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Reviews

Lexington and Concord: The Battle Heard Round the World, by George Daughan, W.W. Norton & Co., New York, 2018, \$27.95

In this analysis of the clashes at Lexington and Concord, Mass., on April 19, 1775, author Daughan pushes past the simple *what* of history to illuminate the more thought-provoking *why*. He hinges his study on two powerful forces that prompted the engagement—one broad-based, the other centered on a single person.

The former was the colonial perception of King George III's egregious overreach into Americans' personal liberties, which fostered deepening resentment. What the British failed to realize was that, as the author says, "Farmers and artisans were determined to fight it out."

The latter was the king's conviction colonists owed him their allegiance, and that a military chastisement would cause the "loudmouth agitators [to be] deserted—embarrassed by the country people, who would be afraid to come out and fight."

It was the Dec. 16, 1773, Boston Tea Party that fanned the embers of resentment into flames of open revolt. The British Parliament reacted by imposing the aptly named Intolerable Acts, both to punish the Massachusetts colonists and to reinforce London's right to tax them.

Caught in the middle of the cascading events was General Thomas Gage, the commander of British forces in North America, who was under pressure to act boldly and teach the colonists a lesson. Although Gage realized his force was too small for the task, King George pressured him to use his troops in increasingly punitive ways. With the April 1775 killing of Colonial militiamen on the Lexington Green and the unexpected British embarrassment afterward at Concord, Gage was proven right. Unfortunately, it was too late—the war was under way.

—Joseph Callo