Every American interested in understanding the American character and the American past should read this book. There are vivid history lessons on almost every page. The constitution becomes not merely a brilliant blueprint for governance. It is—and was also—the only alternative to chaos.

- Thomas Fleming, author of “The Perils of Peace”

Acclaim for “The Unexpected George Washington.”

It's hard to imagine George Washington as playful, tender, or funny. But Harlow Unger searches to find these seldom-seen aspects of the private man, and the result is a far more complete and believable founding father.

- James C. Rees, Executive Director, Historic Mount Vernon

An intimate view of the American hero who managed to follow his ambitions to great power without being disdained for them.

- Publishers Weekly

Features:

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My Personal Review:

Tremendous book on how Washington, in alliance with key members of the revolution, Hamilton, Madison and Jay, step forward to improve the weak Articles of Confederation with a central Federal Constitution that establishes a central government that can establish foreign affairs, commerce, develop an army/navy for defense and work for the common good for the nation over all. The opposition is from predominately large states, New York and Virginia whose opposition can lead to a fracturing of the States needed to approve the constitution. With opposition led by Henry, the great orator, along with George Mason; Virginia is on the verge of voting against the constitution. Governor Clinton of NY, secure in power and the financial gains of NY in charging interstate fees for commerce is
another leader of the anti-Federalists. The author details the key conflicts, primarily the distrust of the western residents made up of frontiersman and farmers who feel neglected by the eastern aristocracy, along with those who value States rights in fear of a central demagogue. The most entertaining part of the book is the battle of Virginia where the Virginia legislature debates the passing of the Constitution with the gifted speaker Henry on center stage, flamboyant, charismatic; Henry electrifies his argument and appeal to the westerners. Federalists, led by Madison, use logical and legal arguments that are Henry's less than proficient abilities. Also, Unger discusses the roles of Hamilton, Madison and Jay in writing the famous Federalist papers that battle Clinton publicly in NY where both parties write under symbolic names. Also, fascinating is the final tactic that Hamilton and Washington to move the Congress out of its lethargy to initially pass the constitution, moving it forward to the States for ratification. Hamilton's 9 hour speech shocks the congress; which was his purpose, into rebuffing what could be a more fearful state of government, monarchy. Although a method to cajole the congress, Hamilton's political enemies in the future would use that speech against him, knowing full well what its original purpose was. Even after the Constitution is passed by the majority of the States, the conflict is not over as Henry leads a campaign to have anti-Federalists dominated the new government's legislature. Madison is a key player in preventing Henry's political disruption and makes a political move that initially infuriates the Federalists as he supports a bill of rights to amend the Constitution that turns into a brilliant compromise deflating much of the anti-Federalist's argument. The history also provides a fascinating look at the States back then, Rhode Island who was benefiting from its geographic location on the sea between two large trade States was the most reluctant to join due to their financial boondoggle of having ports and sea lanes that were primary areas of commerce. Excellent book, well written, replete with reasonable and fascinating biographies of the central players such as George Mason who was so despised by the county he represented, he had to be elected to the Virginia legislature from another one. Wonderfully written book in just over 210 pages with the complete U.S. Constitution as an appendix. I discovered this book while visiting Mount Vernon, how fitting!

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