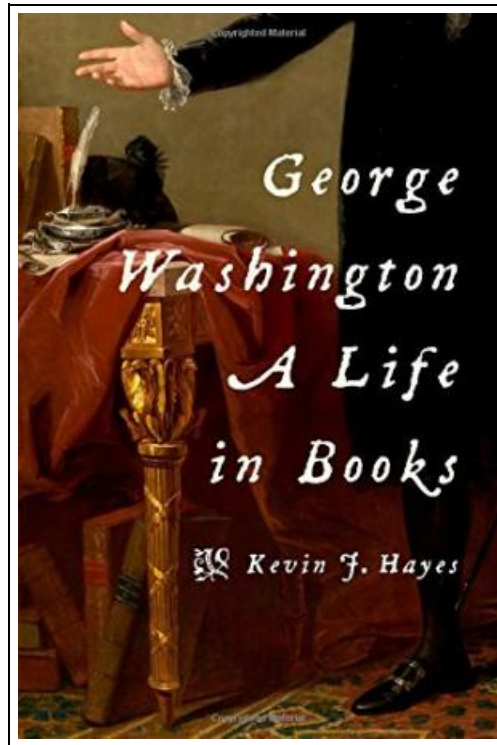


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Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2017. Hardback. Condition: New. Language: English . Brand New Book. When it comes to the Founding Fathers, Thomas Jefferson, Ben Franklin, and Alexander Hamilton are generally singled out as the great minds of early America. Up until the present day, George Washington has never been taken seriously as an intellectual. Indeed, John Adams once snobbishly dismissed him as too illiterate, unlearned, unread for his station and reputation. Yet Adams and most of the men who knew Washington were unaware of his regular devotion to reading as a program of self-improvement. Based on an exhaustive amount of research at the Library of Congress, the collections at Mount Vernon, and rare book archives scattered across the country, Kevin J. Hayes draws on juvenilia, letters, diaries, pamphlets, and the close to 1,000 books owned by Washington to reconstruct the active intellectual life that has gone largely unnoticed in conventional narratives of the first US president. Despite being a lifelong reader, Washington felt a sense of acute embarrassment about his relative lack of formal education and cultural sophistication, and in this lively literary biography, Hayes reconstructs how Washington worked tirelessly to improve his mind. Beginning with the primers, forgotten periodicals, conduct books, and classic eighteenth-century novels such as Tom Jones that shaped Washington's early life, Hayes engages with Washington's letters and journals, charting the many ways the books of his upbringing affected decisions before and during the Revolutionary War. The final section of the book covers the voluminous reading that occurred during Washington's presidency and his retirement at Mount Vernon. Throughout, Hayes also engages with Washington's writings as well as his readings, starting with The Journal of Major George Washington and going through his Farewell Address. The sheer breadth of titles under review here allow...

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