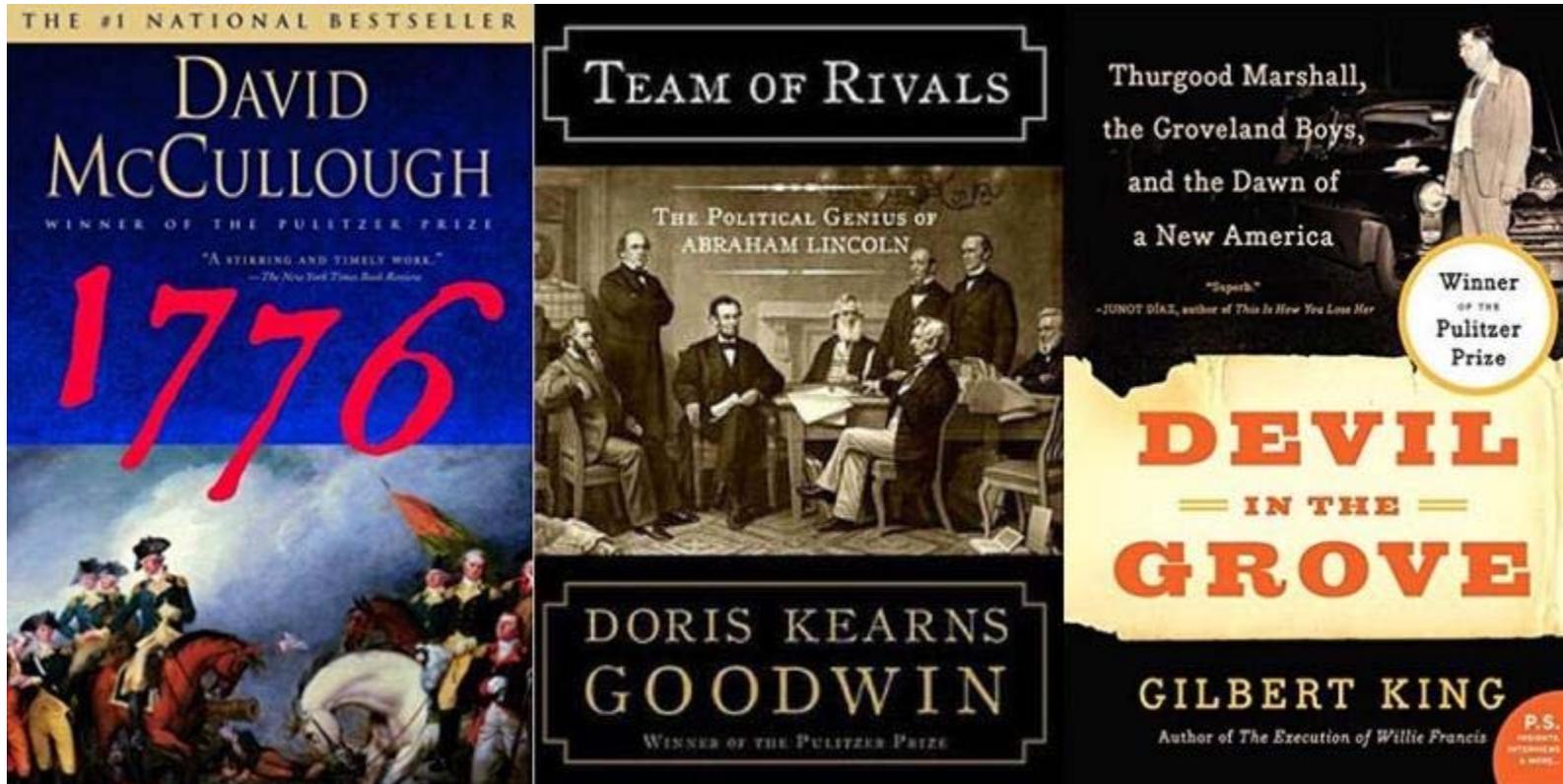


WLRN #FridayReads: American History Edition

By NANCY KLINGENER • JUN 30, 2017
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For this Friday before the Fourth of July, we asked some South Floridians about their favorite works of American history. Tell us what you're reading — or your favorite American history book — by tweeting us @wlrn.

Capt. Bobby “Beetle” Baker, Commanding Officer, Naval Air Station Key West

I last studied American History at West Point in 1990 during my sophomore year and I didn't really have a strong desire to read more about it (outside of

historic military battles that intrigued me) because I was super busy with my jobs in the military. It wasn't until I was a Senior Fellow at Oxford University in 2013 that I yearned again to better understand how our great nation came to be the best in the world.

One evening an older Irish gentleman (he was a UN Ambassador speaking at the OU Strategic Studies Group) yelled at me from across the room shouting, "You darn Americans!!! You darn Americans!!! You think you can achieve the impossible ... and, by golly, you are right!!" I asked the man to accompany me to the Turf Tavern so that I could buy him a pint and further discuss his thoughts and views.

This gentleman explained to me in a very envious tone how, starting back with the Revolutionary War, America has and continues to achieve the impossible. He got me thinking about our country's successes and naturally I was drawn to better understand our independence. I picked up a copy of David McCullough's "[1776](#)" and thoroughly enjoyed the book. David described the first full year of the American Revolution from both U.S. and British perspectives. The Continental Army was a rag-tag bunch who was out-manned and out-gunned and lacked experience and discipline compared to the largely superior British troops who launched the largest invasion force in its history to end the unrest in the colonies. With much luck, determination and innovation, George Washington led farmers, schoolteachers and young boys to an impossible victory. Great book that I highly recommend to everyone!

Dr. Eduardo J. Padrón, President of Miami-Dade College

I concur with President Barack Obama when he cited "[Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln](#)," by Doris Kearns Goodwin, as the book he'd enjoy reading while on a deserted island.

In this biographical portrait of President Lincoln and members of his cabinet — some of whom at one point were also his political rivals — Goodwin depicts how America's 16th President, with unparalleled political intellect, reconciles conflicting personalities to ultimately achieve abolition and victory in the American Civil War. I believe this story remains relevant in modern times. Faced with continuous political turmoil, we must all make a concerted effort to put our differences aside and work together for the well-being of our nation.

Wilson Sayre, WLRN reporter/producer

One of my favorite books of American history is [“Devil in the Grove: Thurgood Marshall, the Groveland Boys, and the Dawn of a New America.”](#)

The book chronicles the case of the Groveland Four. Four young black boys were arrested in central Florida for the supposed rape of a white woman, highlighting all the wild shortcomings of justice in a racist community. Living in South Florida, it's a good reminder to look at a piece of Florida history that highlights just how much in common parts of Florida had with the rest of the south. The book also follows Thurgood Marshall's career, how he came to represent the four young men and went on to sit on the United States Supreme Court. It's incredibly well-written and a good, healthy read for all.