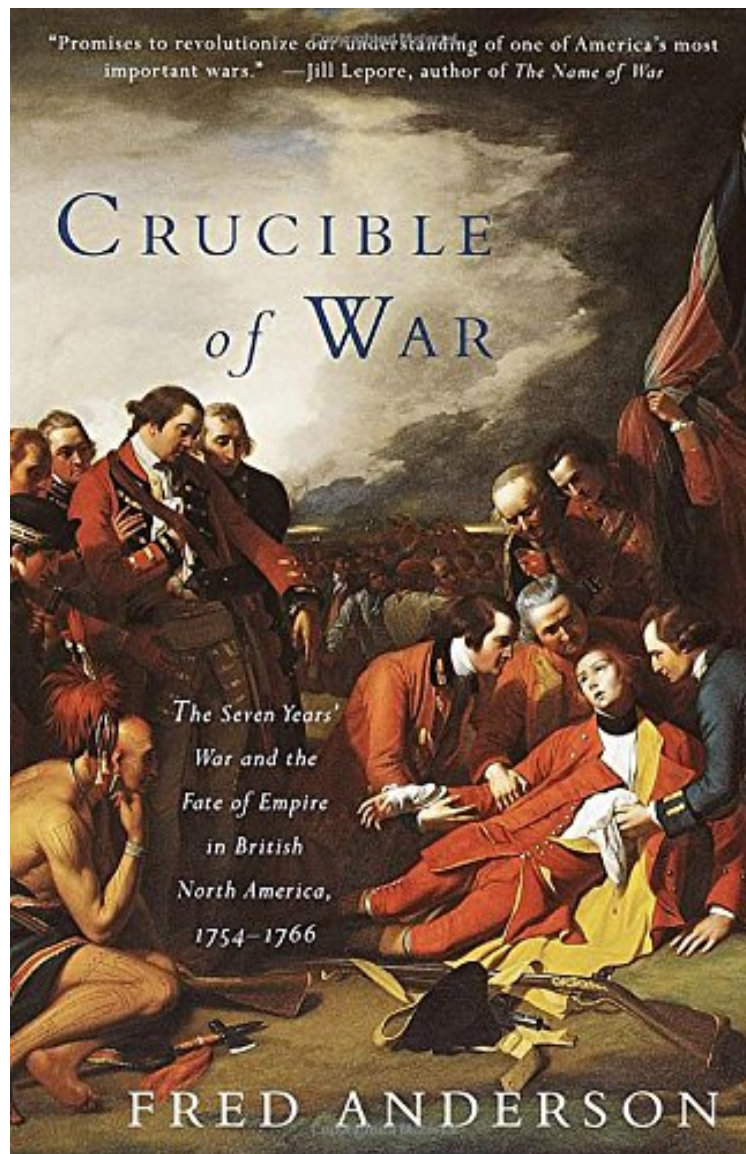


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Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766

Fred Anderson

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Fred Anderson : Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Thorough treatment of an overlooked episode in American history

By Roger Berlind
Fred Anderson has written a very thorough account of the Seven Years' War which is also known in North America as the French and Indian War. While American students generally hear about this war in their high school American History class, it is not really given much importance, being only briefly mentioned along with other wars and events that occurred between the founding of the British colonies and the American Revolution. Anderson makes it very clear, however, that the fighting of the war and its military, political, and economic outcomes had enormous ramifications on European and American history (as well as on the history of the Indian sub-continent). During the war itself, British officers had extensive and often disappointing interactions with American colonists who enlisted in American militia. This shaped the attitudes of key generals and members of Parliament at the beginning of the American Revolution who mostly had very negative views of American soldiers and believed that putting down the rebellion would be easy. More importantly, Britain incurred large debts during the war and was faced with ongoing costs associated with manning a string of forts along the new, expanded frontier. It was these debts and costs that prompted Parliament to pass the Stamp Act and other measures that taxed the American colonists without their representation. Of course, everyone knows that these taxes and subsequent punitive measures that Parliament passed after the colonists resisted them lead to the American Revolution. Anderson makes a compelling case that we gain a much better understanding of the Revolution by starting its story a decade earlier at the beginning of the Seven Years' War. Anderson's narrative is logically laid out in 10 parts which are broken up into 74 smaller chapters that are more easily digested. His account is very thorough but also dramatic and fast-paced despite all the detail. Additionally, it includes excellent maps, portraits of key personnel, and diagrams of important fortresses. Ironically, it turns out that George Washington played a key role in the initial minor skirmish that started the war in 1754. A nice touch of Anderson's is that he ends his story with George Washington in (temporary) retirement at Mount Vernon in 1767, closing the circle of his narrative. The only shortcoming of the book is that it primarily draws on American and British sources. It would have been useful if Anderson had also provided some more French and German viewpoints about the war. But that is a minor criticism. This is one of the history books that I have enjoyed more than most others, both because it was so well written and because I learned so much about a critical period in American history of which I had previously been ignorant.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. When Empires Collide

By Jason S. Taylor
Eighteenth Century wars had a sinister "rationality" to them. They were to the powerful people who instigated them almost heartless struggles, fought for wealth and power. Of course when you study things closer it is more complicated. Even the instigators were not impervious to human feeling and passion. Yet if one is to point to the most cynical age in modern military history one could point to the eighteenth century. At that time wars were fought for rational reasons and peace was made when that was accomplished. Of course it did not feel at all that way to those actually affected by it... The Seven Years War was the greatest of European power struggles. It made the British Empire. In another way it made America. It was then that Americans first started to feel themselves a nation. The author chronicles how this happens in an extraordinarily detailed book about the Seven Years War focusing on how it affected soon-to-be America. He writes of the many people involved in it. And he accepts complexity as complex and does not lazily support either myth or iconoclasm (which is another form of myth). He also describes some of the aspects of frontier war which can be fascinating in their own right. It is well written and a book worth having. However the size and complexity means that it requires commitment to read it. The author's stated goal in this book interestingly, is not to describe the Seven Years War for its own sake but to expound on a theory of his on how it caused the American Revolution. He does this quite convincingly but it leaves a large section (enough to make a book of its own), that simply drags on, after the end of the war. This need not be a burden as one can stop part of the way. For the matter of that, one does not need to read cover to cover. Be that as it may, if you are willing to make the commitment, the book is an attractive one and worth the read.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Feels like it took seven year to read!

