

In Pursuit of Liberty: Coming of Age in the American Revolution

Emmy Werner

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The voices of the children and teenagers who witnessed the colonies' transformation to an independent nation have seldom been heard. This historical account of the American Revolution tells the story of the "forgotten" youngsters who engaged in the boycott of British goods and the battles that led up to the Declaration of Independence. It recounts their courageous exploits in eight years of warfare on land and sea and amid changing social forces that shaped and transformed their postwar lives. While the Revolution disrupted and risked their world, it also gave them an unprecedented degree of autonomy and sense of responsibility. Emmy Werner researched eyewitness accounts—diaries, journals, letters, and memoirs—of a hundred boys and girls between the ages of five and sixteen. Her account reflects reports from black as well as white boy soldiers, from teenagers imprisoned on land and aboard ships, from slave children and youngsters held hostage by Indians, and from children of loyalists and pacifists who opposed the war with Britain for political or religious reasons. She also weaves in the viewpoints of Hessian teenagers who fought for the British. In Pursuit of Liberty sets the experiences of the children and teenagers who lived and wrote in that time in a historical context. It follows the chronology of the American Revolution across two decades from 1770, when the boycott of British goods throughout the American colonies gained momentum, to 1789, when George Washington was sworn in as the first president of a new and independent nation. While focusing on the Revolution's major milestones, Werner highlights the contribution of young people to its progress and ultimate success.

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