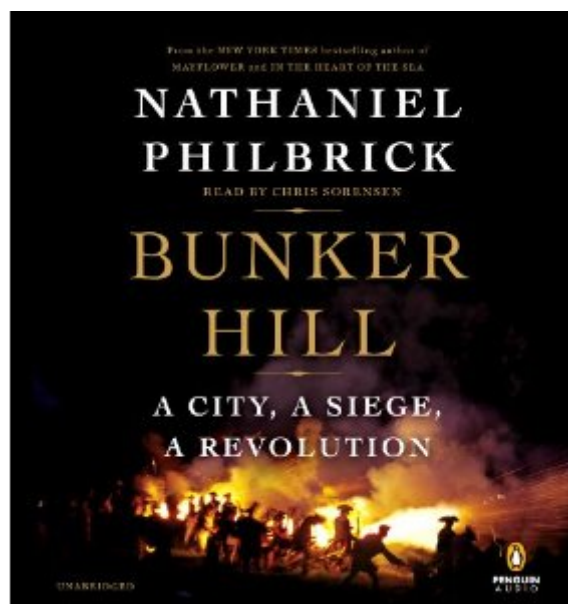


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Bunker Hill: A City, A Siege, A Revolution



Synopsis

Nathaniel Philbrick, the bestselling author of *In the Heart of the Sea* and *Mayflower*, brings his prodigious talents to the story of the Boston battle that ignited the American Revolution. Boston in 1775 is an island city occupied by British troops after a series of incendiary incidents by patriots who range from sober citizens to thuggish vigilantes. After the Boston Tea Party, British and American soldiers and Massachusetts residents have warily maneuvered around each other until April 19, when violence finally erupts at Lexington and Concord. In June, however, with the city cut off from supplies by a British blockade and Patriot militia poised in siege, skirmishes give way to outright war in the Battle of Bunker Hill. It would be the bloodiest battle of the Revolution to come, and the point of no return for the rebellious colonists. Philbrick brings a fresh perspective to every aspect of the story. He finds new characters, and new facets to familiar ones. The real work of choreographing rebellion falls to a thirty-three year old physician named Joseph Warren who emerges as the on-the-ground leader of the Patriot cause and is fated to die at Bunker Hill. Others in the cast include Paul Revere, Warren's fiancée, the poet Mercy Scollay, a newly recruited George Washington, the reluctant British combatant General Thomas Gage and his more bellicose successor William Howe, who leads the three charges at Bunker Hill and presides over the claustrophobic cauldron of a city under siege as both sides play a nervy game of brinkmanship for control. With passion and insight, Philbrick reconstructs the revolutionary landscape - geographic and ideological - in a mesmerizing narrative of the robust, messy, blisteringly real origins of America.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

(via advanced review copy) Have you ever heard of Dr. Joseph Warren? If you're not a revolutionary war buff, you're to be forgiven if you haven't (at least I hope so, since I'd never heard of him). Warren, a popular doctor and president of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, is the unsung hero of the American Revolution who quite possibly may have been the revolution's top general and perhaps our first president had he not been shot on Bunker Hill (well technically Breed's Hill, which we learn, is where the battle of Bunker Hill was actually fought), while trying to rally the troops. The fleshing out of Dr. Warren's life and his stomping grounds in and around Boston, are Nathan Philbrick's domain in *Bunker Hill: A City, a Siege, a Revolution*. Philbrick has the gift of great historians and writers; that is the ability to see the much chronicled with a depth and creativity that helps us see it with fresh eyes too. David McCullough's *John Adams* immediately comes to mind, as does Ron Chernow's tour de force biography of George Washington. Nathan Philbrick has done that here, except in this case, the main protagonist is Boston--at the time, the city "known for its love of liberty, its piety, and its prostitutes." Though soon and forever thereafter, it would be known for the bravery of its beleaguered and besieged citizens. Given the recent marathon bombing, the timing of this book's release is a bit eerie. In *Bunker Hill*, Philbrick has done a powerful if sometimes painful to read job of recreating vivid battle scenes in and around Boston. What makes this much more than just a lesson in military geography is his well-crafted sense of storytelling and his finely tuned sensitivity to the personal drives behind the individuals making history through war and politics.

Bunker Hill is a colorful and exacting history of the Battle for Boston and the events leading to it. Philbrick's strength is in his presentation of a driving, detailed narrative. It focuses on the questions of who, what and when albeit with a bit less emphasis on why. The Battle of Bunker Hill makes little sense without an understanding of how Boston came to be a city under siege in 1776. The author does a good job in the first half of the book, however, in adding fresh insights to his summary of the events preceding the conflict. In doing so, he gives full credit to the role of Joseph Warren, who perished at Bunker Hill, avoiding the usual historical emphasis on Adams and Hancock. In the weeks ahead of Lexington and Concord, Warren "not only continued his leadership role in the Congress and the Committee of Safety: he would be present in the ranks at virtually every encounter between colonial and British forces." In the two critical months prior to the battles at Lexington Green and Bunker Hill, Warren "became the most influential leader in the province of Massachusetts." Philbrick is at his best in rendering these encounters in a journalistic style that

succeeds in bringing to life scenes that sometimes can seem colorless through the process of so many retellings. Witness his description of the first British volley at Concord Bridge: "Action private Abner Hosmer was shot through the face and killed instantly."

Nathaniel Philbrick continues to publish intelligent history that is accurate and written for a general readership. His latest effort, *Bunker Hill: A City, A Siege, A Revolution* continues such a wonderful record that includes *Mayflower: A Story of Courage, Community, and War* as well as *The Last Stand: Custer, Sitting Bull and the Battle of the Little Bighorn*. All clearly demonstrate the author's talent for research and demonstrate a huge curiosity. It is also refreshing that, in addition to the cast of characters we've come to love and respect in the American Revolution such as George Washington, John and Sam Adams, and Paul Revere, that we're introduced to men such as Dr. Joseph Warren, who was perhaps one of the most significant individuals in Massachusetts and Boston leading up to and during the Battle of Bunker Hill (really Breed's Hill). He was killed during the battle and might have been a major mover in the years to come. One of Philbrick's characteristics is his workman like manner in delivering facts such as Dr. Warren to the reader. However, this does not mean his prose is drab or not interesting. In fact he is one of the more talented authors writing in the history genres presently. It is fair to say that the American Revolution was the result of a movement of resistance to British unfairness and harsh treatment, both on the American continent and also in London. Much of the population of Massachusetts never really felt that full-scale revolt would happen, until it actually did. It should be pointed out that while Philbrick's book deals almost exclusively with the Boston area, growing dissatisfaction was present in other colonial centers, but it was the spark in Lexington, Concord and Bunker Hill that finally set the kindling afire.

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