



Finishing Becca: A Story about Peggy Shippen and Benedict Arnold

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An independent-minded young maid tells the story of social-climber Peggy Shippen and how she influenced Benedict Arnold's betrayal of the Patriot forces. Revolutionary Philadelphia is brought to life as Becca seeks to find her "missing pieces" while exploring the complicated issues of the war between the impoverished independence men and the decadent British Tories. "This tale of treachery comes alive under [Rinaldi's] pen."--*Kirkus Reviews*

Finishing Becca: A Story about Peggy Shippen and Benedict Arnold Details

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From Reader Review Finishing Becca: A Story about Peggy Shippen and Benedict Arnold for online ebook

Eve Martineau says

Finishing Becca started off kind of slow in most of the beginning. It was really hard to get into the book and stay interested. Although, it did give me a good point of view of different families during the Revolutionary War. Each family was so different in a lot of aspects so it was easy to see the different points of view. I wouldn't recommend this book just because it was hard to start off. If you can't get into the book its hard to want to read the rest.

Susan Stonesifer says

I love this story that illustrates the class system among the colonists/Americans. There's even an Alexander Hamilton appearance!

Kathryn says

3.75 STARS

I haven't read Rinaldi since my early teens (Time Enough for Drums seemed SO thrilling and romantic at the time!) and I'm not sure if this book just wasn't as good as some of those I read back then, or if I wasn't as wowed because I have read some truly great authors since then and Rinaldi just doesn't quite hold up.

That said, this was still a very enjoyable and fast read that held my interest and she did a fine job of incorporating fact with fiction. At times the theme of Becca needing to find her missing pieces and "finish" herself felt authentic and others it felt forced and even a bit trite. And I felt that we spent rather too much time with backstory and Becca's early days at the Shippen residence (the Benedict Arnold aspect doesn't come in until about 2/3 of the way through). For all that Becca is the protagonist, I never felt that she was fully developed. Peggy Shippen really is the star of the novel, and Rinaldi did a good job of portraying her "hysterics" and spoiled, manipulative nature and her reprehensible behavior, without making her a complete villainess (the Author's Note gives a more complete picture of Peggy). Peggy's father is also three-dimensional, the toll on both his finances and his mental health as he finds it more and more difficult to "stay neutral" in the revolution is touching. I appreciated that Rinaldi gave equal share to both rich and poor, showing how both can be seduced by power and money, and yet both can also have fortitude and morals. I found the differing views of the Patriots and the Loyalists quite interesting, especially as it comes from a teenage girls' perspective (for example, the British soldiers didn't consider "American" girls to be proper ladies; and the American girls purposely dressed in homespun clothes to differentiate themselves from the Loyalists who still wore British finery).

I didn't really know anything about the Benedict Arnold chapter of the American Revolution, except that he was the notorious traitor, and I came away from this book feeling like I understood his story well. I do still want to know why Washington trusted him so completely--if there are any American History scholars out

there, please post and let me know, otherwise I will have to keep researching when I have the time.

All in all, an entertaining and educational read (especially with Rinaldi's fine Author's Note explaining fact from fiction and telling "the rest of the story" about the Arnolds) and a great choice for 4th of July!

Ann says

I LOVED me some Ann Rinaldi when I was twelve, and I bought this book during that obsession, yet never read it due to my freakish book organization rules. I thought that she did a great job of making history accessible to younger readers, without talking down to them (she gives a glossary of lesser-known historical terms at the end of the book instead). Since the main character is always the same age as the intended reader, it makes it easy for us to understand and relate to a person that could seem completely foreign to a reader separated by two hundred years. Becca's position in the Shippen household makes the book really fascinating as she crosses class boundaries, but I thought the ending fell apart a bit and we end up being told what ultimately happens, instead of witnessing it along with Becca. I didn't enjoy this book as much as other Rinaldi books I've read since she is mostly observing the actions of others, rather than acting herself. Or maybe I'm just older. Still, I wanted to keep reading, despite my knowledge of what would happen.

Janie says

Another good Ann Rinaldi. As I said before, Rinaldi writes above average historical fiction aimed at what used to be called "juvenile" but now labeled "young adult." Though written with that age group in mind, Rinaldi's books are interesting, informative, and enjoyable for adults.

Also, Rinaldi doesn't take excessive liberties with the history she includes. At the end of each book, she includes a substantial paged author's note in which she explains and substantiates her choice of viewpoints, tells the reader what is fiction and what is not. That's some good reader support material that gives credence to her story.

