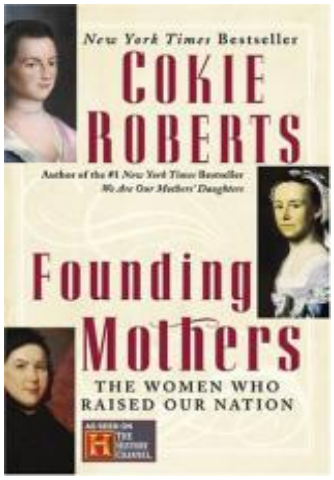
Founding Mothers: The Women Who Raised Our Nation

by Cokie Roberts



About the Book

In the histories of the American Revolution, much has been written about America's founding fathers, those brave men who signed the Declaration of Independence, battled the British, and framed the Constitution. Yet the wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters who supported, encouraged, and even advised them have been virtually ignored.

In **Founding Mothers**, New York Times bestselling author Cokie Roberts brings to light the stories of the women who fought the Revolution as valiantly as the men, sometimes even defending their very doorsteps from British occupation. While the men went off to war or to Congress, the women managed their husbands' businesses, ran the farms, and raised their children. These women who sacrificed for the fledgling nation spent months or even years apart from their husbands, at a time when letters were their only form of contact.

Drawing upon personal correspondence and private journals, **Founding Mothers** brings to life the everyday trials, extraordinary triumphs, and often surprising stories of Abigail Adams, Mercy Otis Warren, Deborah Reed Franklin, Eliza Pinckney, Martha Washington, and other patriotic and passionate women, each of whom played a role in raising our nation.

Discussion Guide

1. What inspired you to read **Founding Mothers**? Why do you suppose the contributions of women in the Revolutionary era have been largely overlooked by historians? Would the founding of the nation have occurred without these women?

2. Which woman would you say had the single greatest impact during the Revolution? How about during the first years of the new government?

3. Despite a lack of legal and social rights, including the right to own property and receive a formal education, how did the women presented in **Founding Mothers** assert their authority and exercise their intelligence?

4. How did life differ for women depending on where they lived --- the North versus the South, the city versus rural areas? How else did geographical circumstances impact their lives?

5. Women often accompanied their husbands to army camps during the war, including Martha Washington, Kitty Greene, and Lucy Knox. Were you surprised they chose to do this? How did these three women in particular contribute to the often harsh life of a military camp and foster the war efforts?

6. By telling the stories of our Founding Mothers, this book also sheds light on the men of the time. Did you learn anything new about these men, including Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, John Adams, and Alexander Hamilton, seeing them from the perspective of their female contemporaries?

7. How important was the "civilizing" role that women played in the years leading up to, during, and after the Revolution? Can you reference examples from the book that show how integral it was for the women to be able to step in and "calm down the men," or even to act as intermediaries, as Abigail Adams did in the dispute between her husband and James Madison?

8. Catharine Macaulay supported the American Revolution and was a vocal proponent of democratic governments in general. Why did Macaulay, an Englishwoman, take such an interest in the American cause? How did she contribute to it?

9. How did Martha Washington define the role of First Lady? Are her influences still evident today? Her political savvy was remarkable, but is there anything that can be learned from Martha Washington on a personal level?

10. Only a limited number of women could have accomplished what Abigail Adams and Mercy Otis Warren did -- those who had access to the men shaping the future of the nation. What about the women who didn't have the advantage of providing direct counsel or publishing their discourses? How did they contribute to the Revolutionary War and the founding of the nation?

11. Cokie Roberts intersperses her thoughts and commentary throughout the book. Does this enhance the narrative? In what ways?

Author Bio

Cokie Roberts is a political commentator for ABC News and NPR. She has won countless awards and in 2008 was named a "Living Legend" by the Library of Congress. She is the author of the *New York Times* bestsellers WE ARE OUR MOTHERS' DAUGHTERS; FOUNDING MOTHERS; LADIES OF LIBERTY; and, with her husband, the journalist Steven V. Roberts, FROM THIS DAY FORWARD and OUR HAGGADAH. She lives just outside of Washington, D.C.

Critical Praise

"[Roberts] creates a strong... case that without the patriotism of women on the home front, the Colonies would have lost the Revolutionary War... Founding Mothers is a series of entertaining mini-biographies and engaging vignettes."

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Publication Date: February 15, 2005
Paperback: 384 pages
Publisher: Harper Perennial
ISBN-10: 006009026X
ISBN-13: 9780060090265