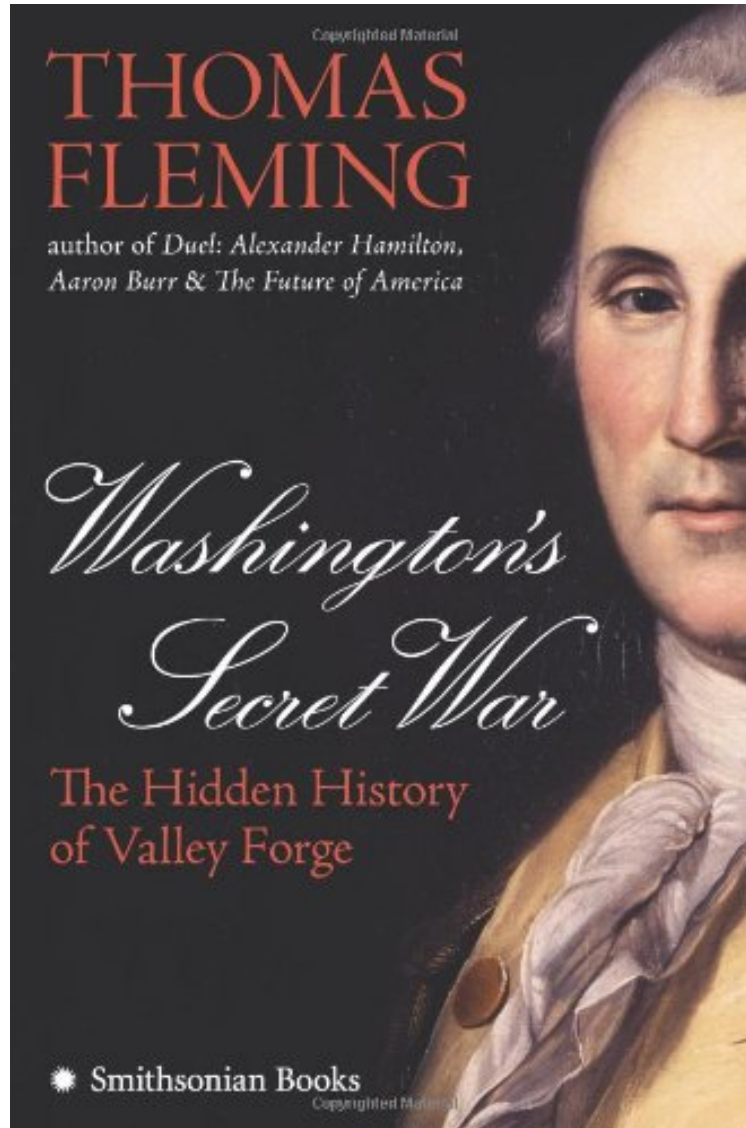


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Washington's Secret War: The Hidden History of Valley Forge

Thomas Fleming

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Thomas Fleming : Washington's Secret War: The Hidden History of Valley Forge before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Washington's Secret War: The Hidden History of Valley Forge:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. The battles behind the scenes.By Stone DogThomas Fleming's "Washington's Secret War" is an excellent work of history that looks behind the scenes, beyond the battles, the starvation of Valley Forge", the stories we've all been told.The author gives us an eyes-wide-open view of the founding fathers at odds with each other and, most importantly, at odds with their commander-in-chief. Most

Americans aren't aware of the crisis in confidence the Congress had in regard to George Washington's leadership of the Continental Army and, indeed, the strategy of meeting the British army in formal battles. There were even some proposing a war of partisan bands and guerrillas. I think Fleming does a good job of showing how George Washington's leadership was being questioned after the previous year's defeats and the loss of Philadelphia - the continental Capital. Add to this the victory at Saratoga which elevated (wrongly) the status of Gen. Horatio Gates, and the infant nation faced a real dilemma. There was a cabal trying to replace Washington with Gates and this had more support than most Americans now realize. There were officers within the army, most notably Thomas Conway and Thomas Mifflin, who disliked Washington and saw him as weak and ineffectual. There were members of Congress who would have joined with these men to replace Washington. In the meantime, Congress was almost completely incapable of helping Washington keep his army together. Congress had printed so much currency that it became worthless and difficulties arose in trying to purchase enough supplies to feed, cloth and keep the army in shoes, gunpowder and rum (more important than you'd expect!). The stories of men naked, shoeless and freezing are mostly true, at least initially. The fact of the matter is that the Continental Army was disintegrating due to desertions, disease and enlistments ending for large numbers of troops. What was amazing is that the author reveals how Washington became a masterful politician in order to keep the army together, prevent his authority from being stripped and preventing the Congress from diverting from his strategy of meeting the British in face-to-face engagements and maintaining the initiative. This is a good book that shows the battles behind the curtain that could have easily derailed the revolution. A great read and great history. Five stars. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. One of the Best books on this War. By Sam One of the most fascinating books that I have read on the American Revolutionary War. Very well written, reading almost like a novel. This is not a book about battles that General Washington fought but one about political intrigue. I believe even people who enjoy reading about the American Revolutionary War battles but not into politics of that era will still find this book outstanding and very interesting. Book focuses on General Washington's relationship with the Continental Congress and the men who were determined to take Washington's place as leader of the army such as Generals Charles Lee and Gates. Also the politicians who wanted to remove General Washington and the ones who fought to keep him as General, especially Henry Laurens and Washington's aide John Laurens. Absolutely fascinating reading about a different kind of battle that Washington fought to keep being general and to provide supplies and food for his men. This book shows the brilliance of General Washington, as a politician and an army leader. Book shows how he was betrayed by men he called close friends. I couldn't put the book down! One note: some historians believe that there was no conspiracy to replace General Washington. This book tries to prove different in regards to letters and actions by various officers and politicians. Regardless of your belief in this conspiracy, you will find the facts presented fascinating and well worth the time to read as it covers all who tried to replace this General. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. An engaging, well-balanced, and very intimate account... By Kindle Customer As soon as I began reading, I felt myself immersed within a world that must have, in its time, felt like it was unravelling. From the intrigue in the Congress and amongst the generals to the very vivid and unrelentingly painful account of Valley Forge, Fleming masterfully painted a harrowing picture of the innumerable obstacles General Washington faced. Artfully presenting the historical account in a sympathetic, powerful, sometimes humorous manner, the author succeeds in showing us a world, a people, and a beleaguered yet determined general through very human eyes. It was a very enjoyable read.

