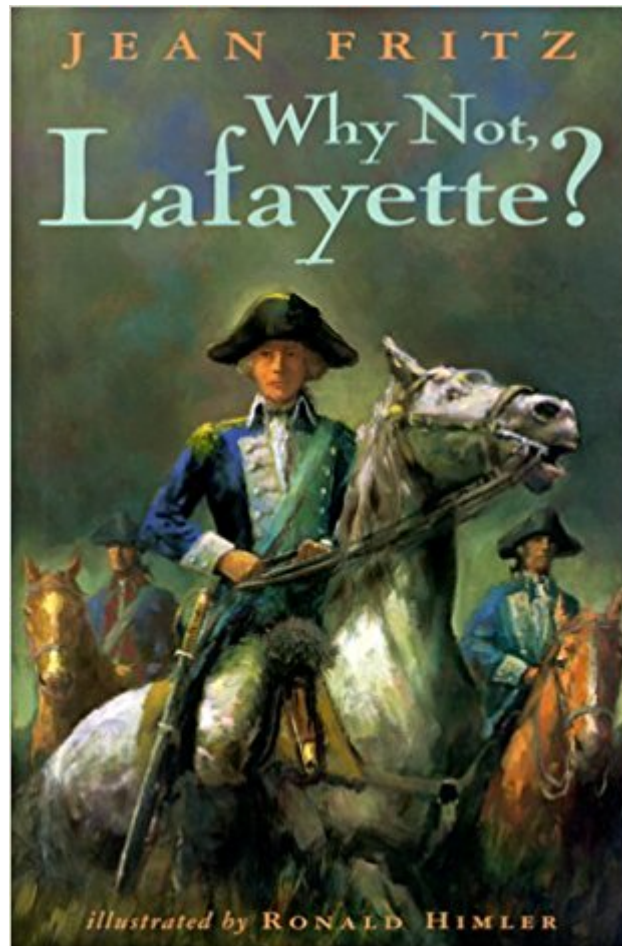




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# Why Not, Lafayette?



## Synopsis

Traces the life of the French nobleman who fought for democracy in revolutions in both the United States and France.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 900L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 96 pages

Publisher: Putnam Juvenile; First Printing edition (October 25, 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 039923411X

ISBN-13: 978-0399234118

Product Dimensions: 6.3 x 0.6 x 9.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.7 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 13 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #336,556 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #22 in [Books > Children's Books > Biographies > European](#) #216 in [Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > United States > Colonial](#) #246 in [Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > United States > Colonial & Revolutionary](#)

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## Customer Reviews

With her typically light touch, Fritz (*You Want Women to Vote, Lizzie Stanton?*) presents a brief and colorful biography of the aristocratic young Frenchman who played an integral role in the American Revolution. Bored with the leisurely life of a court nobleman and longing for glory, the 19-year-old marquis defied not only his father-in-law but his king to help the Americans in their fight for freedom. His fiery, passionate personality (as well as his much-needed money) earned him a place in the hearts of many colonists, particularly George Washington, and he won renown through several battles, including the decisive encounter at Yorktown. After the war, when Lafayette returned to France, he became embroiled in the revolutionary politics of the age, spending time in jail during the Reign of Terror despite his liberal leanings and standing up to Napoleon and, later, King Charles X when they ignored their promises to the people of France. Thanks to the dynamic portraits of military and political figures, readers with no background in French or American revolutionary history will easily make sense of the rush of battles and political wrangling described here. As usual, Fritz

