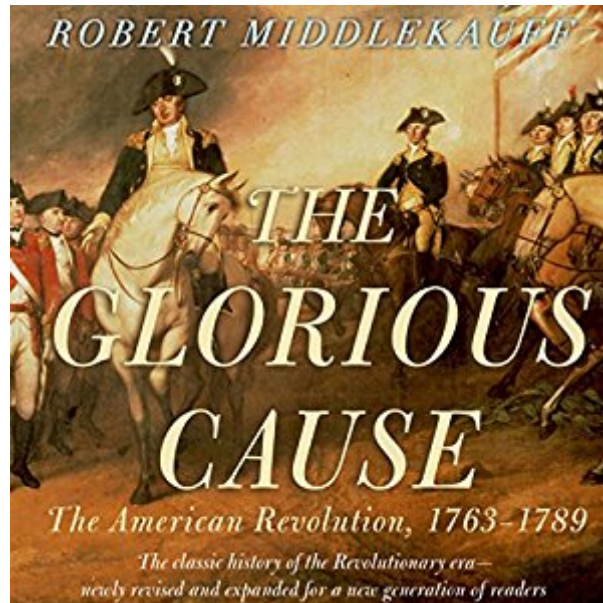


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The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution: 1763-1789



Synopsis

The first book to appear in the illustrious Oxford History of the United States, this critically-acclaimed volume - a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize - offers an unsurpassed history of the Revolutionary War and the birth of the American republic. This panoramic view of the conflict between England and America combines the political and the personal, giving the listener a vivid sense of how the colonists perceived the events of their struggle for independence, from the French and Indian War to "the shot heard round the world", and the importance the colonists assigned to them. Praised as "state of the art" and "the most distinguished series in American historical scholarship", the four new volumes of the Oxford History of the United States - including *The Glorious Cause* - are narrated with engagingly casual warmth by Robert Fass, who previously read an earlier volume in the series, *Empire of Liberty*, by Gordon S. Wood. Please note: The individual volumes of the series have not been published in historical order. *The Glorious Cause* is number III in *The Oxford History of the United States*.

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Customer Reviews

The inaugural volume of the highly honored but still unfinished "Oxford History Of The United States" series is "The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789," a superbly written, scholarly, and highly literate account of the America's War for Independence. Written by Robert L. Middlekauff, Professor of History... this is the finest account of the Revolutionary War I've found to date... even better than Benson Bobrick's "Angel in the Whirlwind," which I've already reviewed."The

"The Glorious Cause" is a comprehensive account of the American Revolution designed to give readers a well rounded overview of not only the causes of the war, but also of how the war was fought. The book succeeds admirably at its task. After finishing "The Glorious Cause," I felt a much greater appreciation for the men and women whose struggle for freedom brought forth on the North American continent a new and independent nation - the United States of America. "The Glorious Cause" begins by examining the causes of the American Revolution. In one of the book's earliest chapters, entitled "The Children of the Twice Born," Middlekauff carefully lays out his closely reasoned and well argued thesis: that the seeds of revolution were planted long before the war was actually fought. Those seeds, embodied in the economic, social, political, and religious fabric of American society, made the evolution to democracy on the North American continent almost inevitable. The earliest settlers came to the New World because of their disenchantment with authoritarian English laws and what they viewed as centralized, overly ritualistic, dogmatic Anglican religion.

Middlekauff has read deeply in the history of the American revolution and the early republic. Moreover, he is interested in more than just a simple narrative; he is interested in causes and motives, as he shows in chaps. 20 and 21 of this book, which discusses why soldiers fought instead of ran. Unfortunately, the narrative in this book has holes, and Middlekauff often fails to put people and personalities into context, making the reading less interesting than it should be. He also makes high demands on readers' attention; this, plus the holes, made the book heavy going at times. Here are some examples of holes: 1) In his discussion of the Intolerable Acts, Middlekauff fails to say what the Quebec Act was, yet on pp. 239 and 280 he assumes you know. 2) 471: "They all knew what happened to Buford's men at Waxhaws when they tried to run away." This is the only time "Buford" and "Waxhaws" are mentioned in the book. 3) 340: "June also brought William Howe back to New York." I can't find where it says Howe had been in New York before. 4) 462: "Some hint of what was coming was given ...when the victors, shouting 'Tarleton's Quarter,' shot and stabbed the wounded..." There is no explanation of this anywhere in the book. 478: "... Lee's Legion rode in. Greene once more had his army in one piece." This is the first time that "Lee's Legion" is mentioned. I had to look in the index to find out that "Lee" was Henry Lee. It never explains how he got a legion. The last time we saw him, on 417, he was foraging in Delaware. No context for people and personalities: Isaac Barre gives a speech supporting the colonies in parliament (74-75), but Middlekauff never tells us who he is or why he speaks so strongly.

After hearing the Schoolhouse Rock favorite, "The Shot Heard Round the World" about 500 times on a trip recently (I have young kids), I just had to get a good book on the American Revolution. I chose this book, the first in the Oxford History of America Series, "The Glorious Cause" by Robert Middlekauff from several at my local bookstore (don't worry, I buy a lot of books from you, too). I chose it in large part because the publisher was Oxford, who generally puts out great books and series. Overall, the book did not disappoint, but it was not quite as good as the dust jacket led me to believe. First, the good: the language and flow is excellent. In the sense of just sitting back and reading - it's a good one. The vocabulary level is pretty high, but you won't need to reach for the dictionary often. The book seems incredibly-well researched. It was clear that Middlekauff is VERY well read on this subject and period, and the footnoting is well-done. I really like being able to follow up on the sources he used and he is generous and thorough in sharing them. Also, he spends a lot of time on the events leading up to the war. Although one reviewer feels that four chapters on the Stamp Act is too much, it actually almost wasn't enough for me! I say that because if you believe what Middlekauff first states (and seems to be true from other readings), that the American people had NO desire to secede from Britain early on, then you must wonder how they got so quickly (relatively speaking) to a course of action as radical as a fight for independence! So I believe the time spent on that period is critical and interesting. The details of the battles are excellent, and generally, any material he provides is thoughtful and interesting.

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