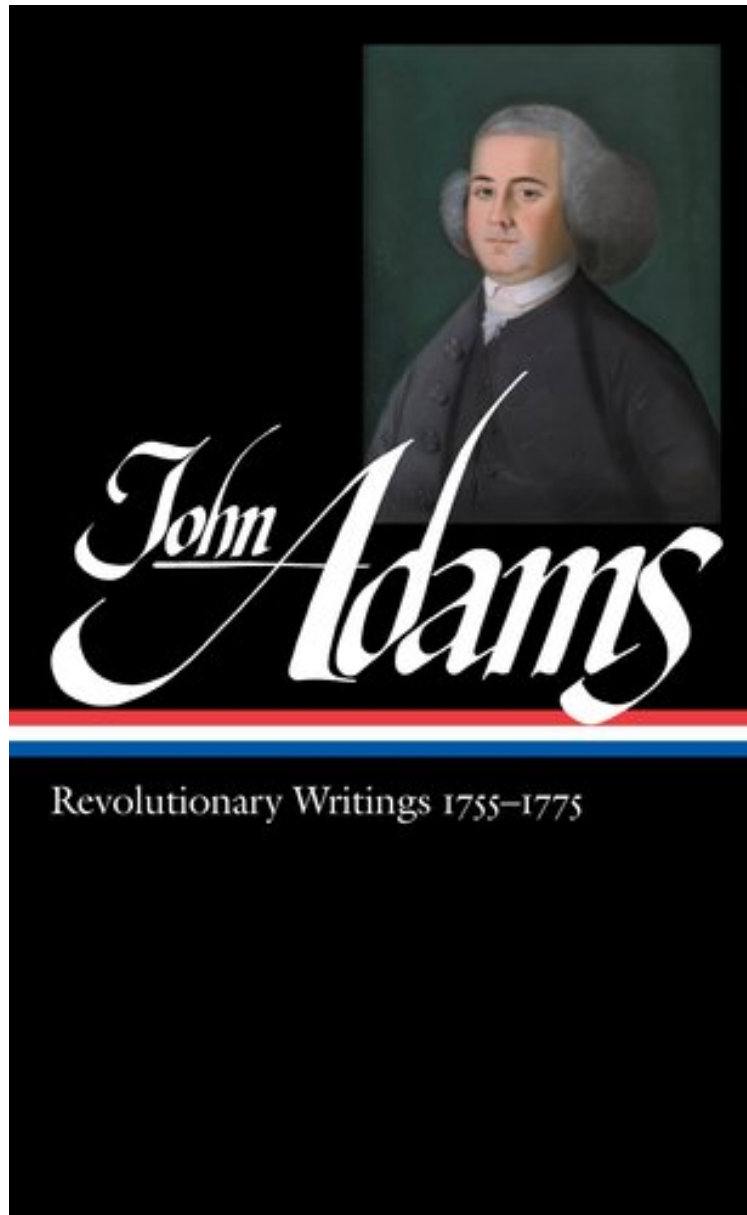


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John Adams

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John Adams : John Adams: Revolutionary Writings, 1755-1775 (Library of America, No. 213) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised John Adams: Revolutionary Writings, 1755-1775 (Library of America, No. 213):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Great Way to Get to Know John Adams! By Aletheno I wrote my doctoral dissertation on the political thought of John Adams many moons ago and possess all of his writings in their unabridged form, but wanted just what this three-volume set provides — a chronological integration of correspondence, essays, and major works intelligently edited to provide a good picture of the range and nature of Adams as a scholar and student of ancient, medieval, and modern political thought and practice. The three volumes together form a generally accurate, if not entirely complete, picture of Adams, the thinker, which may stand as a valuable resource for the appreciation of his many contributions to the independence movement, the Revolution, and to the shaping of the debate over the principles of the Constitution of 1787. Readers will be rewarded by the discovery of a founder whose intellect has been largely buried by his biographers who have emphasized his public and private life to accord with Jefferson's friend-and-foe quips about Adams's affable as well as his irascible character. It is long since time that those interested in the founding pantheon are given the means to appreciate John Adams, the political philosopher and wise student of human nature. Gordon Wood and The Library of America has made that unknown John Adams widely accessible. 13 of 14 people found the following review helpful. John Adams in his own Words By Robin Friedman David McCollough's best-selling biography made John Adams (1735 -- 1826) a revered figure to many Americans. With the Library of America's publication of two volumes of Adams' "Revolutionary Writings", readers will have the opportunity to get to know Adams through his own words and thought. Gordon Wood, the distinguished Pulitzer-Prize winning historian of early America and Professor Emeritus at Brown University has prepared and selected the texts, provided a detailed chronology of Adams' life, and added brief explanatory notes to the selections. The first volume in the set, which I will discuss in this review, covers the years 1755, when Adams was a student at the age of 20, through 1775, while Adams was serving in the Continental Congress. The second volume John Adams: Revolutionary Writings 1775-1783 (Library of America, No. 214) continues with Adams' service in the Continental Congress and concludes in 1783 with the negotiation of the treaty of peace with Great Britain and the winning of American independence. There is a great deal to be digested in these volumes, but there is much more to learn about Adams that is outside their scope. The volumes do not cover the Constitutional period, Adams' vice-presidency and presidency, his long, productive period of retirement, and many of his lengthy later works of political philosophy. For all the virtues of this collection, much of Adams remains to be discovered. The letters Adams exchanged late in life with Thomas Jefferson, for example, are ripe with wisdom and are important in understanding early America and the long, eventful