



## General George Washington: A Military Life

By Edward G. Lengel

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“The most comprehensive and authoritative study of Washington’s military career ever written.”

—Joseph J. Ellis, author of *His Excellency: George Washington*

Based largely on George Washington’s personal papers, this engrossing book paints a vivid, factual portrait of Washington the soldier. An expert in military history, Edward Lengel demonstrates that the “secret” to Washington’s excellence lay in his completeness, in how he united the military, political, and personal skills necessary to lead a nation in war and peace. Despite being an “imperfect commander”—and at times even a tactically suspect one—Washington nevertheless possessed the requisite combination of vision, integrity, talents, and good fortune to lead America to victory in its war for independence. At once informative and engaging, and filled with some eye-opening revelations about Washington, the American Revolution, and the very nature of military command, *General George Washington* is a book that reintroduces readers to a figure many think they already know.

“The book’s balanced assessment of Washington is satisfying and thought-provoking. Lengel gives us a believable Washington . . . the most admired man of his generation by far.”

—*The Washington Post Book World*

“A compelling picture of a man who was ‘the archetypal American soldier’ . . . The sum of his parts was the greatness of Washington.”

—*The Boston Globe*

“[An] excellent book . . . fresh insights . . . If you have room on your bookshelf for only one book on the Revolution, this may be it.”

—*The Washington Times*

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Lengel's *Washington* is the archetypal American soldier—an amateur citizen in arms who struggles to learn an unfamiliar and demanding craft on the job—one who is at the opposite pole from the paragon described in Douglas Southall Freeman's seven-volume biography. A military historian and associate editor of *Washington's* papers, Lengel presents a Washington who was not a creative military thinker, who made no contributions to the theory of war and who conducted his operations, Lengel argues, conventionally and unreflectively. He lacked an eye for defensive positions and could be dangerously rash in attack. More serious, Lengel finds, was Washington's consistent overestimation of the fighting power of his own forces relative to the British. But though Washington was no more than a competent soldier, he excelled as a war leader. Lengel praises his strategic vision, and his perception of America as a nation of free people with a collective destiny, as well as his bravery in battle, loyalty to his subordinates, indefatigability in his administration at all levels and his concern for the welfare of his troops. Lengel also shows Washington as a superb politician, whose relations with civilian authorities were almost uniformly good, and who was dedicated to the cause of independence. For Lengel, Washington's character inspired the trust necessary for any successful revolution. This outstanding work does that character justice. (*June 7*)

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From [Booklist](#)

George Washington has been the subject of several new biographies in the past decade (e.g., *His Excellency*, by Joseph Ellis, 2004). Lengel is a Washington scholar who chronicles his checkered military career, linking events from Washington's humiliation by the French at Fort Mifflin in 1777 to victory with the French at Yorktown in 1781 with evaluations about Washington's ability on every occasion. Lengel is not impressed by Washington's record in the field, which was dotted with disasters until the 1776-77 victories at Trenton and Princeton, recounted in the brilliant *Washington's Crossing*, by David Hackett Fischer (2004). In Lengel's assessment, Washington got into perilous tactical positions through incautious or mismanaged aggressiveness. It is in the less-celebrated area of logistics that Lengel becomes nearly effusive, appraising Washington as an outstanding military administrator. In making his academic points, however, Lengel maintains a fluid and suitably dramatic narrative of Washington's campaigns and battles. A boon for military history readers. *Gilbert Taylor*

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Review

Advance praise for *General George Washington: A Military Life*

“Although there is no such thing as definitive history, Lengel’s book now tops the list as the most comprehensive and authoritative study of Washington’s military career ever written.”

—**Joseph J. Ellis**, author of *His Excellency: George Washington*

“Historians have long debated George Washington’s generalship. Now, armed with many previously untapped sources obtained by the acclaimed Papers of George Washington project Edward Lengel enters the fray with a full-scale biography of Washington the soldier. With a sharp eye for drama, a mastery of detail, and balanced and insightful judgments, Lengel gives us a brilliant and compelling study of the military strengths and weaknesses of the remarkable man who was ‘first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen.’”

–**John Whiteclay Chambers II**, Rutgers University, editor of *The Oxford Companion to American Military History*

“Ed Lengel knows the Washington military papers as have few historians, past or present. His study of Washington’s career as a soldier is a model of clarity and judicious analysis. It deserves a wide readership.”

–**Don Higginbotham**, Dowd Professor of History, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

“Lengel has immersed himself in the most important sources bearing on Washington’s military life. He has not neglected other primary sources, and he has also used existing scholarship well. The result is a book that covers Washington’s military career from beginning to end and offers fresh insights into Washington’s role in the American Revolution.”

–**Robert Middlekauff**, Preston Hotchkis Professor of American History, Emeritus, University of California, Berkeley

*From the Hardcover edition.*

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