By kinsellajr
Loved it. However life and other books kept interrupting! Dense, very well researched and annotated. Would recommend if you have time

In this vivid and compelling narrative, the Seven Years' War long seen as a mere backdrop to the American Revolution takes on a whole new significance. Relating the history of the war as it developed, Anderson shows how the complex array of forces brought into conflict helped both to create Britain's empire and to sow the seeds of its eventual dissolution. Beginning with a skirmish in the Pennsylvania backcountry involving an inexperienced George Washington, the Iroquois chief Tanaghrisson, and the ill-fated French emissary Jumonville, Anderson reveals a chain of events that would lead to world conflagration. Weaving together the military, economic, and political motives of the participants with unforgettable portraits of Washington, William Pitt, Montcalm, and many others, Anderson brings a fresh perspective to one of America's most important wars, demonstrating how the forces unleashed there would irrevocably change the politics of empire in North America.

.com Histories of the American Revolution tend to start in 1763, the end of the Seven Year's War, a worldwide struggle for empire that pitted France against England in North America, Europe, and Asia. Fred Anderson, who

teaches history at the University of Colorado, takes the story back a decade and explains the significance of the conflict in American history. Demonstrating that independence was not inevitable or even at first desired by the colonists, he shows how removal of the threat from France was essential before Americans could develop their own concepts of democratic government and defy their imperial British protectors. Of great interest is the importance of Native Americans in the conflict. Both the French and English had Indian allies; France's defeat ended a diplomatic system in which Indian nations, especially the 300-year-old Iroquois League, held the balance between the colonial powers. In a fast-paced narrative, Anderson moves with confidence and ease from the forests of Ohio and battlefields along the St. Lawrence to London's House of Commons and the palaces of Europe. He makes complex economic, social, and diplomatic patterns accessible and easy to understand. Using a vast body of research, he takes the time to paint the players as living personalities, from George III and George Washington to a host of supporting characters. The book's usefulness and clarity are enhanced by a hundred landscapes, portraits, maps, and charts taken from contemporary sources. Crucible of War is political and military history at its best; it never flags and is a pleasure to read. --John Stevenson

From Publishers Weekly

From 1756 to 1763, the Ohio Valley was the site of a historic contest between the French and the English, both of whom wanted to add this fertile soil to their colonial holdings. In this elegant new account of the Seven Years' War, University of Colorado historian Anderson demonstrates that the conflict was more than just a peripheral squabble that anticipated the American Revolution. Not only did the war decisively alter relations among the French, the English and the Native American allies of the two powers, who for decades had played the English and French off one another to their own advantage, but just as critical, argues Anderson, the war also changed the character of British imperialism, with the mother country trying to reshape the terms of empire and the colonists' place in it. (It was the British victory of 1763, for example, that led the British to post a permanent, peacetime army in America and to support those troops with new taxes.) Indeed, Anderson shows that familiar events of the mid-1760s, like the Stamp Act and Tea Act crises, are better understood as postwar rather than prewar events: they did not "reflect a movement toward revolution so much as an effort to define the imperial relationship." This volume, then, will be of interest not just to Seven Years' War buffs, but also to those interested in the entire Revolutionary era. Anderson's magisterial study--like his earlier book, *A People's Army: Massachusetts Soldiers and Society in the Seven Years' War*, who worked on this massive book for ten years, tells a fascinating story of the events and personalities of the Seven Years' War, which he considers the most important military conflict of the 18th century. From the perspective of all of North America and of the world-wide empires of the major European nations, it was far more significant than the American Revolution, he argues. Anderson demonstrates that the events of the 1750s and 1760s need to be viewed on their own terms, not as mere preliminaries to the American Revolution. One of the great strengths of this book is its expert integration of the Iroquois confederation into discussions of North American and European diplomacy. Enriched by a plethora of excellent maps and illustrations, this book combines exhaustive original research with a wonderfully accessible writing style. This terrific book is highly recommended for all university and large public libraries. -Thomas J. Schaeper, St. Bonaventure Univ., NY

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From Library Journal

Anderson (history, Univ. of Colorado; *A People's Army: Massachusetts Soldiers and Society in the Seven Years' War*), who worked on this massive book for ten years, tells a fascinating story of the events and personalities of the Seven Years' War, which he considers the most important military conflict of the 18th century. From the perspective of all of North America and of the world-wide empires of the major European nations, it was far more significant than the American Revolution, he argues. Anderson demonstrates that the events of the 1750s and 1760s need to be viewed on their own terms, not as mere preliminaries to the American Revolution. One of the great strengths of this book is its expert integration of the Iroquois confederation into discussions of North American and European diplomacy. Enriched by a plethora of excellent maps and illustrations, this book combines exhaustive original research with a wonderfully accessible writing style. This terrific book is highly recommended for all university and large public libraries. -Thomas J. Schaeper, St. Bonaventure Univ., NY

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