

SOURCES

midwife and diarist who wrote from 1785 until her death in 1812. What makes these excerpts of greater value is additional background information on the topic, and for some entries, an epilogue ("What Happened Next") and a final section entitled "Did You Know?"

Tying the set together are the two volumes of *Biographies*, which feature people who have appeared in the other volumes as major players or lesser-known figures, such as Benjamin Banneker, a free black who wrote to Thomas Jefferson in 1791 requesting freedom for slaves. Banneker's letter and Jefferson's response both appear in *Primary Sources*. The fifty entries in *Biographies* run to nearly ten pages each and it is encouraging that the coverage extends beyond powerful white men to include Native Americans, African Americans, and women.

Finally, as part of the complete set, a cumulative index is included. A minor quibble is that, although illustrations are listed in the index, it would have been helpful to have the illustrations listed separately from the rest of the material.

This set is highly recommended for public and school libraries, and for the homeschooled. The reading level is aimed at middle and senior high school students, but it would not be beyond the capabilities of upper elementary school students.—Carla Wilson Buss, *Curriculum Materials and Education Librarian, University of Georgia Libraries, Athens*

The Skinny About Best Boys, Dollies, Green Rooms, Leads, and Other Media Lingo. By Richard Weiner. New York: Random, 2006. 289p. acid free \$14.95 paper (ISBN 0-375-72141-9).

This work fulfills its promise of defining terms from theater, film, broadcasting, and journalism. However, the format is not what one would expect in a reference work. Weiner exchanges lexical format for a free-flowing discussion that is dense with definitions, etymology, and interesting asides. Media terms appear in italics within the paragraphs, rather than appearing as separate entries in bold face.

The discussion centers on chapter themes such as "Broadcasting" and "Theatre," as one might expect. Other chapter themes such as "Body Parts," "Colors," and "Geography" reflect a new and creative way to organize the terms. These chapter titles are not to be taken literally. For example, the chapter "Body Parts" defines terms such as "headline," "face margin," and "handwringing." The chapter on "Geography" is really about metonyms. The chapter subtitles reveal just how tongue-in-cheek this book really is. They include phrases such as "Not just for couch potatoes," "From peewees to brutes," and "Gibberish and thingamajigs." Clearly, Weiner intends for his book to entertain as much as it informs.

Weiner admits that the starting point in his research for this book was his work on *Webster's New World Dictionary of Media and Communications* (Macmillan, 1996). However, this work is not a replacement for the previous reference work. The straightforward, lexical approach of the earlier work still makes it a superior reference source. That said, the very thorough index in the new work makes it accessible, even useful as a media glossary. It just does not look like a glossary.

This is a book one would read in chapter-sized chunks. It does not quite read like a standard nonfiction book, nor would one normally use it like a dictionary. *The Skinny* provides high-quality browsing material. It will appeal to trivia hounds and the generally curious in addition to those wishing to learn the jargon of communications industries. It is pure linguistic fun.

The volume itself is a tall, narrow paperback—perhaps a play on the word "skinny" in the title—yet attractive and comfortable to handle. The text is quite readable, but it moves fast, like free association. Academic, public, and secondary school libraries would gladly collect this book. However, it defies easy classification as either a reference book or a circulating book.—Steven R. Edscorn, *Library Director, Memphis Theological Seminary, Tennessee*

Social Issues in America: An Encyclopedia. Ed. by James Ciment. Armonk, New York: Sharpe, 2006. 8 vols. acid free \$499 (ISBN 0-7656-8061-0).

This eight-volume reference set contains entries on more than 150 major issues facing American society in the twenty-first century, ranging from economic and scientific to social and political. Written by scholars in various fields, entries include historical background as well as analyses of current aspects of the issue. Entries also include bibliographies (including Web sites), chronologies, glossaries, tables, and primary source documents. Each volume includes a topic finder that organizes all of the major issues by subject headings. Also included in each volume is a cross-reference index. Finally, the eighth volume is a thorough subject index, making this series a well-structured reference tool.

The content of the encyclopedia is outstanding and a pleasure to read. Entries are not as comprehensive as the Contemporary World Issues series of books published by ABC-CLIO, but they do pack a tremendous amount of information into a small number of pages. This condensed format may be more manageable and not as overwhelming for the first-year composition student.

Social Issues in America is an excellent reference tool but would not be a necessary purchase for a library that subscribes to Gale's *Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center* database, which contains hundreds of reference books, periodical articles, primary source documents, statistics, multimedia, and Web sites on today's major issues. As an electronic resource, the *Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center* is much more appealing and convenient to the user.

Although there are many reference materials and databases covering controversial issues in the United States, *Social Issues in America* provides the substance of an issue in an efficient and thought-provoking way. Recommended on an elective basis for academic collections and large public libraries.—Colleen Lougen, *Electronic Resources Librarian, State University of New York, New Paltz*