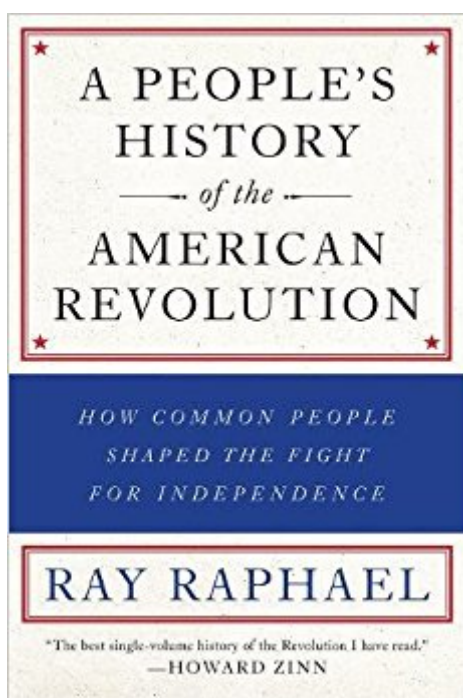


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# A People's History Of The American Revolution: How Common People Shaped The Fight For Independence



## Synopsis

Upon its first publication in 2001 as the inaugural volume in The New Press People's History series, edited by the late Howard Zinn, Ray Raphael's magisterial A People's History of the American Revolution was hailed by Fresh Air as "relentlessly aggressive and unsentimental." With impeccable skill, Raphael presented a wide array of fascinating scholarship within a single volume, employing a bottom-up approach that has served as a revelation to thousands of Americans. A People's History of the American Revolution draws upon diaries, personal letters, and other Revolutionary-era treasures, weaving a thrilling, "you are there" narrative—a tapestry that uses individual experiences to illustrate the larger stories—(Los Angeles Times Book Review). In the trademark style of Howard Zinn, Raphael shifts the focus away from George Washington and Thomas Jefferson to the slaves they owned, the Indians they displaced, and the men and boys who did the fighting. This "remarkable perspective on a familiar part of American history" (Kirkus) helps us appreciate more fully the incredible diversity of the American Revolution by helping us see it through different sets of eyes.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

California-based writer Raphael (An Everyday History of Somewhere; etc.) offers an accessible study of the American Revolution, as part of a series edited by Howard Zinn, and in the tradition of his A People's History of the United States. Most books on the Revolution focus on generals and

kings, although scholars have, in the last two decades, turned some of their attention to the lives of ordinary people. Raphael transforms the best insights of that scholarship into a lively, readable narrative. Yes, kings and generals were important, but it was the people at large who brought about American independence. Even before the war started, ordinary people were involved in protesting British abuses, refusing to consume tea and other British luxury items. Women supported the Revolution by spinning their own cloth (rather than buying it from Britain) and working the farms their husbands left behind when the militia called them to the front. Young men eager to "git" their rights uncomplainingly subsisted on moldy bread while they camped out in the snow, waiting to encounter Redcoats. White colonists weren't the only Americans affected by the war. Abenaki Indians, for example, were paid to fight alongside the rebels. Raphael also shows how many slaves, infected with the freedom-fighting spirit, bid unsuccessfully for their own independence via insurrections, escape and reasoning. Both English and American armies wanted the slaves' loyalties, and the slaves, in turn, believed that if they served the winning side, they would gain freedom. Moving from broad overviews to stories of small groups or individuals, Raphael's study is impressive in both its sweep and its attention to the particular. The book will delight, educate and entertain all Revolution buffs. (Apr.) Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Raphael (*Men from the Boys: Rites of Passage in Male America*) narrates the American Revolution from the eyes of the common people who, without wealth, authority, or privilege defined and shaped the Revolution. He argues that the Revolution was largely the product not of the patrician classes of Virginia or New England but of the common people. Through letters, diaries, and other accounts, Raphael shows these individuals—white women and men of the farming and laboring classes, free and enslaved African Americans, Native Americans, loyalists, and religious pacifists—acting for or against the Revolution and enduring a war that compounded the difficulties of everyday life and that resulted in a higher percentage of American civilian and military deaths than any of America's other wars except the Civil War. Written for the lay reader, this work synthesizes recent historical scholarship on the Revolution and maintains the high standards of editor Howard Zinn's "People's History" series. Strongly recommended for public and academic libraries. DCharles L. Lumpkins, Pennsylvania State Univ., State College Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

