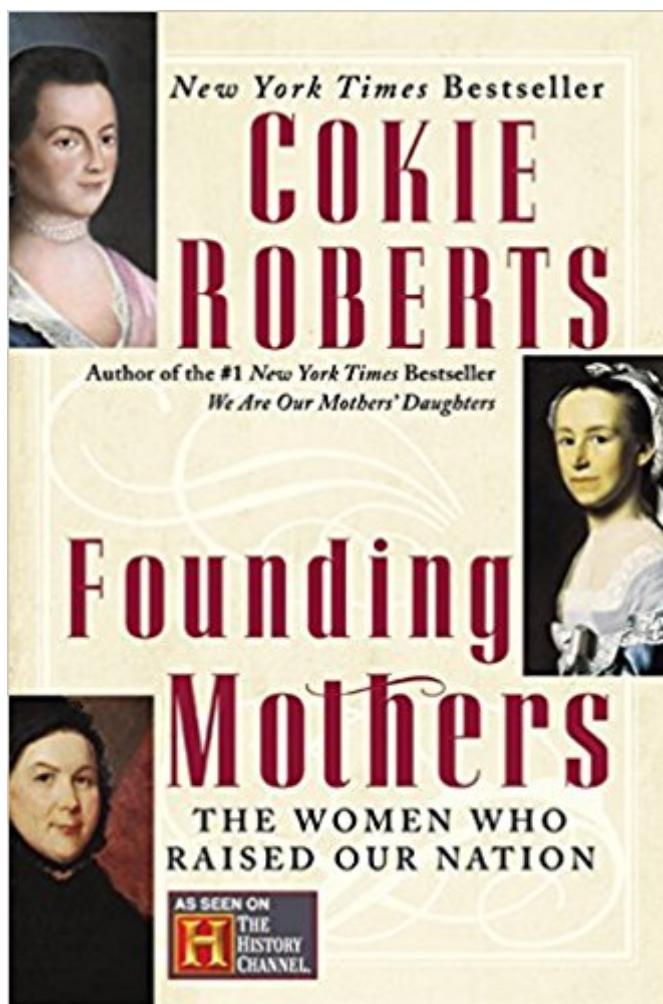


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# Founding Mothers: The Women Who Raised Our Nation



## Synopsis

From #1 New York Times bestselling author Cokie Roberts comes New York Times bestseller *Founding Mothers*, an intimate and illuminating look at the fervently patriotic and passionate women whose tireless pursuits on behalf of their families—and their country—proved just as crucial to the forging of a new nation as the rebellion that established it. While much has been written about the men who signed the Declaration of Independence, battled the British, and framed the Constitution, the wives, mothers, sisters and daughters they left behind have been little noticed by history. #1 New York Times bestselling author Cokie Roberts brings us women who fought the Revolution as valiantly as the men, often defending their very doorsteps. Drawing upon personal correspondence, private journals, and even favoured recipes, Roberts reveals the often surprising stories of these fascinating women, bringing to life the everyday trials and extraordinary triumphs of individuals like Abigail Adams, Mercy Otis Warren, Deborah Read Franklin, Eliza Pinckney, Catherine Littlefield Green, Esther DeBerdt Reed and Martha Washington—proving that without our exemplary women, the new country might have never survived.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

ABC News political commentator and NPR news analyst Roberts didn't intend this as a general history of women's lives in early America—she just wanted to collect some great "stories of the women who influenced the Founding Fathers." For while we know the names of at least some of these women (Martha Washington, Abigail Adams, Eliza Pinckney), we know little about their roles

in the Revolutionary War, the writing of the Constitution, or the politics of our early republic. In rough chronological order, Roberts introduces a variety of women, mostly wives, sisters or mothers of key men, exploring how they used their wit, wealth or connections to influence the men who made policy. As high-profile players married into each other's families, as wives died in childbirth and husbands remarried, it seems as if early America—or at least its upper crust—was indeed a very small world. Roberts's style is delightfully intimate and confiding: on the debate over Mrs. Benedict Arnold's infamy, she proclaims, "Peggy was in it from the beginning." Roberts also has an ear for juicy quotes; she recounts Aaron Burr's mother, Esther, bemoaning that when talking to a man with "mean thoughts of women," her tongue "hangs pretty loose," so she "talked him quite silent." In addition to telling wonderful stories, Roberts also presents a very readable, serviceable account of politics—male and female—in early America. If only our standard history textbooks were written with such flair! 7 illus. not seen by PW. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Gr 3-6 •Most children know that the "Founding Fathers" are the men who helped the 13 colonies develop into the United States. What about the women of the time period? While some of them, such as Martha Washington, Dolley Madison, and Deborah Read Franklin, are famous because of their husbands, Roberts goes deeper into the historical record to find individuals who were quite accomplished in their own right. In addition, many less-well-known women aided the war effort, ran businesses, wrote, spoke, and generally contributed a great deal to the development of the nation. The book begins with a time line of women in history from 1765 to 1815, followed by double-page chapters that detail individual women, including First Ladies Washington, Madison, and Abigail Adams, as well as others such as Sarah Livingston Jay and Catharine Littlefield Greene. A formal portrait and lovingly re-created signature are accompanied by a more humorous illustration of each figure. In addition, sections about writers and warriors highlight other significant accomplishments. Grammarians may not appreciate the author's colloquial style, but the conversational tone is appealing. Beautifully intricate illustrations, rendered with antique pens, sepia ink, and watercolors, suit the text well. Thoughtful design, well-chosen facts, and an approachable format combine to make a book readers will enjoy and appreciate. —Lucinda Snyder Whitehurst, St. Christopher's School, Richmond, VA --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

