

references as well as easy-to-find sections on the family (lineage), depiction in art, appearance in literature, occurrence in space (helpful for constellations and asteroids), how the name is used in modern times, and a section providing references to classic works. Longer entries also have a short self-check true/false test so that readers can check their comprehension.

Each volume includes a list of Greek gods and heroes and their Roman counterparts, the Greek alphabet with English equivalents, and a very small map (without compass rose or scale) of the ancient world. Six short plays that can be produced or read in the classroom are presented. The final volume contains a "Table of Associations" that links names of gods and heroes with the concepts, words, and phrases with which they are associated. There is also a "Table of Word Origins" and a "subject index" to the entire work. These features greatly enhance the usefulness of the work. Unfortunately, there are no guide words on the pages and the light brown or sepia tone used to highlight some of the text is difficult to read in library light.

Neither Kathleen Daly's single volume *Greek and Roman Mythology A to Z* (Facts On File, 2003), which contains short entries on about five hundred topics, nor David Lemming's *The Children's Dictionary of Mythology* (Franklin Watts, 1999), which has more than three hundred entries on mythology from various cultures, have the depth or added features of this work. It has found a niche somewhere between the one-volume works mentioned above and the multivolume (and pricey) *Gods, Goddesses, and Mythology* (Marshall Cavendish, 2005), which is not restricted to just the Greek and Romans. In terms of both usefulness and value, *The Lincoln Library of Greek and Roman Mythology* is superior. Recommended for school and public libraries where patrons do reports on mythology.—Dona J. Helmer, Librarian, Anchorage School District, Anchorage, Alaska

Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopedia. Ed. by Josef W. Meri. New York: Routledge, 2006. 2 vols. acid free \$350 (ISBN 0-415-96690-6).

With *Medieval Islamic Civilization*, the editors hope to fill what they see as a lack of a "single reference work that presents Islamic civilization in a manner intelligible to the nonspecialist" (xi). With this two-volume set, the latest in a series of Middle Ages-focused encyclopedias from Routledge, they have created a thorough and accessible reference tool for general inquiries on the topic.

There are numerous titles in existence on the topic of Islam during medieval times, but the great majority of them focus on politics and philosophy. With this general work, the editors cover more than five hundred topics, including concepts and ideas, people, geographic locations, and other items. For a work produced by more than 250 people, the entries are uniformly excellent. The editors have aimed for dispassionate writing, and that goal is achieved without having the entries become dull. Besides being devoid of subjectivity, the entries are also written in a straightforward and accessible manner, and the contributors attempt to explain concepts in the simplest terms possible.

The entries are alphabetical, ranging in length from a half-page for lesser personalities to several pages for entries on topics such as judges, the Qur'an, or political theory. A great deal of thought seems to have gone into the many cross references, and while illustrations are not plentiful, those included are useful. Each volume includes a list of entries arranged both alphabetically and thematically, and the introduction appears in both volumes. The index is extensive and extremely thorough, coming in at fifty-five pages in length. Index topics that have their own entries are italicized, while others have any page numbers listed in which that topic is mentioned. This extensive index should prove valuable to those searching for subjects that are not given their own entry in this work.

The user most likely to make use of this title is the generalist, one whose grasp of the topic is limited and to whom the articles are clearly targeted. For those cases where these entries may be insufficient, or in the case of someone who would like to read further on a given topic, the editors have provided helpful tools. Most entries include extensive "Further Reading" lists, and many include "Studies" lists as well. For those topics where the author has culled the entry from others' research, a list of primary sources is included.

While those familiar with Islamic studies may find little need for this reference work, *Medieval Islamic Civilization* will be useful for the general library patron. This work would best be utilized by students in secondary school or college libraries, and by patrons at medium- and large-sized public libraries. This is a well-rounded, well-written set that offers a good starting point for library patrons.—Craig Shufelt, Director, Fort McMurray Public Library, Alberta, Canada

The Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature. Ed. by David Scott Kastan. New York: Oxford Univ. Pr., 2006. 5 vols. acid free \$595 (ISBN 0-19-516921-2).

The best reference books fulfill a unique and necessary purpose, giving good value for the dollar. Margaret Drabble's *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* (Oxford Univ. Pr., 2000) is a companionable, comprehensive, and inexpensive single volume. Ian Scott-Kilvert's *British Writers* (Scribner, 1984) is magisterial, exploring the traditional and evolving literary canon in lengthy essays on individual authors. Although expensive, the work effectively manages the subject in a core set of volumes with supplements. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature* can be compared to these and to other established reference titles in English literature.

In approximately 500 signed essays, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature* attempts to reflect the "great range and depth" of the literature of the UK and the Republic of Ireland since Anglo-Saxon times. The set's organizers observe that British literature "still remains at the heart of the commitment to the humanities in English-speaking countries, not least the United States" (xi). Questions about depth, completeness, and balance naturally arise, and the preface is quick to mention that topic selections "no doubt reflect" the organizers' own "knowledge, interests, and judgments" (xi). Unlike Drabble's *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*,