works in humanizing details: Washington's distaste for physical display was such that he once scolded Alexander Hamilton for playfully slapping him on the shoulder; near the end of her life, Lafayette's wife professed to be so in love with her husband that she often felt faint just looking at him. Lively, vigorous and just plain fun to read. Ages 8-12. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Grade 5-8-In an informal yet informative narrative, Fritz presents the life of the French nobleman who came to espouse the democratic cause and worked toward achieving it. He not only fought successfully in the American Revolution, and proved himself as a leader of men, but also participated in advancing freedom in his own country and freed slaves in French territories. The author recounts the Marquis's full and honorable life, which spanned many important events in history including the French Revolution and the rise and fall of Napoleon. There is a lot of history contained in a little over 70 pages but despite its brevity, the book provides a great deal of information. A background knowledge of the time is useful to understanding some of the events fully. A well-executed, full-page pencil drawing appears in every chapter and serves to enliven the presentation. This competently written and documented title will not disappoint Fritz's many fans. Marlene Gawron, Orange County Library, Orlando, FL Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Lafayette was very influential in our history, both during and after the Revolution, and yet, most Americans know very little about him. I was very happy to find a book about Lafayette that was written for children. It is important to introduce them to this fascinating Frenchman. The book is well written and very informative.

its a great book

Excellent book for younger students.

I plan to learn every last thing about Lafayette, but this was a really nice little introduction into his life!

Do you remember who Marie-Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier was? He is very famous in American history, but you probably know him better as the Marquis de Lafayette, or, as he preferred

to be called, just Lafayette, who was born Sept. 6, 1757. His father died before he was two years old and his mother and grandfather died when he was twelve, leaving him to inherit their fortune under the guardianship of his great-grandfather. At fourteen years old, he joined the French Military and, at age sixteen, married Marie Adrienne Francoise de Noailles, whose family was related to King Louis XVI. At nineteen, against the wishes of his great-grandfather, his father-in-law, and the King, he purchased a ship and persuaded several French officers to accompany him to fight in the American Revolution. And, the rest, as they say, is history. Colonial General George Washington appointed Lafayette a major general. Wounded at Brandywine, the young Frenchman endured the freezing winter at Valley Forge, and then saw action at Barren Hill and Rhode Island. Returning to France for as time, he, along with Ben Franklin, was able to secure troops and supplies from the French government for the American cause which helped to force Cornwallis to surrender at Yorktown. By then Lafayette was again in America and present for the surrender. Back in France, Lafayette upheld the ideals of liberty all through the French Revolution, the Reign of Terror, and the rule of Napoleon, though he spent five years in an Austrian prison. Following his release, in 1824, President James Monroe invited Lafayette to the United States as the "nation's guest," and during the trip, he visited all twenty-four states. Jean Fritz is a wonderful author. We have read and liked many of her biographies for children, such as *George Washington's Breakfast; And Then What Happened*, *Paul Revere?*; *Where Was Patrick Henry on the 29th of May?*; *Will You Sign Here*, *John Hancock?*; *Just A Few Words*, *Mr. Lincoln*; *The Double Life of Pocahontas*; and *Harriet Beecher Stow and the Beecher Preachers*. We have also enjoyed a few of her young people's novels, such as *Early Thunder*; *The Cabin Faced West*; and *Brady*. Some parents might want to know that George Washington is quoted as having called the hapless General Charles Lee a "d\*\*\* poltroon." It is said that Lafayette had never heard Washington swear before, "but obviously he could." Lafayette was truly a remarkable character in history. It is no wonder that General John J. Pershing is reported to have said when he and his armies landed in France during World War I to help the French against the attacks of Kaiser Bill's Germany and its allies, "Lafayette, we are here."

Bought this as an adjunct to Hamilton because who's everybody's favorite fighting Frenchman? ... Lafayette!

Lafayette, young brash and bored, takes as his life motto the "Why Not?" on his family crest and answers the call to adventure by leaving the ennui of European court life and taking up arms in the American cause. His personal life, including wife and kids left at home, his adoration of Washington,

and his instrumental role in the success of the faltering colonial revolution are all adequately explained for young readers, but there is an uncharacteristic flatness to the telling. Fritz' many other biographies certainly qualify her to tackle this enigmatic subject, but the intricacies of political intrigue seem to obscure the storyline. Lafayette's life seems to have been about boredom, about opposing constituted authority and about swashbuckling adventure, no matter who pays the price. A tough subject to cook down for readers 10-14, by any standard. It's a great read for an overview of Lafayette's life, but lacking in the fire and passion of Fritz's other books.

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