relationship between these two Founders. In reading these two volumes, the persistent reader can hear Adams' own words and consider his achievements and thought. This opening book consists of 72 letters together with diary entries, newspaper articles, essays, and public messages. The volume is in three broad sections, the first of which is titled "Lawyer and Patriot" and covers the years 1755 -- 1774. The second section is titled "The Continental Congress" and covers extensively the years 1774 -- 1775. The third section includes selections from Adam's unfinished autobiography, written in 1802, which track the events covered in the text. In his letters, Adams revealed a great deal of himself, including his frequently conflicting traits of ambition, vanity, honesty, and commitment to public service and to making something useful of his life. Thus, in the early selections of the book, the reader gets to know Adams as a young man struggling with his career choices as he determines to become a lawyer, with his religious faith, and with his ambition. The volume also touches upon his courtship of Abigail Smith, whom Adams married in 1764. Abigail and her frequently absent husband exchanged many revealing letters, as she became his famous helpmeet and confidant. The book covers an eventful period in pre-revolutionary America and Massachusetts as Adams, a diligent, eloquent, and successful young lawyer, rose to a position of prominence. After the French-Indian war, Britain began to tax the American colonies beginning with the Stamp Act of 1764. This tax, and subsequent actions would lead to the rupture with Britain and ultimately to independence. From the beginning, this volume shows, Adams was active in the Revolutionary movement and in protecting the colonies against what he perceived as tyranny from Great Britain. Many of Adams' essays and newspaper articles supportive of the early revolutionary cause are included here. They begin with the early, tongue-in-cheek essays under the name of "Humphrey Ploughjobber" and progress to a still important work, Adams' "Dissertation on the Canon and the Feudal Law" of 1765, which sets forth Adams' understanding of the British constitution and of the abuses Britain was perpetuating in the colonies. The volume also includes a lengthy series of essays in which Adams explains his understanding of judicial independence and how he believed it was threatened by continuing acts of Parliament. The longest section of this volume consists of essays Adams published in 1775 under the name of "Novanglus". The Novanglus essays were replies to essays written by one Daniel Leonard under the name of "Massachusettensis". Adams knew Leonard, but at the time of the exchange he did not know that Leonard had written these essays. The Massachusettensis and the Novanglus essays are included in their entirety. In 1819, Adams himself collected and published them in a book. The subject of the exchanges is, broadly, the political and legal relationship between Britain and the colonies and about whether the colonies were justified in attempting to declare their independence. At one time, Leonard had sympathized with independence, but he wrote in "Massachusettensis" as a strong Loyalist. He argued that Britain had the legal and moral right to legislate for the colonies and that Britain's governance of the colonies had been, on the whole, mild and beneficent. He criticized Adams and his fellow revolutionists as

