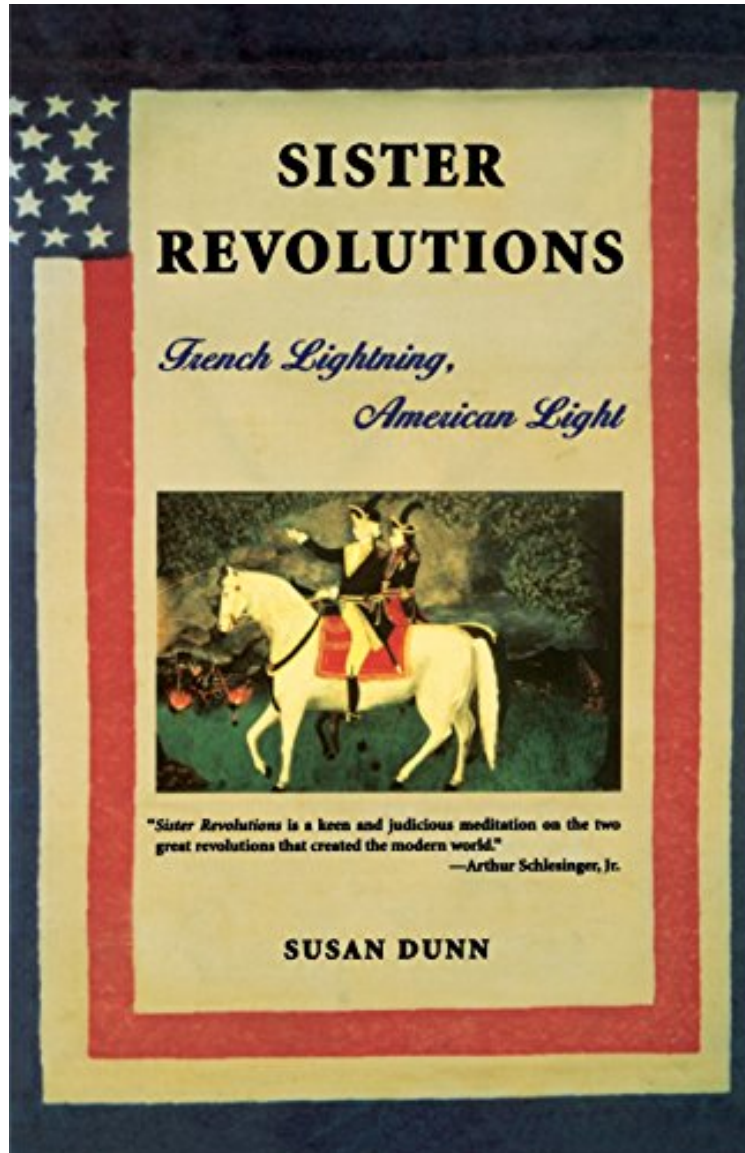


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Susan Dunn : Sister Revolutions: French Lightning, American Light before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Sister Revolutions: French Lightning, American Light:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Interesting perspective By Leon Lam This book is a comparative analysis of the American and French revolutions. Dunn argues that the experience, open-mindedness, gentlemanly

manner, and emphasis on the protection of rights of the Founding Fathers are the key factors for the peaceful transition in America while the lack of these characteristics led to bloodbath and chaos in France. The author shows a high degree of sophistication in this work. Well researched and lucidly outlined, this book is an outstanding study of the two revolutions and provides a unique perspective to understand the two important historical events. Her concluding remark on the value of political conflicts in democracies is particularly alarming in today's America, where debates often goes sour and differences in opinions cause acrimony. A must-read. 4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A Great Read! By K. Unger Having read quite a bit about both the French and American Revolutions, I found this book to be a wonderfully written comparison of both the ideology underlying the movements and the continuing consequences of those ideologies. This is a very meaningful book, both for students of the two revolutions, as well as for people interested in political science and government in general. Not only does it do an excellent job of distilling the movements, but it is extremely well written. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Revolutions, America and France By Harry Trumfio The Sister Revolutions by Susan Dunn is an outstanding comparison of the whys and wherefores of both revolutions. It delves into the readiness of each nation to create, implement and preserve the democratic process. Highly recommended for anyone who wants to know why America succeeded in its great experiment.

