

SOURCES

the works themselves gives the reader a flavor of the resource and supports the text of the annotations, which are objective and even-handed. The entry for Edward Said's *Orientalism*, for example, manages to acknowledge both the importance and the controversial nature of this extremely important book without subjective editorializing.

As the author himself points out, this reference is neither exhaustive nor all-inclusive, but is meant to be a beginning point for research. Deeper and wider coverage can be found in the venerable and monumental (and expensive) *Index Islamicus* (Mansell 1977–1993; Bowker-Saur, 1994–2000; Brill, 2001–), and many resources more completely cover individual subject areas within the broader context of Islamic studies, such as Hans Daiber's *Bibliography of Islamic Philosophy* (Brill, 1999), *The Modern Arab Woman: An Annotated Bibliography* by Michelle Raccagni (Scarecrow, 1978), or Seyyed Hossein Nasr's *An Annotated Bibliography of Islamic Science* (Cultural Studies and Research Institute, Tehran, Iran, 1975–). However, due to its impressive coverage, thoughtful organization, and scholarly presentation, *Islamic Civilizations, History, Contributions, and Influence: A Compendium of Literature* is highly recommended for any public or academic library, and is suitable for the general public, undergraduates, and scholars in the area of Islamic studies who wish for a concise, affordable, and useful research tool.—Amanda Sprochi, *Health Sciences Cataloger, University of Missouri–Columbia*

Middle East Conflict Reference Library. Detroit, Mich.: Thomson Gale, 2006. Individual volumes are:

Middle East Conflict: Almanac. By Tom Pendergast and Sara Pendergast. Ed. by Ralph Zerbonia. Middle East Conflict Reference Library. Detroit, Mich.: Thomson Gale, 2006. 267p. acid free \$60 (ISBN 0-7876-9458-4).

Middle East Conflict: Biographies. By Tom Pendergast and Sara Pendergast. Ed. by Ralph Zerbonia. Middle East Conflict Reference Library. Detroit, Mich.: Thomson Gale, 2006. 282p. acid free \$60 (ISBN 0-7876-9457-6).

Middle East Conflict: Primary Sources. By Tom Pendergast and Sara Pendergast. Ed. by Ralph Zerbonia. Middle East Conflict Reference Library. Detroit, Mich.: Thomson Gale, 2006. 238p. acid free \$60 (ISBN 0-7876-9458-4).

Middle East Conflict Reference Library Cumulative Index. Ed. by Ralph G. Zerbonia. Middle East Reference Library. Detroit, Mich.: Thomson Gale, 2006. 16p. acid free \$5 paper (ISBN 0-7876-9459-2).

Since the events of September 11, 2001, there is a clear need for materials regarding Middle Eastern politics and history. The editors of *Middle East Conflict* address this interest by aiming, “to aid readers who wish to understand the history of conflict in the Middle East” (xi). With this set, they provide a thorough introduction to and explanation of both the history and reasons behind the continuing battles in this contested region.

The set is divided into three volumes: *Almanac*, *Biographies*, and *Primary Sources*. Each is succinct at fewer than three hundred pages and includes the same introduction; the time-

lines in each are similar to one another. Each volume has an index at the back, supplemented by the separate *Cumulative Index* that covers all three volumes.

The *Almanac* is a generalized examination of Middle-Eastern conflict, with a decidedly modern slant. The first two chapters cover the period from ancient times until the mandate system of the 1940s, while the remaining twelve chapters cover the last sixty years. Emphasizing the events of the post–World War II period is useful, because the rise of Israel coincides with increased conflict.

The *Biographies* volume examines twenty-six key figures in the Middle East, and does so extensively. Most of the entries range from ten to thirteen pages, and include biographical information as well as the role each person has played. The small number of biographies included is slightly surprising, but the editors have done well in their choices. Not only do these biographies serve as an introduction to important figures in the conflict, but they could also prove very useful as a key source for research papers. As with the *Almanac*, this volume also focuses on the modern era in its choice of entries.

As its title implies, the *Primary Sources* volume includes numerous declarations, personal accounts, United Nations resolutions, and other primary documents relating to the conflict. Divided into seven chapters arranged by theme, this volume provides a good perspective of the region's troubled history, particularly through the first-person accounts.

The language used in this set will appeal to several user groups. All entries are clearly written without being overly dry, and at a language level intended for everyone from juvenile to adult users. The authors seem to have taken the approach that the users of these volumes are coming in with little knowledge of the region, so anyone new to this topic won't feel overwhelmed. The *Almanac* and *Biographies* volumes should serve as useful jumping-in points for anyone interested in learning more about conflicts in the Middle East, while *Primary Sources* is likely to serve those taking their studies a little further by examining the sources from which much of the information is drawn.

The biggest concern with this set is that the authority of the authors is not clear. Given that there is no list of contributors, it would seem that the Pendergasts are responsible for all the entries, with the exception of some help they were apparently given on several of the biographies. The problem is that there's no information given about the authors' qualifications for writing this set. An “About the Authors” section at the front of each volume or a list of contributors would have been helpful. The authors do list a couple of “advisors,” although the expertise and role of these advisors is never explained.

