

Founding Mothers Reading Guide

1. What inspired you to read **Founding Mothers**? Why do you suppose the contributions of women in the Revolutionary era have been largely overlooked by historians? Would the founding of the nation have occurred without these women?
2. Which woman would you say had the single greatest impact during the Revolution? How about during the first years of the new government?
3. Despite a lack of legal and social rights, including the right to own property and receive a formal education, how did the women presented in **Founding Mothers** assert their authority and exercise their intelligence?
4. How did life differ for women depending on where they lived—the North versus the South, the city versus rural areas? How else did geographical circumstances impact their lives?
5. Women often accompanied their husbands to army camps during the war, including Martha Washington, Kitty Greene, and Lucy Knox. Were you surprised they chose to do this? How did these three women in particular contribute to the often harsh life of a military camp and foster the war efforts?
6. By telling the stories of our **Founding Mothers**, this book also sheds light on the men of the time. Did you learn anything new about these men, including Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, John Adams, and Alexander Hamilton, seeing them from the perspective of their female contemporaries?
7. How important was the “civilizing” role that women played in the years leading up to, during, and after the Revolution? Can you reference examples from the book that show how integral it was for the women to be able to step in and “calm down the men,” or even to act as intermediaries, as Abigail Adams did in the dispute between her husband and James Madison?
8. Catharine Macaulay supported the American Revolution and was a vocal proponent of democratic governments in general. Why did Macaulay, an Englishwoman, take such an interest in the American cause? How did she contribute to it?

9. How did Martha Washington define the role of First Lady? Are her influences still evident today? Her political savvy was remarkable, but is there anything that can be learned from Martha Washington on a personal level?
10. Only a limited number of women could have accomplished what Abigail Adams and Mercy Otis Warren did—those who had access to the men shaping the future of the nation. What about the women who didn't have the advantage of providing direct counsel or publishing their discourses? How did they contribute to the Revolutionary War and the founding of the nation?
11. Cokie Roberts intersperses her thoughts and commentary throughout the book. Does this enhance the narrative? In what ways?

Adapted from readinggroupguide.com