



## The Course of Human Events

*David McCullough*

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**The Course of Human Events** David McCullough

s/t: The 2003 Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities

In this short speech, the master historian tracks the founding fathers' and his own fascination with all things historical.

## The Course of Human Events Details

Date : Published (first published May 24th 2004)

ISBN :

Author : David McCullough

Format : Kindle Edition 30 pages

Genre : History, Nonfiction, North American Hi..., American History, Audiobook, Historical

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## From Reader Review The Course of Human Events for online ebook

### Barb Middleton says

David McCullough gave this terrific talk at the Jefferson Lecture in Humanities in 2003 and I listened to the 38 minute audio book spoken by the author. He begins by talking about John Trumbull's painting of the Declaration of Independence that hangs in the United States Capitol Rotunda and the artist's intentional inaccuracies.

The signing did not take place July 4, 1776, and had no formal gathering as seen in the dramatic painting. The decorative display of the room does not accurately reflect the room where the men signed the Declaration of Independence, but it doesn't matter. Trumbull was creating a symbolic event and while he takes liberty with the room, he is completely accurate with the faces of those in the room capturing the qualities of Jefferson and Adams. Washington is absent and McCullough explains why. The intent by Trumbull is to show the brave intentions of the men in Congress who were making a declaration against the King of England claiming freedom for the thirteen colonies and making them traitors to the crown. The painting is symbolic of what the country stood for at that time. Pretty heady stuff. It is easy to get swept up in the story as David McCullough reveals the individuals in history, bringing the time alive and making it vibrant.

The rest of the lecture explains the importance of education to the Founding Fathers and books that influenced David McCullough making him pursue the career of being a historian. He talks about reading, "Ben and Me" by Robert Lawson, as a six-year-old and I thought to myself... I've never seen a kid that young read that book. It goes to show what a gifted man McCullough is and quite brilliant himself. He then quotes many other books that influenced him growing up. He's 82 years old so his book list had some unfamiliar names for me. I'll have to check them out. I did know the children's books, however, and I have seen N.C. Wyeth's glorious illustrations of Treasure Island. Although McCullough mentions Wyeth pictures in The Last of the Mohicans and Drums as influencing him.

The last part of the lecture focuses on how history needs to come alive. A writer can have all the facts but if there are not interesting individuals or empathy or heart in the history being revealed, then it won't hold readers interest. History has to be literature, he says several times, as well as, "History is about change and the power of ideas." He ends by explaining that the American experiment was an unfulfilled promise with a government of laws and not of men, equality and justice, the importance of the individual, freedom of thought and religion, and a love of learning. You can read the lecture printed at the web site:  
<http://www.neh.gov/about/awards/jeff...> Be inspired.

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### Carol says

Second Read 01/28/16: I still just love David McCullough. He inspires me as few authors ever have. I really respect his ability to retain what he studies, his research, and every thing that makes a book for him. Awesome!!!

First Read: 02/12/14 I think David McCullough is one of my favorite authors of all time. First of all, I was probably one of the worst history students in school. I hated it, but through him, I've developed a love for

history, and I can hardly wait to meet John Adams and George Washington. He's really blessed my life. I have an uncle that has read all his books. I'm getting a start, but that would be a great feat.

This piece is written to talk about our forefathers, some of what they did, and the impact they had. It's short, but oh so wonderful. Never heard of it, but really enjoyed it. Recommend.

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### **Kalman says**

McCullough is always a fun read. This is a very short, inspiring lecture on history as a valuable subject of study.

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### **Gary Hoggatt says**

In 2003, historian David McCullough delivered the Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities in Washington, DC. Released as an audiobook in 2005 as *The Course of Human Events*, this speech is a 45 minute love letter to the field of history itself, and a joy to listen to for those who share McCullough's passion.

My first encounter with McCullough was his audio book reading of his Revolutionary War history *1776*, so I already knew going into *The Course of Human Events* about McCullough's great oratorical skills and his mastery of the subject. As he notes in the speech, when he delivered *The Course of Human Events* he was working on *1776* at the time, and a great many - though not all - of his examples and stories come from the Revolutionary era.