The Founding Mothers by Cokie Roberts would be a good book to read just before reading James D. Best's *Tempest at Dawn*. Robert's book deals with the wives, sisters and mothers of the founding

fathers. These women who supported the Revolution, who mostly stayed home raising their children and running their homes, took on the additional burden of running their husband's farms and business while their men served in the army or the Continental Congress. Perhaps the most famous of those on the home front was Abigale Adams who was so good at what she did that eventually her husband, John Adams gave her complete decision making so she could collect legal debts, buy land and unofficially have the responsibilities thought to be too burdensome and complex for women to handle. Mercy Otis Warren wrote pamphlets, poems and plays supporting the Revolution, and eventually wrote the first history of that war. Women like these had a complete grasp of the politics of their times though they were not allowed to vote. Many of them like the legendary Mollie Pitcher accompanied their enlisted husbands, stepping in and taking over duties of the fallen. Some disguised themselves as men and fought alongside them. At headquarters, Martha Washington, Kitty Greene and Lucy Knox formed a lasting friendship as they followed their husbands from Boston, Morristown, Vally Forge and finally to victory. The book follows the fortunes of these women as well as many other wives and mothers from all over the thirteen colonies as they managed the homefront and became spectacular at fund raising and other tasks once thought to be beyond their abilities. The book covers the years from the Stamp Act through John Adams' election as President of the new nation of free and equal men. Equality for women is still not complete. Ms Roberts has done a masterly job at researching the lives of the women of the Revolution. Another bonus is her ability to tell an exciting story which is hard to put down.

I'm not yet finished reading this book, but I already like it. There is so much interesting information about the women of the Revolutionary period that you will learn things you never had in history class. And it reads as easy as a novel, with plots that would make many novels seem pale by comparison. But you won't like Benjamin Franklin much after you read his wife's story! He was a great man in many ways, brilliant and creative and an inventor to boot. But he was a selfish and egocentric character as well. I suspect he was much better as a friend than as a husband. His wife, who is usually vaguely brushed off as "common-law", in most histories, was actually a remarkable, strong, intelligent, and accomplished woman. She raised Ben's illegitimate son as well as her own daughter with Ben (their son died tragically young), and ran his businesses while he gallivanted around Europe for years. She deserves better than the very few words accorded her in most histories. I am thankful to Cokie Roberts for telling her story. Of course, Ben's neglected wife is not the only woman in this book. I just had to rant a little about the way she was treated! As I said, I haven't finished the book yet, so I'll be learning about the lives of many more interesting women as I

continue with this book.I definitely recommend this book.

I have long been an ardent fan of Cokie Roberts and her *Founding Mothers* (HarperCollins, 2005). A great companion read to this is Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's *Well-Behaved Women Seldom Make History* (Alfred Knopf, 2007). I often use these two books as references when I teach perspective in American history.I have also been a long time and ardent fan of Diane Goode's work. Her exquisite illustrations have graced some of my favorite books, including *When I Was Young in the Mountains*, by Cynthia Rylant (1982) When I heard that Goode was illustrating Roberts' book, it thought it was a brilliant match. And I was right.The book presents a collection of fascinating women biographies, showcasing their efforts and triumphs as they helped create a new nation. Goode's pen and ink illustrations are reminiscent of the style and grace of colonial penmanship. Drawing from personal letters and diaries, every page is a true masterpiece. I love this book.

After reading "Tempest at Dawn," I had to read about the incredible women who ran the households, businesses, crops, plantations, and children of the men who were forming the backbone of this nation the last 60 years of the 1700's. I am in awe....of the women....not so much of the men. They, as wives and daughters, had no rights at all. They were little more than slaves themselves, and yet they did what they could, when they could, however they could to let the men know what was truly needed in the forming nation...and it infuriates me to see that despite the women doing it ALL on the home front, the men still gave them little more than a pat on the head and tokens of lip service....and that includes John Adams. Abigail should have kicked his butt to the curb for the way he treated her. Count me among the exceedingly grateful to live in this day and age, and count me first in line to worship the women of that era who did what they could to give me this opportunity.

Well done Cokie Roberts! My daughter and I are enjoying this book immensely. We are both history buffs and learning a lot about the women who helped shape our great nation. I have a bachelor's degree in American Studies, and even I am leaning from this book! In school you learn all about our Founding Fathers, and hear all about Betsy Ross and the first flag, but you learn nothing about many of these other women that Cokie Roberts has included here, except that they are wives, sisters, or mothers of famous men. It is fascinating to hear more about the role these remarkable

women played in the formation of our country. I am now looking forward to reading some of the adult versions of Cokie Roberts books too.

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