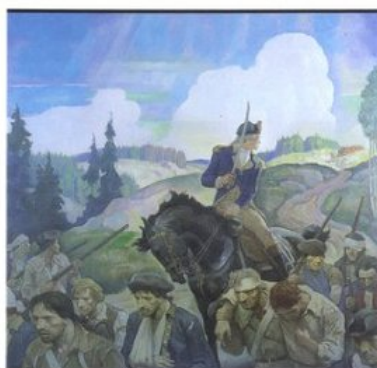


RABBLE IN ARMS



Kenneth Roberts

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Rabble in Arms Kenneth Roberts

The second of Roberts's epic novels of the American Revolution, Rabble in Arms was hailed by one critic as the greatest historical novel written about America upon its publication in 1933. Love, treachery, ambition, and idealism motivate an unforgettable cast of characters in a magnificent novel renowned not only for the beauty and horror of its story but also for its historical accuracy.

Rabble in Arms Details

Date : Published January 1st 1996 by Down East Books (first published 1933)

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Author : Kenneth Roberts

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Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, Military History, American Revolution, Classics, War

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From Reader Review Rabble in Arms for online ebook

Lynn Ballard says

One of my favorite historical writers

This was an epic historical novel with loveable heroes and villains and a different slant on Benedict Arnold, an amazingly enigma of a man. I felt engrossed in the struggles of our country to become a nation

Lynn Pribus says

While I'm not much for historical novels, this is such a classic that I read it for a bimonthly piece I do for a military magazine. Although I grew up in NY state where history is much more about the Revolution than the Civil War, I didn't realize just how important Lake Champlain was to the Revolutionary War in the north. The "rabble" of the title comes from a sneering comment by the British General Burgoyne about the Colonists army which was "half-fed, half-armed and half-dressed" since Congress did not provide adequate funds.

The first-person narrator, a sea-going Maine man, is a great admirer of Benedict Arnold who was the key to the success at Saratoga, although he was not supported by Congress. It was several years later that Arnold, unpaid by Congress and tried for improprieties (found not guilty, although mildly censured by Washington) and deeply in debt conspired to betray West Point to the British.

Silly me, I red the last chapter through tears as the cadre of Mainers finally marched into their hometown of Arundel (now Kennebunkport)

Bill says

Second book in Kenneth Roberts' historical fiction concerning the northern campaign of the Revolutionary War and the heroic role of Benedict Arnold. Some favorite characters return (Steven Nason, Cap Huff) and several new ones are added, and the tale is told through the eyes of a new protagonist (a young sea Captain from Arundel recruited by Nason).

The romantic entanglement of our young hero, and the struggle to overcome the intrigue and disinformation campaign of the villains, is formulaic (and to the extent it feels like a repeat of Arundel, almost tedious). But that is not the point. What makes these books so interesting and rewarding is the historical detail. Most Americans, myself included, do not even know the broad strokes of the story of the Saratoga campaign, and for that alone the yarn is worthwhile. But Roberts gives a convincing and absorbing account of the fine details of what it was like to live, struggle and fight in the colonial army during these trying times. There is heroism, yes, but mainly an unvarnished portrayal of ragged, poorly lead, poorly equipped troops fighting well equipped but unmotivated professional soldiers who are far from home.

Julie Davis says

Ok, Book Bingo: A Book Based on a True Story. You can read all about why I chose this book at the link.

Based on a quote at the beginning, a thank you to Booth Tarkington (!), and just flipping through the book itself, it looks as if this has a focus on Benedict Arnold which is a surprise. If so, this would have been quite a "revolutionary" attitude (couldn't help it, had to do it) at the time this book was written, some 60 years ago.. Roberts was known for digging up forgotten facts and taking a stand, however unpopular, as readers of Oliver Wiswell know. That book was told from the American Tory point of view and raised firestorm of protest when it came out. But they couldn't dispute Roberts on the history itself and that is what makes his books so interesting.

Looking forward to this very much.

UPDATE

Something I'd forgotten about Roberts' characters. They are almost always from Maine and have a stubborn New England attitude that makes me laugh, as I believe it is meant to do although it isn't ever played for laughs. (Cap Huff is for laughs, a la a revolutionary Falstaff.)

Protagonist Peter Merrill may have been to London but he displays many of the provincial attitudes of someone who never left Maine. He mistrusts a femme fatale not only for the knowing look he detects in her eyes but also because she says she went to school in Quebec. Wait, he thinks, all those schools would be convent schools. She must be Popish! (Quelle horreur!) Also, we find out that everyone should know a New Yorker is never going to measure up to a solid fellow from Maine.

I love these character quirks because it seems very true to the insular nature of those from the colonies at the time. Truth to tell, we've still got those insular quirks these days. Just ask any Texan about California. (And vice versa.)

FINAL

I'd give this 3-1/2 if I could. Ultimately it is not the equal of my favorite Roberts' novel, Oliver Wiswell, which does much the same service in showing the great American Revolutionary and British figures "warts and all." This is a good look at why it was such a shock when Benedict Arnold turned traitor because he'd fought so well and valorously before. We tend to forget that part and it is worth revisiting. This book is a good way to do that.

Jeff says

Wonderful read... captured my attention immediately, and held it throughout. I had live up in the Saratoga Springs-Albany area and was aware of this history yet never really pursued research at the time. Of course now I am looking for bio's of Benedict Arnold and the Northern campaign.

Ross says

I have read and re-read this amazing title, along with it's prequel Arudel several times. Written 6 decades ago, it still is vibrant and alive, the characters are full of life, and become favorites. The bluff good hearted Cap Huff, old Doc Means and the rest of the cast are the types of literary heroes, "ordinary men doing extraordinary things" that inspire. I was particularly drawn to the story of Benedict Arnold, the man and the

hero. While he was America's first 'traitor', his story, while Roberts perhaps over sympathizes with the man, is nevertheless fascinating.