Shoshanah says

Finishing Becca takes place during the American Revolution in Philadelphia. The title refers to how Becca's mother sends Becca to be a maid in the Shippen household to help her find her missing pieces and become a finished woman. While in the household she becomes acquainted with General Benedict Arnold.

From elementary school I know who the traitor Benedict Arnold is. But while I knew we betrayed the American to the British, I wasn't sure the details of the event. By the end of the book I can't send a know every detail of Benedict Arnold, but understand his story quite a bit more.

This isn't a time period I frequent, and being where I found the book I was a little hesitant. But it wound up being a pleasant surprise. I wound be more than willing to read more of her books, or even reread the book I was assigned to read back in 8th grade (In My Father's House was the book after a quick google search.)

Megan says

I loved it; I've always loved reading about Benedict Arnold, since he's a very interesting character in history, and I was pleased to find a novel about the story. I loved Becca. She was hilarious, and certainly long-suffering with Peggy. It was very exciting; I could only put it down to get some sleep. I'm glad that I read it.

"Old Washington said any woman who got herself in such a state surely must be innocent. Which just goes to show you what a passel of fools all me are, Opal, generals or not." (One of my favorite Becca lines).

Cassiejoan says

Ann Rinaldi's The Fifth of March: A Story of the Boston Massacre was one of those books that made me love reading. I stumbled on it at the public library in middle school and devoured it. I had no idea history could be interesting. And then a whole new world opened up to me...and I've been reading historical fiction ever since.

????? ?????? says

am I in love with this novel? Yes indeeeeeeeeeeeeeeed ...

It's simply an amzaing historical novel ... Omi bought me the book and I wasn't encouraged to read it as it deals with one of the issues that I hate the most "THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION" (it's not the occasion to tell u how much I hate their talks about their fight for independence when they occupy others) But I picked the book and started reading it just cos Omi asked me to do so (she did it really kindly) ... and there is the surprise !!!! fascinating language , beautiful discription , and an amazing style of linking events together ...

Becca no one is ever finished dear ...

Annabel ♥ says

This review can also be found on Leopard Kitty Books, <http://leopardkittybooks.blogspot.com> . :)

The day I bought this book was one of those days that I kept staring and staring at the YA section of the bookstore and every book looked the same and none of them interesting. Usually I just can't get enough of YA books but that day I was looking for something new, something different from the books that I usually read. Well I was right. This book was certainly different from most of the books I have read in my YA-obsessed years.

For some reason the day I bought it I was in the mood for some good historical fiction. I sifted through the layered shelves of the bookstore with my mom, who (unlike most moms) has a keen eye for good young adult books and seems to always know when I'll like a book and when I will not. Some of the books I read

she looks at with horror/disgust, but most of the time she has a good eye for YA books and scrapes up something I more or less enjoy. While I did this my mom stumbled upon this author--Ann Rinaldi--read the blurb and handed it to me. I looked at it, it seemed interesting enough so I decided to buy it.

Anyway, about the book! I found this book really interesting because while the main protagonist and her family are fictional characters, some of the characters are real. I didn't realize this until about halfway through the book, when I was looking at the cover and the part of the title that said "A Story About Peggy Shippen and Benedict Arnold" made it sound like these characters were real, so I Google searched them and guess what? They are. I liked how the author combined her imagination with real historical figures and blended them together to create a good story-line.

Another thing that I noticed was that while the story was told by Becca, she didn't seem to be the main character. All through the book the main focus seemed to be on Peggy. Becca made many observations on Peggy's character but in the end it was mostly left to the reader to determine what they thought about Peggy. I for one didn't like her at all. Her spoiled behavior and the way she acted in general were enough to make me want to hurl. I guess it's a good lesson for people because it will show them how spoiled children are terrible. Anyhow, I really didn't like Peggy but liked her sisters a lot, especially Elizabeth. I liked her rebellious attitude from the start--the way that she dressed like a "boy" and that was rebellious back then--and the way she laughed in Peggy's face when Peggy was being a spoiled little princess. I couldn't help but like what Rinaldi did to enhance her character.

There were a lot of historical books by this author in the section of the bookstore, but this one caught my interest because of the title--"Finishing Becca". I had no idea what it meant by "finishing" and how it could apply to finishing a girl. So I decided to read it to find out. To all of you who are thinking about reading this book, it was about getting "finished" (sort of an old fashioned term). Getting finished usually involved going to school for young girls but since Becca either couldn't afford finishing school or couldn't go to it, she works as a maid to Peggy to get "finished", which apparently consists of: learning how to paint watercolors, learning to speak and understand French, and being able to dance properly. While these things seem frivolous to girls in 2012 they were actually quite important in 1778.