"Congress does not trust me. I cannot continue thus," George Washington confided to Congressman Francis Dana of Massachusetts on his first visit to Valley Forge. Though Congressman Dana assured the general that a majority in Congress still had faith in him, he was nonetheless stunned by Washington's apparent defeatism. George Washington's threat to resign during the fateful winter at Valley Forge is just one of the many revelations awaiting the reader in Thomas Fleming's startling new book. Prize-winning author of "Liberty The American Revolution" and "1776: Year of Illusions," Thomas Fleming has returned to the American Revolution, demolishing long-accepted fictions of Valley Forge and cutting through layers of myth to reveal a hitherto unknown side of George Washington. The defining moments of the Revolutionary War did not occur on the battlefield or at the diplomatic table, claims Fleming, but at Valley Forge. Fleming transports his readers to December 1777. While the British army lives in luxury in conquered Philadelphia, Washington's troops huddle in the barracks of Valley Forge, fending off starvation and disease even as threats of mutiny swirl through the regiments. Though his army stands on the edge of collapse, Washington must wage a secondary war, this one against the slander of his reputation as a general and a patriot. Readers watch as Washington strategizes not only against the British army, but against the ambitions of General Horatio Gates, the victor in the battle of Saratoga. Gates has attracted a coterie of ambitious generals who are devising ways to humiliate and embarrass Washington into resignation. Using diaries and letters, Fleming creates an unforgettable portrait of an embattled Washington. Far from the long-suffering stoic of historical myth, Washington responds to attacks from Gates and his allies with the dexterity of a master politician. He parries the thrusts of his covert enemies and, when necessary, strikes back with ferocity and guile. While many histories portray Washington as a man who transcended politics, Fleming's Washington is an exceedingly complex man, a man whose political maneuvering allowed him to

retain his command, even as he simultaneously struggled to prevent the Continental Army from dissolving into mutiny at Valley Forge. Written with his customary flair and eye for human detail and drama, Thomas Fleming's gripping narrative develops with the authority of a major historian and the skills of a master storyteller. "Washington's Secret War" is not only a revisionist view of the American ordeal at Valley Forge--it calls for a new assessment of the man too often simplified into an unreal American legend. This is narrative history at its best and most vital.

From Publishers Weekly Starred . Fleming enhances his position as a leading general-audience historian of the American Revolution in this convincing argument for the importance of internal diplomacy in the conflict's development. Like David McCullough's *1776*, Fleming's volume depicts Valley Forge as the revolution's turning point, with the fulcrum being George Washington's ability to develop "a new kind of leadership" that combined military and political elements. Recognizing the limited applicability of European precedents in the new republic, Washington simultaneously had to revitalize an army on the point of collapse and energize a Continental Congress ignorant of how to conduct a war. He performed both feats while maintaining both his authority as commander-in-chief and the principle of military subordination to political authority. And, all the while, he managed to keep the British believing that conciliation was preferable to battle. Fleming credits Washington's achievement to a force of character that increasingly impressed soldiers and politicians alike, but even more to Washington's ability to persuade waverers and opponents to his point of view by using a "series of positive proposals, well researched and closely argued." Fleming's use of short chapters (one- to three-pages each) and lively prose helps keep the complicated political maneuvers easy to follow. (Oct. 25) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist George Washington's contemporaries regularly referred to his aura of gravitas, part of which was as an apparent ability to remain above the petty squabbles that characterize democratic politics. Yet, as Fleming indicates, that detachment from political warfare was mostly illusion. He focuses on the winter and spring of 1777-78, when the Continental Army was encamped in deprived, brutal conditions at Valley Forge. This, of course, was a turning point for both Washington and his army. Aided by Baron Von Steuben, the army emerged from their travails as a disciplined, professional fighting force. In Fleming's view, this was also the period when Washington honed his skills at political warfare. He was the target of constant criticism from members of the Continental Congress, and ambitious subordinates hoped to replace him. But Washington learned to give as good as he got, while still maintaining the appearance of aristocratic distance from the fray. Fleming has provided an original and provocative reinterpretation of a critical period in the struggle for independence. Jay Freeman Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved Fleming enhances his position as a leading general-audience historian of the American Revolution with this convincing argument. (Publishers Weekly (starred review)) Solid account of the political intrigue that threatened the American cause during the winter of 1777-78. (Boston Globe)