Heidi says

Rabble in Arms takes place during the American Revolution and tells the story of the American retreat from Quebec, following their trouncing by the British, all the way to the battle of Saratoga, where they trounced the British back. There are many great battles as the Americans retreat, beset by hunger, indians, smallpox, and many other ills. Roberts did a spectacular job following every twist and turn in this story, and in my copy there was a map that enabled one to follow events spacially. There was also a very touching love story, not to mention a beautiful and nasty female spy trying to gum up the works. Oh -- another interesting sidebar is that the military hero of this particular book is none other than Benedict Arnold! I read this book as a teenager and for a long time went around convinced that Arnold was the much maligned victim of the forces of the establishment! Whatever you come away believing about him, it is certainly clear that he did have a brilliant mind and substantial military abilities, and also that he was on the receiving end of a lot of petty jealousy from the likes of General Gates, who was much less gifted. Unlike Roberts, though, I don't think this excuses his ultimate behaviour.

Cindy says

Benedict Arnold's name has become synonymous with the word traitor but Roberts shows us it is not that simple. And it never is with history because we are talking about real people and all the influences, passions, events and conflicts that shaped their lives. Not many have matched Kenneth Roberts mastery of historical fiction which is probably why he is still being published today.

Eric says

Fantastic read. Incredibly researched. Rich in detail. I enjoyed it immensely

Mhbright says

Disappointing. I had done some online research looking for a good novel set during the American Revolution, and this is the novel that many people recommended. I bought the whole trilogy and read Arundel first. Arundel dealt with the attempt to capture Quebec city, and this sequel continues with the fighting on and around Lake Champlain leading to the eventual defeat of Burgoyne, the general who said the colonial army was a "rabble in arms." Maybe one shouldn't read two of these close together or maybe this one at almost six hundred pages is just too long, but I grew impatient with it and started skimming for the last hundred pages. In this novel the main character and the woman he loves are ciphers. The comic characters, Cap and Doc, are colorful although they grow tiresome as the story wears on. Benedict Arnold is the hero and comes to life; however, Roberts belabors the genius of Arnold, the incompetence of his fellow generals, and the many injustices done him by Congress. The story stops short of Arnold's betrayal. I must say I did very much enjoy the part of the book in which the main character and his companions are taken captive by Indians. Otherwise, see if you can find a condensed version.

Henry Staunton says

Rabble in Arms by Kenneth Roberts is a historical fiction book about two brothers from Maine who go to fight for their country's independence in the American Revolution, and the challenges they face throughout the war. This book has been praised for its historical accuracy, giving the reader a unique first person perspective into the fighting that occurred in the northern theater during the American Revolution, and thus is a great read for anyone who is interested in learning about the American Revolution. For the person who cares not so much about historical accuracy and more about story, the book still has much to offer, featuring a cast of extremely memorable and diverse characters, many of which were real people who had actually been involved in the revolution.

Irene says

If you had high school history classes similar to mine this book provides proof of how cursory and in some instances falsely those textbooks were in providing an appreciation for how we became the United States. I would strongly recommend this book. This is my third Roberts book and I intend to read all of them.

Helena says

So this book did get better in the end, especially once there was actual battle, considering the book was supposed to be about the Revolutionary war. It was really interesting though to learn more about the true story of Benedict Arnold, when all we really remember him as is as a traitor. I think I would have enjoyed this more if I didn't have to read it as a summer reading assignment.

Cheryl says

My this was long and I'll admit to skipping through a LOT. Mostly because the hero worship of Benedict Arnold just got over the top and tedious. Yes, he was a brilliant General. Yes, he was under-appreciated and frequently hosed over by Congress and other Generals. But ... there are an awful lot of pages dedicated to extolling his virtues and browbeating Congress/Other Generals to the extent that it does take away a bit from what is a really good story. Steven Nason takes a bit of a back seat in this one with the Merrill brothers Peter & Nathaniel moving to the forefront to deal with Ms. Marie de Sabrevois (Nason's ex-paramour from Arundel) and the NY campaigns & ultimate defeat of Burgoyne. There is a lot of great stuff in here and I was initially going to jump immediately into Part 3 of the series (The Lively Lady) but think I need a break.

Don't get me wrong - this is great historical fiction about the American Revolution, probably among the best, but it is a tougher read than Arundel.

Abigail Hartman says

"Rabble in Arms" felt to me like "The Last of the Mohicans," but set during the Revolutionary rather than the French and Indian War - and without Uncas, which is to say, not quite as good. The writing, especially the first-person narration, gives the book a richly *American* flavor: I loved the main character's passion for his home, for his people, for his country, and his tenacity in doing what he felt was right. Roberts presents a refreshingly un-glorious picture of war (another comparison would be to say "Rabble in Arms" is "Killer Angels" for the Revolutionary War), but he also shows, through the eyes of Peter Merrill, the pluck of the untrained, ill-organized American rabble who somehow managed to kick British rear-end. Additionally, he offers a spirited defense of Benedict Arnold that encourages the reader to do more research and rethink the character of that most execrated of gentlemen.

I had only two small disappointments with the novel. One was the lack of development in both Ellen's and Nathaniel's characters; because the main character was apart from them for so long, it was difficult to form an opinion on them. Well, I formed an opinion on Nathaniel, but it wasn't positive. Much more time was spent developing the characters of, say, Doc Means and Cap Huff, where I would have liked to see more depth to Steven Nason and Joseph Phipps and the rest of the crew.

Secondly, the peppering of exclamation marks in the dialogue drove me batty. Small complaint, but nagging.
