

THE LIBRARY OF THE FOUNDING FATHERS

The Founding Fathers of the United States were among the best-read generations in history. Because of their extensive reading, they knew human nature was flawed, but also capable of greatness. That is why they constructed a government that divided power, gave each division the ability to check and balance the other, and insisted that only a knowledgeable and virtuous people could maintain a free government, even with the best of constitutions. They cited writers, historians, philosophers, lawyers, and statesmen from many nations across thousands of years of history. Here is a growing list of those books and authors that were in their libraries. This list will continue to be updated. (Last updated May 29, 2017)

CLASSICAL PERIOD

Homer

- *Iliad and the Odyssey*

Herodotus (484-425 BC)

- *The Histories*

Thucydides (c. 460-c. 400 BC)

- *History of the Peloponnesian War*

Plato (c. 428-c. 348 BC)

- *The Republic* (c. 380)
- *The Laws*
- *Rhetoric*
- *Poetics*

Aristotle (384-322 BC)

- *Nicomachean Ethics*
- *Politics*

Demosthenes (384-322 BC)

- *The Orations of Demosthenes* (the Olynthiacs, the Phillipics, public trials, political speeches)

Polybius (c. 200-c. 118 BC)

- *The Histories*

Cicero (106-43 BC)

- *De Legibus* (“*On the Laws*”)
- *De Officiis* (“*On Duties*”)
- *De Oratore* (“*On Oratory*”)
- *De re publica* (“*On the Commonwealth*”)

Virgil (70-19 BC)

- *Aeneid* (c. 29-19 BC)

Titus Livius (59 BC-17 AD), “Livy”

- *History of Rome*

Plutarch (c. 46-125 BC)

- *Parallel Lives* (second century BC)

Pliny the Elder (23-79)

- *Natural History* (79)

Pliny the Younger (61-c. 113)

- *Epistulae* (“Letters”)

Epictetus (c. 50-135)

- *Discourses*
- *Enchiridion*

Tacitus (c. 56-120)

- *On the Origin and Situation of the Germanic Peoples* (“Germania”)
- *Histories* (c. 100-10)
- *The Annals*

Marcus Aurelius (121-80)

- *Meditations*

Sacred Books

- *Bible* (fourth century)

MEDIEVAL PERIOD

Justinian (c. 482-565)

- *Corpus Juris Civilis* (sixth century), the “civil law”

Henry de Bracton (c. 1210-c. 1268)

- *On the Laws and Customs of England* (mid-thirteenth century)

John Fortescue (1394-1479)

- *In Praise of the Laws of England* (c. 1468-71)
- *The Governance of England* (1471)

Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527)

- *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Livy* (1531)
- *The Prince* (1532)

Thomas More (1478-1535)

- *Utopia* (1551)

EARLY MODERN PERIOD

Michel de Montaigne (1533-92)

- *Essays*

Sir Edward Coke (1552-1634)

- *Coke’s Reports* (1600-15)
- *Institutes of the Laws of England* (1628-44)

Richard Hooker (1554-1600)

- *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (late sixteenth century)

Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

- *The Advancement of Learning* (1605)
- *Novum Organum* (“New Instrument”), 1620

- *De Augmentis Scientiarum* (“Partitions of Science”), 1623
- *Essays* (1625)
- *The New Atlantis* (1627)

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

- All the plays and sonnets

Hugo Grotius (1583-1645)

- *On the Law of War and Peace* (1625)

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)

- *Leviathan* (1651)

John Milton (1608-74)

- *Areopagitica: A Speech by Mr. John Milton for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing, to the Parliament of England* (1644)
- *The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth* (1660)
- *Paradise Lost* (1674)

Matthew Hale (1609-76)

- *A History and Analysis of the Common Law of England* (1713)
- *The History of the Pleas of the Crown* (1736)

James Harrington (1611-77)

- *Oceana* (1656)

Algernon Sidney (1622-83)

- *Discourses Concerning Government* (1698)

William Petyt (1636-1707)

- *The Ancient Right of the Commons of England Asserted* (1680)

John Somers (1651-1716)

- *Vox populi, vox dei: Judgment of Kingdoms and Nations Concerning the Rights, Privileges, and Properties of the People* (1709)

ENLIGHTENMENT PERIOD

John Locke (1632-1704)

- *Two Treatises of Civil Government* (1689)
- *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689)
- *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690)
- *Some Considerations of the Consequences of the Lowering of Interest and Raising the Value of Money* (1691)
- *On the Reasonableness of Christianity* (1696)

Isaac Newton (1642-1727)

- *Principia* (“Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy”), 1687

Paul de Rapin (1661-1725)

- *History of England* (1726-31)

John Trenchard (1662-1723) and Thomas Gordon (c. 1691-1750), “Cato”

- *Cato’s Letters* (1724)

- *A Short History of Standing Armies in England* (1698); Trenchard and Walter Moyle (1672-1721)

Jonathan Swift (1667-1745)

- All the works, essays, etc.

Anthony Ashley-Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713)

- All the works, essays, etc.

Joseph Addison (1672-1719)

- All the works, essays, plays, etc.

Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke (1678-1751)

- *The Freeholder's Political Catechism* (1733)
- *A Dissertation Upon Parties* (1735)
- *Remarks on the History of England* (1743)
- *The Idea of a Patriot King* (1749)
- *A Letter on the Spirit of Patriotism* (1749)
- *Letters on the Study and Use of History* (1752)

Alexander Pope (1688-1744)

- *The Dunciad* (1728)
- *Of False Taste* (1731)
- *Of the Uses of Riches* (1732)
- *An Essay on Man* (1733-34)

Charles Louis de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu (1689-1755)

- *Persian Letters* (1734)
- *Reflections on the Causes of the Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1734)
- *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748)

Jean-Jacques Burlamaqui (1694-1748)

- *The Principles of Natural and Politic Law* (1747)

Francois Arouet de Voltaire (1694-1778)

- *Letters on the English Nation* (1733)
- *Works* (1751)
- *General History and State of Europe* (1756)

Abbé Gabriel Mably (1709-85)

- *Observations on the Romans* (1740)
- *Observations on the Government and laws of the United States* (1784)

David Hume (1711-76)

- *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40)
- *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1751)
- *Treatise: An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751)
- *Political Discourses* (1752)
- *History of England* (1754-62)
- *The Natural History of Religion* (1755)

- *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78)

- *Discourse on the Origin of the Inequality of Men* (1754)
- *The Social Contract* (1762)
- *Emile* (1762)

Emerich de Vattel (1714-67)

- *The Law of Nations* (1759-60)

William Blackstone (1723-80)

- *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765-69)

Richard Price (1723-91)

- *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty* (1776)
- *Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution* (1784)

Adam Smith (1723-90)

- *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759)
- *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776)

Catharine Macaulay (1731-91)

- *History of England* (1763-83)

Edward Gibbon (1737-94)

- *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-88)

Cesare Beccaria (1738-94)

- *An Essay on Crimes and Punishments* (1764)

Jean Louis de Lolme (1740-1805)

- *The Constitution of England* (1771)