

"[The authors]...maintain a refreshing reverence for the Constitution itself. Rather than ask readers to believe that an 'assembly of demigods' (Jefferson's words) wrote the Constitution, Ms. Kiernan and Mr. D'Agnese challenge the notion that the group that crafted this document of enduring genius was uniquely brilliant or visionary. If this raises the question of how exactly the miracle was accomplished, it should at least give readers some hope for our own seemingly uninspired political era." -- *The Wall Street Journal*

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Signing Their Lives Away: The Fame and Misfortune of the Men Who Signed the Declaration of Independence

By Denise Kiernan, Joseph D'Agnese

Signing Their Lives Away: The Fame and Misfortune of the Men Who Signed the Declaration of Independence By Denise Kiernan, Joseph D'Agnese

In the summer of 1776, fifty-six men risked their lives and livelihood to defy King George III and sign the Declaration of Independence--yet how many of them do we actually remember?

Signing Their Lives Away introduces readers to the eclectic group of statesmen, soldiers, slaveholders, and scoundrels who signed this historic document--and the many strange fates that awaited them. Some prospered and rose to the highest levels of United States government, while others had their homes and farms seized by British soldiers.

Signer George Wythe was poisoned by his nephew; Button Gwinnett was killed in a duel; Robert Morris went to prison; Thomas Lynch was lost at sea; and of course Sam Adams achieved fame as a patriot/brewer.

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"[The authors]...maintain a refreshing reverence for the Constitution itself. Rather than ask readers to believe that an 'assembly of demigods' (Jefferson's words) wrote the Constitution, Ms. Kiernan and Mr. D'Agnese challenge the notion that the group that crafted this document of enduring genius was uniquely brilliant or visionary. If this raises the question of how exactly the miracle was accomplished, it should at least give readers some hope for our own seemingly uninspired political era." -- *The Wall Street Journal*

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Starred Review. Grade 5 Up—On that immortal "Second of July," in 1776, 56 men described by King George III as daring and desperate affixed their names to the most celebrated document in American history. Or did they? With this work, Kiernan and D'Agnese present readers with astonishing individual portraits of all the signers in an attempt both to dispel some of the mythology surrounding the document as well as to establish a place in the historical discourse for those men not named Jefferson, Hancock, Franklin, or Adams. The marvelously arranged work lends itself to either straightforward reading or skipping around. The table of contents, divided by state, sparks readers' interest from the very beginning with its "the Signer who..." format, a feature that also allows great accessibility for reports and assignments. An entertaining and effective narrative of about three to five pages per individual is presented, and the full text of the document, a brief time line, and a section on the "Miscellany of Independence" are appended. Readers will delight as they discover just which signer "was the first to die," "slept in caves," "had the worst penmanship," and "went broke on shady land deals."—*Brian Odom, Pelham Public Library, AL*

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About the Author

Denise Kiernan and **Joseph D'Agnese** have been published in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Village Voice*, *Wired*, *Discover*, and other national publications. D'Agnese's work has twice been included in the anthology "Best American Science Writing." Both are winners of Educational Press Association awards. They live in North Carolina.

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