to look no further than *The American Revolution: A Concise History*. I would never have imagined that so big a picture could be conveyed in so few words, but Bob Allison has done it. That he has accomplished this feat without losing the voices and the character of individual people is an amazement indeed. A fine book." --Fred Anderson, University of Colorado, Boulder"This highly readable account is ideal for general readers and can also be utilized for college survey courses in U.S. history." --*Booklist*"A scholar has to master a lot of material to present it so concisely and authoritatively, and Allison's book is one of the best places to get a reliable introduction to the Revolution and the Constitution." --Thomas S. Kidd, *Books and Culture*

About the Author Robert J. Allison is Professor of History at Suffolk University. His books include *The Crescent Obscured: The United States and the Muslim World, 1776-1815* (OUP, 1995); *Stephen Decatur, American Naval Hero, 1779-1820* (2005); *A Short History of Boston* (2005); and *Revolutionary Sites of Greater Boston* (2005). He lives in Boston, MA.