



A New World: An Epic of Colonial America

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"I write of peoples and of a struggle." So begins *A New World*, an ambitious and extraordinary book that challenges conventional historical narrative by presenting episodes in North America's history through the eyes and voices of the Europeans who established the first colonial outposts here. Beginning with the swaggering John Smith at Jamestown and ending with the beleaguered Montcalm at Quebec, Arthur Quinn allows towering historical figures to emerge from an often beautiful, sometimes forbidding early American landscape and speak. An elderly William Bradford looks back with growing despair at the early promise of the Pilgrim colony at Plymouth. Governor John Winthrop tries to administer a dose of practicality to the Puritans of Massachusetts. Jesuit missionaries bring Christianity and disaster to the Huron Confederacy. A blustering Peter Stuyvesant watches Manhattan slip from Dutch grasp. William Penn's Holy Experiment in Pennsylvania goes increasingly awry. And, finally, the British and the French fight history's first world war for supremacy in the New World. Telling each story using the literary conventions of the day, Quinn casts North America's colonial beginnings as a multicultural epic, gripping the reader throughout with his uncanny eye and storytelling skill. The result is a history not just for scholars, but for all citizens of a nation whose birth came only through long struggle, and at a terrible cost to Europeans and Native Americans alike.

A New World: An Epic of Colonial America Details

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From Reader Review A New World: An Epic of Colonial America for online ebook

Stacey says

Very interesting

Deirdre says

very informative history of colonial north america. language can be a bit flowery at times but it has the feel of a novel as we follow the fascinating characters of the time.

Jordan Waterworth says

Narrative history at its finest.

Crysta says

Quinn obviously loves this time period, and as do I, so I thought we'd be a good match. He begins quickly, and in rich detail, describing the settling of Plymouth, Jamestown, and Quebec. Much time and attention is given to how each of the colonies interacted with one another and that influence on the larger global scene. Quinn also provides sharp detail of the Native American cultures at the time (as seen through the eyes of the Europeans), and the many wars, peace treaties, and alliances that took place amongst those nations. Unfortunately, Quinn gets so lost in the minute details of each time and place that he loses the thread of interest. The book became a heavy chore about half-way through, and pure drudgery in the last three chapters.

John says

Arthur Quinn's A New World: An Epic of Colonial America is a semi-interesting collection of unrelated chapters about the different characters who were personalities in each of the original 13 colonies for their establishment. The biggest takeaway for me from this book was the diversity of the 13 colonies in terms of their origins and European sponsors before they were consolidated by the British into "their colonies". At times, if you are not an anthropology or sociology major with an interest in minute details, you will get tired and tend to gaze over several pages given how inconsequential some of the events described in the book are in the grand arc of history. The book however, definitely gave me a good understanding of early American and Canadian history and I would recommend it anyone who is interested in understanding pre-colonial history better. We tend to forget that there were around 200 years of existence in North America during which Europeans and Americans battled before the settling down of the colonies in the late 1600s.

Scott says

Arthur Quinn's "A New World" is a must-read for any student of early American history and a should-read for fans of entertaining tales.

While undeniably a history, Quinn's effort is sure to disappoint anyone who is looking for a comprehensive treatment of colonial America, anything approaching dates, figures, and similar hard data. Quinn endeavors to tell a story rather than offer a definitive analysis. This is the kind of history that is best savored in a comfortable armchair with your favorite beverage, not at a desk with a notepad.

Certain passages sweep the reader away -- the majestic falls near Quebec, the horrific torture of a mighty Indian warrior, the crotchety character of the Acadians, and on and on . . . Quinn brings this murky period of American history to life in a unique fashion that can only serve to heighten the reader's interest in learning more.

Like anyone who attempts to tell a gripping tale, Quinn abandons historical analysis in favor of grand storytelling. This is a different type of history. However, by bringing the era to life and giving the reader characters and events to care about, Quinn can do more to engender a deep desire to learn more about colonial America than dry, hyper-accurate historical treatments of the era that might provide more pure "data" than Quinn.

Check this book out -- you'll be glad you did.

Dara Salley says

I chose to read this book because I'm sadly lacking in knowledge of American history. I've read many wonderful books about the history of England, Russia and France but I've always avoided American history. I was under the mistaken impression that compared with the tribulations of kings, queens and csars, American history was pretty dull. Quinn's book was anything but dull, however.

There is the tragic drama of European contact with Indians. The narrative was not one of unadulterated oppression and betrayal on the part of the Europeans. The struggle for survival, especially at first, was tilted greatly in favor of the Indians. There are many nuances in the way that different nationalities treated the Indians, and the way that different tribes treated the Europeans. I found the stories of the men who joined Indian tribes and lived among them especially interesting. They had an unprecedented and unrepeatable chance to learn Native American culture before it was unalterably changed.

I'm a native New Yorker and I spent my formative years in Pennsylvania. It's possible I just wasn't paying attention, but I don't remember learning about the settlement of those areas in school. The information certainly wasn't presented in as interesting a fashion, and with such detail as in Quinn's book. The initial religious experiments, the original charters and the men who rose to power in the early colonies had a lingering effect on the make-up of those states that carries down to the 21st century. As a citizen of those states I feel that I owe a debt of gratitude to the early settlers. I should at least know their stories and struggles.

The only issue I had with the book was Quinn's writing style. It is ridiculously overblown to the point that it sometimes ceases to make sense. I got used to it after a while and it didn't bother me as much, but every so often there would be a phrase that made me pause and wonder. It's obvious that he has much love and enthusiasm for his subject matter, but he is prone to overstatement.

Still, this issue does not overshadow the amazing subject matter. Quinn takes huge amounts of information and turns it into an exciting and vivid narrative. It is no small feat and I'm glad that he was able to convert me into an American colonial history enthusiast.

Chris Wolfington says

This is not a normal history book, but a series of biographies on prominent North American colonists. And instead of each biography being written like a matter-of-fact history, they're written as narratives. So it feels like you're reading fiction short stories, but each one is historically accurate. I liked how in some chapters the author gives background information and includes other groups or individuals as supporting characters, e.g. the chapter on William Bradford is also a history of the Pilgrims, some of their prominent leaders, as well as Squanto and other Indians they encounter. The book features both British and French colonists, and the last 3 chapters focus on the French and Indian War, the climax of colonial history before you get into the Revolutionary period.

The colonists featured are:

- John Smith
- Samuel de Champlain
- William Bradford
- John Winthrop
- Saint Jean de Brebeuf
- Peter Stuyvesant
- Nathanial Bacon
- Louis de Buade Comte de Frontenac
- William Penn
- Louis-Joseph de Montcalm
- There are also 2 chapters on the French and Indian War that have so many people in them that it's hard to call them biographies.

I gave it 4 stars because it's very good, but not a definitive work. For the first time I saw colonial history through the eyes of other human beings, not just as facts listed on a page. I appreciated the British-French mix even though I wasn't expecting it, and all in all it gave me a deeper and more personal understanding of colonial history.

Michael says

This was an excellent read on Colonial America and Canada. It has some brutal scenes in it on the wars involved. It covered the personalities very well on the different leaders of the colonies and the armies. The use of religion in the different colonies was very interesting. It covered the Puritan belief, Indian beliefs, conversion styles, dogma, punishment, exclusion and pacifism of the Quakers in Pennsylvania.

Stephen says

A colorful, moving narrative of the settling of America from multiple national perspectives. Quinn destroys many of our national myths.
