

Op-Ed: A Good Book Is a Journey

There are many elements that impact a young person's life – our parents, friends, and teachers of course – but also where we live and the kinds of media we consume. When we think of media, our first thoughts may turn to movies, television, or maybe even video games and social media. For me though, books have had the most profound impact. A good book is a journey. Growing up, I could always count on books to give me a broader perspective by introducing me to new people, places, and ideas. One book in particular had a strong impact on me – David McCullough's *1776*.

1776 was published in 2005 when I was in high school. As a student, I always loved American history, and I jumped at the chance to learn more about one of the most important years in our nation's past. What interested me the most was how victory emerged from failure. General Washington and the Continental Army were underfunded, underfed, struck by disease, and always on the move. At times, the only bright spots came when they were able to retreat and avoid a total defeat – such as at the Battle of Brooklyn. Looking at *1776* from our vantage point over 200 years later, it's shocking to note the number of times when our entire future as a nation was nearly snuffed out; but the Continental Army endured.

The examples of dedication and perseverance that Washington and his army modeled have had a lasting impact on me, as has the lesson that individuals and their decisions really can shape history. Reading books like *1776* enables us to look into a window to the past through which we can glimpse lessons that are applicable today. Each of us has the ability to make a lasting impact at our jobs and in our communities.

As we celebrate literacy week, set some time aside to let a book take you on a journey. What you discover may surprise and impact you in ways you haven't yet imagined.