

## George Washington: Father of a Nation

**Peter Dabbene**

**Juan Carlos Colla Acland, Illustrator**

AmazonKDP (Oct 22, 2023)

Softcover \$20.00 (95pp)

979-886257037-3

*Memorable stories pair with beautiful artistic renderings in this effective graphic novel biography of the first president of the United States.*

Peter Dabbene, with illustrator Juan Carlos Colla Acland, introduces the events of George Washington's adventure-filled life in the graphic biography *George Washington*, a visually engaging overview of the first US president's experiences.

The graphic novel starts in Washington's childhood, with the death of his father and with young George wondering what will become of him. It continues through his entire life and includes some tributes after his death. That's a lot to pack into a slim book, limiting the roles of other characters. Indeed, it covers some complex issues in only a few panels. Still, *George Washington* does a great job of covering the key moments of Washington's life and career.

In several spots along the way, the graphic novel approach allows the book to condense the action with creative visuals. In one memorable sequence, young George studies and writes down 101 "rules for civility" as he tries to fit in with his half brother's high-society friends. Here, the book pairs some of those rules (shown in cursive to differentiate them from the regular text) with scenes of Washington establishing his early career as a surveyor. Another early highlight covers young Washington's ten-week, thousand-mile journey to deliver letters between British and French commanders, showing several life-threatening experiences he faced along the route and letting the action drive the story.

The book also includes the other important events that shaped the arc of Washington's life: his stint as a major in the Virginia militia; the loss to the French in the disastrous 1755 Battle of the Monongahela; his marriage to Martha; his appointment as commander of the colonial forces; the key battles of the Revolutionary War; the Constitutional Convention; his presidency; and his retirement to Mount Vernon. Most of these stories are told via conversation rather than narration, which allows *George Washington* to keep up its momentum. There are also enough emotional stories along the way—both personal tragedies and military setbacks—to flesh out Washington as a person.

The artwork depicts Washington at different ages while keeping him recognizable and makes strong use of dynamic characters against sparser backgrounds to create movement. Some images, such as those of Washington crossing the Delaware with his troops and the British surrender at Yorktown, stand out for their beautiful renderings. The book also makes use of maps, letters, and other documents to provide useful context.

*George Washington* uses a graphic novel approach to tell one of the most important stories in American history, and does it well. It's an effective, enjoyable overview of its subject's life and tales.

JEFF FLEISCHER (December 15, 2023)

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