What the two great modern revolutions can teach us about democracy today The American and French revolutions presented the world with two very different visions of democracy. Although both professed similar Enlightenment ideals of freedom, equality, and justice and set similar political agendas, there were also fundamental differences. The French sought a complete break with a thousand years of history; the Americans were content to preserve many aspects of their English heritage. Why did the two revolutions follow such different trajectories? And what lessons do they offer us about democracy today? In lucid narrative style, Dunn captures the personalities and lives of the great figures of both revolutions, and shows how their stories added up to make two very different events.

.com American historians have long appreciated France's contribution to the American Revolution, led by champions such as the Marquis de Lafayette and given full force by the combined Franco-American defeat of the British army at Yorktown. French historians have returned the favor by analyzing the contribution of American revolutionary thought to the French Revolution, which followed the American struggle for independence by only a decade. Susan Dunn adds a well-written, lively narrative history to the record, with a cast of characters that ranges from the austere warrior George Washington to the firebrand Robespierre. More importantly, she limns just how different the American and French revolutionary projects were. In her view, the American Revolution emphasized personal freedom, thanks in large measure to the arguments of philosophers mistrustful of government in any form (Thomas Jefferson and James Madison among them). For the French, she suggests, personal freedom was of less importance than consensus, public order, and economic democracy; of paramount concern was the incorporation of ordinary people, the Third Estate, into the state. Comparing the American Bill of Rights with the French Declaration of the Rights of Man, Dunn shows how these "sister revolutions" diverged. The result is an engaging work of political history, one that illuminates the events of later years on both sides of the Atlantic. --Gregory McNamee From Publishers Weekly The American and French Revolutions claimed the same Enlightenment ideals: freedom, equality, justice. Still, the two events were profoundly different in method and result. The American Revolution led to a well-reasoned public dialogue on the nature of democracy and the role of the fledgling government. This dialogue culminated first in the Articles of Confederation and then the Constitution, on which the country has been anchored securely ever since. The French Revolution, on the other hand, led to the height of unreasonableness: a bloodbath of recrimination followed by a fragile republic destined to yield again and again to upheaval. Williams College professor Dunn (*The Deaths of Louis XVI*) explores the roots of these differences, finding that they spring from differences in the basic philosophy of citizenship espoused in each embryo state. While the Americans believed individual rights to be paramount, the French insisted on the appearance of public unity. Individual liberty was no more valued in the early French Republic than it had been under the Bourbons, she explains: "Armed with the 'truth,' Jacobins could brand any individuals who dared to disagree with them traitors or fanatics," writes Dunn. "Any distinction between their own political adversaries and the people's 'enemies' was obliterated." And as Dunn observes, tyranny does not good nation-building make. Dunn's comparative analysis is solid and well articulated As far as it goes. A penultimate chapter, "Enlightenment Legacies," which treats the influence of the French and American experiences on subsequent revolutions from Russia to Africa, only begins to explore the legacies left by the sister revolutions. (Oct.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal In this insightful work, Dunn (history of ideas, Williams Coll.) quickly puts to rest the mistaken notion that all political revolutions are the same. She notes that while the American and French revolutions were "sister" revolutions, there were some distinct differences, most importantly in visions employed and policies pursued. Dunn explores the dramatic differences between these two ideological episodes of the modern political world, illustrating the limits and excesses of revolutionary political thought and behavior. Central to her work is the thesis that the American revolutionaries were more properly guided by skepticism concerning the perils of putting too much faith in reason;

they believed, she argues, that experience and a healthy dose of historical understanding and appreciation were critical. Highly recommended for all public libraries. A Stephen Kent Shaw, Northwest Nazarene Coll., Nampa, ID Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.