Why, might you ask, did you not rate it 5 stars? Well if you know me, YOU know that I never like books to be boring. I like them to be packed with nonstop action, and this book slowed down at times and after a while I would flip through a couple of pages and see what chapter looked interesting, and then I would "skip" to the chapter (skim the book really fast until I got to the good part). All books have their slow parts, right?

I'd recommend this book to you if you are an avid YA reader who is looking for a different kind of YA book and appreciates historical fiction and historical writing.

Rebecca Radnor says

The book is based on historical events and written in two parts, first the British occupation of Philadelphia when Peggy Shippen a local beauty becomes close friends with the British commander John André, and second, when the Patriots retake the city and Peggy meets and marries Benedict Arnold, and then Arnold's ultimate betrayal of the patriots with André hung as a spy for helping Arnold in his attempt to surrender West Point to the British. (If this is a spoiler for you than, I'm sorry, but you weren't paying attention in your history classes.)

However, the story is also about Becca, Peggy's maid. A common theme for Rinaldi is to make her main characters observers on history events who are girls coming of age; in this regard, this is one of her better efforts. Throughout the story Becca negotiates complex and subtle choices regarding morals and values and

what she really wants for herself.

In the first half, Becca is sent by her mother (a woman whose fortunes have radically declined after the death of her husband) to work as a maid to Peggy the prettiest girl in Philadelphia, whose character is suspiciously similar to that of Veruca Salt from Charlie and the Chocolate Factory if only a bit more vicious. The agreement is that in lieu of pay Peggy's parents will train Becca in all the feminine skills that she would have learned in finishing school (french, music, needlework, elocution, proper manners), hence the book's title. This is central to the internal issues Becca struggles with throughout the book, because she has always felt the loss of the life she would have lived had her father not died; Becca takes 'finishing' to mean that the parts within herself that she feels are empty and missing, because of this change in circumstances, will somehow be filled in. She looks to the rich people around her to decide what those pieces would have been and should be, to be her role models and guides.

In the second half, the story's emphasis shifts entirely from Becca's internal development to Peggy's marriage and the story of Benedict Arnold, and in essence its as though Rinaldi forgets about Becca. Now she's just observing the story and reacting to it, but very little internal development. Rinaldi's got to get out the tale about Arnold, but is not longer focused on her main character's development, and often times even though she's been developing the character to have a backbone in the last second the character loses its and tells no one what they know. This is something you see often with Rinaldi as she approaches the end of her books. They're not supposed to be longer than is appropriate for YA novels, she gets near the end, she's GOT to get out the historical tale and after spending so much time and effort developing a complex tale, crunches out the ending so it will fit the required length and explain why this person wasn't known in the history books.... because in the end they did nothing about what they knew.

up until the 2nd part, its a great book, but then the quality takes a dive

Becca Lee says

I bought this book because it has my name in the title. It was cute, probably 3 stars but it gets a bonus because I'm vain.

Bronwyn says

This book has everything I love in Ann Rinaldi's books. History, intrigue, interesting characters, and then her author's note telling you what's true or not. Really great. Will have to reread some others here soon.

Isabel Jacobs says

Becca Syng is a clever girl on the quest to find her "missing pieces." When her mother sends her to the Philadelphia home of the Shippens, a wealthy Quaker family, to be "finished," Becca begins to think that she is meant to live like they do, surrounded by riches. Yet as the servant to Peggy Shippen, a spoiled, pretty daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Shippen, Becca realizes that the life of the wealthy isn't how it looks on the outside. Peggy is constantly manipulating her parents for everything they could possibly give her, including General Benedict Arnold, a man who Peggy's parents strongly dislike. When Becca moves in with the new

couple to stay as Peggy's servant, she watches in terror as Peggy gets the American general to turn on his allies and become a Loyalist.

Ann Rinaldi has outdone herself with this novel. Finally, readers will be able to see the Revolutionary War from a fresh point of view. This remarkable book will be a good read for young adults and adults alike.

PLEASE ADD COMMENTS!!!! They are gladly accepted.

Becky says

I wanted to like this book, I bought it at a used bookstore on a whim because my name is similar to the title and I'm from PA. However, something about the style was just so offputting. It didn't flow for me, I was never engaged, it was just a total slog. Becca's thoughts were very heavy-handed, I feel. You know, her doomsday pronouncements and all. Like, Peggy thought it would be like ____ and it was. It didn't feel like the voice of a rather immature young girl. I wasn't invested in Becca, her mother, Peggy, the revolution, the British, anything. This was drier than some nonfiction history books I've read. The constant dithering over class, the absence of good pacing, I just could not deal with this book and I have nothing positive to say.
