

**Publishers Weekly, Week of 11/5/07**

**The Real Benedict Arnold**

Jim Murphy. Clarion, \$20 (272p) ISBN 978-0-395-77609-4

The two-faced silhouette of Benedict Arnold on the cover of Murphy's (*An American Plague*) biography furnishes a telling image: one profile looks sharp and stately; the other has the crooked features and sinister frown typical of a villain. Readers will find both versions here. While tracing Arnold's life, Murphy challenges the myths that have defamed Arnold and points to some disappointments that led him to betray the nation, in the process revealing an outspoken and oft-abused soldier who had few allies in the American Congress and who was often stymied by personal and professional disloyalty toward him. Because Arnold did not keep a diary and because his letters were burned after his death, Murphy draws on official documents and his knowledge of Revolutionary times to make bold inferences about the "real" Arnold's beliefs. Introducing each chapter with a quotation, Murphy emphasizes Arnold's will to persevere in the face of devastation and provides readers with the opportunity to predict, discover and reflect on the line's meaning as each chapter unfolds. The author's consideration of other historians' theories and use of sophisticated vocabulary will challenge his audience to think critically and consider all points of view. Ages 10-up. (Oct.)