One of the wonderful things to emerge out of Howard Zinn's focus on the struggles of the

common people in history was the bottom up approach to studying history. Zinn was not responsible for this view alone, but his seminal work *A People's History of the United States* played a very important role in popularizing the history of ordinary people in extraordinary times. Ray Raphael continued that tradition with this volume concerning the American Revolution. Part of Zinn's *A People's History* series, *American Revolution* explores the period through the actions of common people. The result is a very different view of the Revolution. Raphael explores the history of ordinary Americans in the time of the American Revolution in seven chapters. From the very beginning of the Revolution in the time of the Stamp Act through the Spirit of '75, women, loyalists, Native Americans, and African-Americans, he explores how the actions of these common people affected the course of the era. The result is a fascinating exploration of history that often is overlooked or downplayed by history books. Gone are the Great Men of History and in their place are men and women who had to make decisions for their own interests and needs. This is a great book in the sense that it can complement political histories or grand narratives by providing a view to the role of people in the Revolution. That is the best way I think the bottom up approach to history can work. As a college professor, one of the classes I teach is the survey course which covers a huge amount of time in a relatively short period of time. We often have no recourse but to go with the larger view of history as a result. I have found that providing each student with a segment from this book and others like it gives them a glimpse into the ways common people reacted to the events around them. In this way they can begin to understand that history is really nothing more than the actions of millions of people over time. Some of those people are well known to us while many others are not, but all of their actions are what makes history, not just that of a few. I particularly like how Raphael explores the history of the Stamp Act riots that took place in Boston of 1766. He explains the role of Ebenezer MacIntosh in orchestrating those riots. Yet, most Americans have never heard of this man and what he did. Without Ebenezer's actions, these riots might not have taken place or been directed against the Stamp Act. Without them, it becomes difficult to say what might have happened. Suddenly, the role of a common becomes important to how things occurred in history. There are many more tales like this in the book. That is what really stands out. It is a collection of stories and that makes for great history. This was not a good/evil or black/white event. There were many shades of grey before, during, and after the period. People had widely varying reactions to the event itself and acted accordingly. Don't believe me? Read for yourself and you can begin to understand why people did what they did. Even better, learn how some of these actions would have ramifications for events that transpired long after these people passed away. The book is easy to read too. Raphael made good use of sources, but instead

of writing like a closeted academic he focused on telling a story. The result is a good, fact filled, and entertaining view of history that often eludes many historians' attempts. I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book and found many uses for it in my history classes.

Many times an author will write a book based on numerous other books where authors interpret circumstances that are the relied upon by other authors. The results are a variations of the facts. However, in this book you are reading the actual words of the people of that time. You get their feelings as well as true facts. A great read, a great piece of the whole picture, for the inquisitive as well as historians. You'll come away telling people "Did you know that.....?"

Ray Raphael is a remarkable writer and incredible historian who has a gift for being able to bring history alive. He cuts through all the glamorized versions of our history that we've been fed throughout our lives by clearly describing things as they most assuredly must have happened. He's refreshing and compelling. That's why this is an additional copy I ordered just to share with friends.

I live on an Island in the middle of the ocean. I do not choose expedited service unless I need it immediately. I did not choose expedited for this item and it came very quickly. This is a must read book if you want to know the other side of the story of the founding of our country; you know, the one not told by the rich aristocrats who stole our country from us in 2007, 2008, 2009. They didn't steal it from us in those years, they stole it from us in 1776 to 1789. They stole it from us when they wrote the Constitution. It is very sad and eye opening. It may well change your view of being an American as it has mine,

This book gave an interesting view of what the war was like for the ordinary people. It also pointed out to me that from the beginning the US government has not treated veterans well and from the beginning it has given special privileges to the rich while not caring about the average people.

Interesting read. Not a historical main course, however. More like a side dish. Use it as a supplement to other history books.

I really enjoyed the subject matter. I highly recommend to anyone who wants to understand the way average person lived during the hardship time.

Interesting perspective

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