incendiaries and feared that they would bring disaster to themselves and to the colonists. Adams, for his part, in long torturous and difficult essays largely denied Britain's right to legislate for the colonies and denied its power to tax because the colonies had no representation in Parliament. Adams was critical of Britain's governance and argued that a cabal had been formed in the colonies and in Britain to reduce the colonies to subjection and to establish tyranny. The learning and arguments of both *Massachusettensis* and *Novanglus* are prodigious. To my reading, Adams does not always get the better of the argument. These essays are difficult and wordy, but they capture much of what was at issue between Britain and her colonies. They also show the role of Adams in the struggle. Adams' thought shows revolutionary fervor and a commitment to representative government. It also exhibits a deep skepticism about human nature and a fear that the different economic groups in society would tend towards tyranny or anarchy unless they were made part of a mixed government with strong checks and balances among the potential factions. The tensions in Adams' political thinking make it both difficult and rewarding. It resists easy categorization. I conclude this review by quoting from the last paragraph of a "Draft of an Essay on Power" which Adams wrote in 1763. In 1807, Adams returned to this product of his youth to declare that "this last paragraph has been the Creed of my whole Life and is now March 27, 1807 as much approved as it was when it was written by John Adams." Adams wrote, in his 1763 draft essay as follows.(p. 90)" No simple Form of government, can possibly secure Men against the Violences of Power. Simple Monarchy will soon mould itself into Despotism, Aristocracy will soon commence an Oligarchy, and Democracy, will soon degenerate into an Anarchy, such an Anarchy that every Man will do what is right in his own Eyes, and no Mans life or Property or Reputation or Liberty will be secure and every one of these will soon mould itself into a system of subordination of all the moral Virtues, and Intellectual abilities, all the Powers of Wealth, Beauty, Wit and Science, to the wanton Pleasures, the capricious Will, and the execrable Cruelty of one or a very few". This selection of Adams' early writings makes for serious, sustained reading and thought. A good background in American history will be beneficial in reading this book. The Library of America and Wood deserve gratitude for making this volume and its companion volume of Adams' Revolutionary Writings accessible to lay readers. The book will reward readers interested in the Founders and in American history and political thought. Robin Friedman² of 2 people found the following review helpful. Founding Father' Views By Tony Marquise Jr. No man, except George Washington, did more than John Adams to spark the fire that started the Revolution and carry the war to victory. This book shows Adam's thoughts about these events and how to overcome America's foes. A higher recommendation cannot be given to any book about this period in America's history.

Propelled by the power of his pen and the clarity of his judgment, an ambitious young provincial lawyer named John Adams became a major figure in the American Revolution. This first of two volumes gathering his essential writings to 1783 includes the complete newspaper exchange between "Novanglus" (Adams) and "Massachusettensis" (Loyalist Daniel Leonard), as well as extensive diary excerpts and characteristically frank personal letters-many to his "dearest friend" Abigail-that convey the excitement and danger of the mounting crisis with Britain, from the Stamp Act riots of 1765, to the Boston Massacre and Tea Party, to the First Continental Congress, where Adams became a leader of the patriot cause. A companion volume carries the story forward to the Peace Treaty of 1783.

About the Author John Adams (1735-1826), educated as a lawyer at Harvard, was the Massachusetts delegate to the First and Second Continental Congresses. During the Revolutionary War, he served abroad in diplomatic roles and helped negotiate the peace treaty. After serving as Vice President for two terms under George Washington, he was subsequently elected President.