Although not a perfect or all-inclusive effort, *Middle East Conflict* should nonetheless find a home in many upper-elementary, high school, and college libraries. For biographies of figures deemed important enough for inclusion, it is an excellent source and a much better choice than a general encyclopedia. The same is true of the almanac articles, which should be valuable for anyone interested in an overview of many subjects in relation to the conflict. This three-volume set should

help fill a need in what is currently a hot area of study and is a much better purchase than any of the single-volume efforts released over the past few years.—Craig Shufelt, *Director, Fort McMurray Public Library, Alberta, Canada*

Notable African American Writers. Ed. by the Editors of Salem Press. Magill's Choice. Pasadena, Calif.: Salem, 2006. 3 vols. acid free \$207 (ISBN 1-58765-272-2).

The scope of *Notable African American Writers* is coverage of "eighty great novelists, poets, playwrights, short-story writers, and writers of nonfiction from Colonial America to today" (vii). Its purpose is "to help readers to better understand the experience of African Americans and provide an opportunity to examine African American literary culture across history from poet Phillis Wheatley (1753) to playwright Susan Lori Parks (1963)" (vii).

Sixty-eight of the essays in these volumes originally appeared in other Salem Press sets: *Critical Survey of Drama* (2003), *Critical Survey of Poetry* (2003), *Critical Survey of Short Fiction* (2001), and *Critical Survey of Long Fiction* (2000). Only twelve essays were commissioned specifically for *Notable African American Writers*: those on Frederick Douglass, W. E. B. DuBois, Henry Louis Gates Jr., Alex Haley, Virginia Hamilton, Martin Luther King Jr., Nella Larsen, Terry McMillan, Walter Dean Myers, Gordon Parks Sr., Booker T. Washington, and Cornel West.

Those readers familiar with Magill's literary criticism series of books will find the layout of this three-volume set instantly recognizable. Magill's is known for its precise layout: author's name, major genre, place of birth, place of death, chronological listing of the works, achievements, biography, and finally the analysis of the author's literary career as well as an annotated bibliography at the end of each article.

Among the titles classified by the Library of Congress with the subject heading: American Literature—African American Authors—Dictionaries, this set is a much better buy in comparison with other familiar titles, such as Shari Hatch's *African American Writers: A Dictionary* (ABC-Clio, 2000); Valerie Smith's *African American Writers* (Scribner, 2001) and Philip Bader's *A to Z of African Americans: African American Writers* (Facts On File, 2004). *Notable African American Writers* adds so much more value.

For the purposes of comparison, I took a look at the coverage of one author, Jean Toomer (1894–1967), a well-known writer who is covered in each set. Each of the three comparison titles includes the name and birth and death dates at the beginning of the entry. Similarities fall off dramatically after that.

Both Hatch's *African American Writers: A Dictionary* and Bader's *A to Z of African Americans* go right into Toomer's life and intersperse it with his literary contributions. They both devote around two to three pages to the author and provide references or further reading without annotations. So for an abbreviated treatment of Jean Toomer, look to these titles.

Smith's *African American Writers* devotes most of its pages to an analysis of Toomer's book, *Cane* (Harper, 1923), choos-

ing not to spend its time analyzing Toomer's lesser known works as *Notable African American Writers* does. For an in-depth analysis of the author's life and how he came to his life's work, consult *African American Writers*.

Notable African American Authors offers a much better layout of the main facts about an author's work and breaks it down into genres. After an analysis of the author's major achievements and a short biography, the genre is identified (for example, short fiction) with an analysis of each of the author's major works within that genre. In addition, *Notable African American Writers* gives the researcher an added bonus in volume three: four overview essays on the African American writer's contribution to the various literary genres.

For the more extensive and precise treatment of the author and his major works, consult first *Notable African American Writers* and if that title is not available, then Smith's *African American Writers* as a second choice. I highly recommend *Notable African American Writers* for large academic and public libraries.—M. Elaine Hughes, *African American Studies Liaison Librarian, Georgia State University, Atlanta*

Notable Latino Writers. Ed. by the Editors of Salem Press. Magill's Choice series. Pasadena, Calif.: Salem, 2006. 3 vols. acid free \$207 (ISBN 1-58765-243-9).

Notable Latino Writers recompiles 122 essays on Latino authors, most previously included in Magill's *Cyclopedia of World Authors*, 4th revised ed. (2004), and in several other Salem titles. The current work stands out for its use of a distinctively broad definition of Latino, used "to refer to authors living in the Americas who speak—or descend from those who spoke—any romance (hence 'Latin') language, as well as those of Latin American descent living in the United States..." (vii). In addition to U.S. Latino writers, the set covers some of the best-known authors from Latin American countries (including Brazil) and historical periods from the colonial to the twenty-first century. The main criterion for the inclusion of a Latin-American writer is that significant works are commonly available in English.

Arranged alphabetically, each entry contains a brief biography, quotations from representative works, and a partial list of the author's works by genre in both the original language and English translation. Many entries include photographs or portraits of the author. Volume 3 contains seven overview essays on Latin American and Latino literary genres (drama, long and short fiction, poetry), a list of some four hundred-plus Latino authors not covered in the work, a bibliography of secondary sources, and an excellent annotated listing of electronic resources for Latin American and Latino literary research. Several indexes allow users to find material by genre, country, chronology, title, and subject.

Notable Latino Writers is a useful compilation for the subject area and makes no claims to being comprehensive, but it also does not provide the reader with any idea of its selection criteria, other than that the authors' works be available in English. This is certainly problematic in an area of literary