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Sommario/riassunto	During the first half-century of American independence, a fundamental change in the meaning and morality of ambition emerged in American culture. Long stigmatized as a dangerous passion that led people to pursue fame at the expense of duty, ambition also raised concerns among American Revolutionaries who espoused self-sacrifice. After the ratification of the U.S. Constitution and the creation of the federal republic in 1789, however, a new ethos of nation-making took hold in which ambition, properly cultivated, could rescue talent and virtue from the parochial needs of the family farm. Rather than an apology for an emerging market culture of material desire and commercial dealing, ambition became a civic project-a concerted reply to the localism of provincial life. By thus attaching itself to the national self-image during the early years of the Republic, before the wrenching upheavals of the Industrial Revolution, ambitious striving achieved a cultural dominance that future generations took for granted. Beyond the Farm not only describes this transformation as a national effort but also explores it as

a personal journey. Centered on the lives of six aspiring men from the New England countryside, the book follows them from youthful days full of hope and unrest to eventual careers marked by surprising success and crushing failure. Along the way, J. M. Opal recovers such intimate dramas as a young man's abandonment by his self-made parents, a village printer's dreams of small-town fame, and a headstrong boy's efforts to both surpass and honor his family. By relating the vast abstractions of nation and ambition to the everyday milieus of home, work, and school, *Beyond the Farm* reconsiders the roots of American individualism in vivid detail and moral complexity.