One of the themes the McCullough builds in this speech is that none of the famous figures of the past lived in the past. In fact, they all lived in their present, and the success of their struggles was anything but certain at the time. By learning about how they overcame the challenges of their present, we can find courage and learn to overcome the challenges of our present. It's a powerful theme, and McCullough makes a strong case for it.

McCullough also discusses how he discovered his own joy of reading and of history, and cites some of the books that influenced him, as well as books that inspired and influenced the Founding Fathers. This is a great resource for history fans, and I've already requested some of these books from my library to discover for myself.

This speech is just that, a speech, and not a full book. But if you're a fan of McCullough, you'll be delighted anyways, and motivated to read more of his work, as well as those works he mentions in the speech.

If you're a history fan, you'll love McCullough's eloquent tribute to the field with *The Course of Human Events*. If you're not a history fan, you might just be after you've listened to this speech.

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### **Brittany says**

Well done. I reminded me of things I take for granted. The things that we have here and now were created by the sacrifices of the past. I love that this is an easy listen, but can really get your "wheels" turning. Thanks for the recommendation Em. I have been anticipating listening to this for weeks, every since I place a

request at the library. I can understand why you would want to give to so many people. His passion and choice of words makes me want to read 1776.

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### **Jillian says**

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### **KayG says**

A brief but moving testament to McCullough's love of books and of history. I must read more of him. I listened to this audiobook on Hoopla.

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### **bsc says**

Short, but very insightful and inspirational. In this lecture, McCullough talks about the role of history in our lives, and how it played a role in the lives of our founding fathers. This greatly increases my respect for McCullough and the study of history. Highly recommended for everyone.

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### **Elizabeth A. says**

This is an audio CD of a speech that David McCullough--a famed writer of historical works like 1776--gave in 2003. Called The Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities, this speech honors McCullough for his incredible work in researching American history and presenting it in extremely readable texts.

But as my husband I drove to visit his sister, McCullough's words awakened in us the gift that all Americans can have, if they only choose to receive them. These gifts reside in libraries across the country. These are the gifts of reading--literature, history, philosophy--your choice. McCullough talks about being a child and his parents introducing him to reading. If today we are blessed with McCullough's works like 1776 and John Adams, Truman etc, it is because he read BEN&ME as a child and fell in love with American history. I'm going to get a copy of that book, which I do remember reading and enjoying the illustrations, for my grandchildren. They will add it to their growing library. Who knows. Maybe one of them will grow up to also write about history.

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### **Theresa says**

This is a short but wonderful speech on the humanity of our founding fathers, on their sacrifices, and belief in education. He mentions many important books that influenced him, and wastes no words. Fabulous! Hoopla now has the audiobook.

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### **Ashley \*Hufflepuff Kitten\* says**

McCullough makes great points about the importance of being well-read and well-rounded; knowing your history and science and art and everything else. And it went quick! Barely more than half an hour of audio, read by the author.

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### **David Steele says**

Typical pleasurable read by a master historian.

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### **Emily says**

Oh my 5 whoppin' stars and garters!

I've been listening to this short 45 minute address over and over again. I cannot get enough of it.

As McCullough says, in quoting a young John Adams: "I must judge for myself. But how can I judge? How can any man judge unless his mind has been opened and enlarged by reading."

I want to disseminate copies of this book to strangers at the grocery store, the dentist's office, and the gas station. Beware, if I see you often enough, you may receive a copy for St. Patrick's Day, the winter equinox, or your half birthday. If I had a million dollars...

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### **Missy says**

This book ignites fervor inside me. I am going to check out the authors other book. It also makes me want to read all the numerous books he mentions. I have listened to it for over a week now every day. I tell everyone I talk to about it. It makes me want to go back to school or at the least seize each day and never quit learning. I think we all need to read this and then get together and gush over it. What a beautiful stirring work this is. Emily asked for my favorite one liners in it and how can I choose? It is a blessing to anyone who can listen to the words. Trust me and listen to it 10 times before you even really start to think about it. It has layer upon layer and each time I listen a new gem sparkles. This book made me march around my bedroom recalling days gone by when I used to wear red, white and blue sequins in the Days of 47 parade. You will be excited to be alive and proud to be an American.

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### **Karen says**

I am so bad at this thing called review, so I will just say that McCullough's writing encourages learning about our history, and this lecture is no exception.

