

Richard Hofstadter: An Intellectual Biography



Richard Hofstadter: An Intellectual Biography

by David S. Brown

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

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Richard Hofstadter (1916-1970) was one of the most influential American historians of the 20th century. His work explored the intersection of politics, culture, and intellectual history, and he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award for his contributions to the field.

Hofstadter was born in Buffalo, New York, to a Jewish family. He attended the University of Buffalo and Columbia University, where he studied history. After graduating from Columbia, Hofstadter taught at Sarah Lawrence College and Columbia University. In 1952, he joined the faculty of the University of California, Berkeley, where he remained until his death in 1970.

Hofstadter's work is characterized by its wit, clarity, and erudition. He was a master of the historical narrative, and his books are full of vivid characters and engaging stories. Hofstadter was also a gifted synthesizer, and he was

able to draw on a wide range of sources to create a comprehensive understanding of American history.

Hofstadter's most famous works include *The Age of Reform* (1955), *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (1963), and *The Paranoid Style in American Politics* (1965). These books explore the themes of populism, anti-intellectualism, and paranoia in American history. Hofstadter argued that these themes were deeply rooted in the American experience, and that they had a profound impact on American politics and culture.

Hofstadter's work has been praised for its originality, insight, and literary merit. He is considered one of the most important historians of the 20th century, and his work continues to be read and studied by scholars and general readers alike.

Hofstadter's Personal Life

Richard Hofstadter was born in Buffalo, New York, on August 6, 1916. His father, Samuel Hofstadter, was a lawyer, and his mother, Frances Landman Hofstadter, was a social worker. Hofstadter had two older sisters, Miriam and Ruth.

Hofstadter's family was Jewish, and he was raised in a secular household. He attended public schools in Buffalo and graduated from high school in 1933. Hofstadter then enrolled at the University of Buffalo, where he majored in history.

Hofstadter was a brilliant student, and he quickly distinguished himself in his studies. He was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and graduated summa cum

laude in 1937. Hofstadter then attended Columbia University, where he studied history under the renowned historian Carl Becker.

Hofstadter received his PhD from Columbia in 1942. His dissertation, "The Progressive Historians: Turner, Beard, Parrington," was published in 1944 and won the Pulitzer Prize for History.

Hofstadter married Beatrice Kevitt in 1942. The couple had two children, a son, Dan, and a daughter, Emily.

Hofstadter died of a heart attack in New York City on October 24, 1970. He was 54 years old.

Hofstadter's Intellectual Development

Richard Hofstadter's intellectual development was shaped by a number of factors, including his family background, his education, and his experiences during the Great Depression and World War II.

Hofstadter's family was secular and intellectual, and he was exposed to a wide range of ideas from an early age. His father was a lawyer and his mother was a social worker, and both parents were active in the community. Hofstadter's sisters were also intellectuals, and they all encouraged his interest in learning.

Hofstadter's education also played a major role in his intellectual development. He attended some of the best schools in the country, including the University of Buffalo and Columbia University. At Columbia, he studied under the renowned historian Carl Becker, who had a profound influence on his thinking.

The Great Depression and World War II also had a significant impact on Hofstadter's intellectual development. The Depression led him to question the traditional values of American society, and the war led him to see the world in a more complex and nuanced way.

All of these factors combined to shape Hofstadter's intellectual development. He became a brilliant historian who was able to write about the American past with wit, clarity, and erudition.

Hofstadter's Major Contributions to the Field of History

Richard Hofstadter made a number of major contributions to the field of history. His work explored the intersection of politics, culture, and intellectual history, and he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award for his contributions to the field.

Hofstadter's most famous works include *The Age of Reform* (1955), *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (1963), and *The Paranoid Style in American Politics* (1965). These books explore the themes of populism, anti-intellectualism, and paranoia in American history. Hofstadter argued that these



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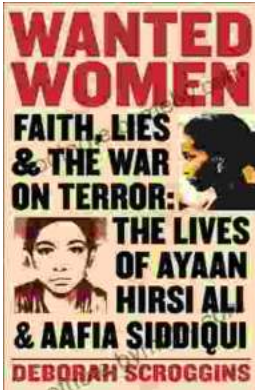
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