



Discussion Questions

1776

by David McCullough

Source: Madison Public Library

1. Why do you think that McCullough chooses to begin 1776 with King George III of England? How does this set the tone for the historical events about to unfold?
2. Describe the differences between the British and Colonial armies. Did the untrained, impromptu existence of the Colonial army give it any advantages over the British? What kind of insight into the military experience did the wealth of letters and other first hand sources McCullough provide?
3. One of the key figures in McCullough's account is General George Washington. Did 1776 change your perspective on Washington? How would you describe Washington's character? Do you think that Washington was a good leader? Do you think that there was anything particular about Washington that enabled him to turn a losing battle into a victory?
4. What kind of men were Nathanael Green and Henry Knox? What was their role in the success of the military? Why do you think Washington selected out these two untrained men above others and despite his distaste for New Englanders?
5. Did any of the events during the year of 1776 surprise you? Has reading about the military's experience altered your view of the events that were simultaneously taking place in Philadelphia? How do you think the soldiers later felt about the 4th of July as a holiday, knowing that they did not receive news of the Declaration of Independence until well after the 4th?
6. How did you find the pace of the book? Did McCullough's method of having events unfold make you feel you were living in 1776?

7. After writing such lengthy books on figures such as John Adams (751 pages) and Harry Truman (1117 pages) were you surprised at the short length of this book? Does he accomplish all the reader needs in these 386 pages? If you read the previous longer biographies: were they overly long?