

Founders Reading List

“If you want to understand what the Founders were trying to do, you should read what the Founders were reading.” -- David McCullough

What the Founders Read

- *The Holy Bible*
- The Magna Carta
- The Mayflower Compact
- Writings of Polybius, Cicero, Thomas Hooker, Sir Edward Coke, Baron Charles de Montesquieu (e.g. “The Spirit of Laws”), Sir William Blackstone (e.g., “The Commentaries of the Laws of England”), John Locke, Adam Smith
- *Discourses on Livy* – Machiavelli
- *Cato’s Letters* – Trenchard and Gordon
- History: Greek, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, European, English

Writings about the Founders

- *His Excellency: George Washington* – Richard Ellis
- *Washington’s God* – Michael Novak, Jana Novak
- *George Washington: The Character and Influence of One Man* – compiled by Verna M. Hall
- *John Adams* – David McCullough
- *Alexander Hamilton* – Ron Chernow
- *American Sphinx* (Thomas Jefferson) – Richard Ellis
- *James Monroe* – Harry Ammon
- *James Madison* – Ralph Ketcham
- *The First American* (Benjamin Franklin) – H.W. Brands

What the Founders Wrote

- The Declaration of Independence
- The Constitution of the United States of America
- *The Federalist Papers* – Hamilton, Madison, Jay
- *The Anti-Federalist Papers and the Constitutional Debates* – Ed. Ralph Ketcham

Additional Reading:

- *The Law* – Bastiat
- *Miracle at Philadelphia* – Catherine Drinker Bowen
- *Democracy in America* – Alexis de Tocqueville
- *The American Constitution: Its Origins and Development Vols I and II* – Alfred H. Kelly, Winfred A. Harbison, Herman Belz
- *The American Founding* – Frank W. Fox
- *The Magna Charta* – James Daugherty
- *1776* – David McCullough
- *The 5000 Year Leap* – Cleon Skousen
- *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* – Gordon S. Wood

A collection of 20 of the most significant writings in the history of political thought can be found at the following link:

<http://oll.libertyfund.org/readinglists/view/10-classics-in-the-history-of-political-thought>

Let divines and philosophers, statesmen and patriots, unite their endeavors to renovate the age, by impressing the minds of men with the importance of educating their little boys and girls, of inculcating in the minds of youth the fear and love of the Deity and universal philanthropy, and, in subordination to these great principles, the love of their country; of instructing them in the art of self-government, without which they never can act a wise part in the government of societies, great or small; in short, of leading them in the study and practice of the exalted virtues of the Christian system...” --Samuel Adams