

Reference Books

Tammy J. Eschedor Voelker

Editor

America in World History. Ed. by Susan Crean and Tom Lansford. Armonk, N.Y.: Sharpe Reference, 2010. 4 vols. alkaline \$299 (ISBN 978-0-7656-8171-3).

Long before globalization created a new international dynamic, the United States has reacted to or influenced world history. This four-volume general reference set addresses America's influence on world history from early settlement to the contemporary era by highlighting American events in an international context. Attempting to break away from treating America in isolation, this work handles the nation's past with the consideration to international reactions, outcomes, and consequences. This approach is important because "fusing U.S. and global history provides a more thorough appreciation of the past and view of the present" (vi).

The volumes are arranged in chronological order and cover first encounters to 1776, 1776 to 1898, 1898 to 1965, and 1965 to the present. Combined, the volumes include 122 entries. Each entry is accompanied by photographs, color illustrations, and maps that provide a visually pleasing layout. Quotes, shorter essays and biographies, and chronologies appear in inset boxes as well. Guided reading bibliographies are included at the end of each entry, which include popular and scholarly sources. A glossary is provided with each volume, and a master chronology can be found at the end of the fourth volume.

While some entries are not surprising, like "The Louisiana Purchase" and "The Truman Doctrine," others provide a fresh analysis of how American events had an international impact. For example, "Jamestown and Tobacco" and "California Gold Rush" cover localized events which had global reverberations. Contemporary issues like globalization, free trade, and terrorism are covered with entries like "North American Free Trade Agreement," "Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol," and "War on Terror."

Several American history reference sources do provide a degree of overlap with *America in World History*. The second edition of Stanley Kutler's *Dictionary of American History* (Scribner, 2003) has expanded to include cultural and demographic elements, seeming to acknowledge the nation's rapid transformation over the past twenty years. However, this authoritative source still gives the majority of coverage to the internal history of America. Alexander DeConde, Richard Dean Burns, and Fredrick Logevall's *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy*, 2nd ed. (Scribner, 2002) directly handles America's international connections with 121 in-depth essays, covering the first alliances to ethnic cleansing and terrorism. Specific information about policy statements, decrees, and

charters are included that help define the diplomatic and political stances of America. *America in World History* does stand on its own, however, because of the original concept of the work. This collection would be appropriate for public and school libraries building collections regarding international relations and globalization, or as a timely addition as a reference source in American history collections.—Emily Cox, Graduate Student, School of Information and Library Science, UNC-Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, North Carolina

America's Natural Places. Ed. by Stacy Kowtko. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Greenwood, 2010. 5 vols. alkaline \$380.00 (ISBN 978-0-313-35088-7). E-book available (ISBN 978-0-313-35089-4), call for pricing.

The established link between education and conservation is frequently mentioned in the new reference title *America's Natural Places*, and it serves as a reminder that it is especially important that library communities have access to resources that explain the issues surrounding the protection of unique environments and ecosystems throughout the United States.

General Editor Stacy Kowtko has gathered researchers and academic writers to contribute individual volumes that cover five geographic regions of the United States: "East and Northeast," "The Midwest," "South and Southeast," "Rocky Mountains and Great Plains," and "Pacific and West." Each title is prefaced by an individual introduction to the region, and a glossary and bibliography complete each volume. Entries (of one to three pages) for habitats or natural places are listed alphabetically by state, complimented by black and white photography and maps, and concluded by a further reading section.

The goal of *America's Natural Places* is "to present representative challenges faced across the country, providing information on historical and ongoing preservation efforts" (ix), and it achieves its goal by educating the reader on diverse ecosystems, threats to their future, and efforts to protect them that will stimulate further research and discussion. Readers will also be engaged on broader societal issues such as climate change and encroaching development and how they are impacting individual ecosystems and natural sites.

In comparison, the most recent reference title to address endangered habitats in the United States is Crawford's *Habitats and Ecosystems: An Encyclopedia of Endangered America* (ABC-Clio, 1999), which details special habitat sites by state with only a short paragraph devoted to each site. Crawford's older work may offer more comprehensive lists of habitats for ready reference; however, *America's Natural Places* offers in depth analysis of fewer representational ecosystems in a current context.

The intended audience for this five-volume encyclopedia is listed as "high school and undergraduate students as well as hobbyists and nature enthusiasts" (xii); however, this reviewer suggests that any library community would benefit from acquisition of this title. Also, it should be noted that volumes

SOURCES

are available for individual sale to reflect local geographic interests.—Paul MacLennan, *Reference Assistant, CSU-East Bay Library, Hayward, California*

Asian American History and Culture: An Encyclopedia. Ed. by Huping Ling and Allan Austin. Armonk, NY: Sharpe Reference, 2010. 2 vols. alkaline \$229 (ISBN 978-0-7656-8077-8).

Asian American History and Culture: An Encyclopedia is a two-volume set that presents immigration histories and cultural essays on twenty-one Asian American groups. The source begins with a ninety-page section about “The Asian American Experience,” addressing a myriad of topics from adoption to important historical events like the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. The encyclopedia is then organized alphabetically by group, starting with the Bangladeshi Americans and concluding with Vietnamese Americans in volume 2.

In the preface, the editors explain that “for larger groups, or those with longer histories in the United States, sections include a narrative history followed by alphabetically arranged thematic essays” (xxi). These thematic essays include information about education, politics, religion, women, and other specialized topics. The Chinese Americans, Filipino Americans, Japanese Americans, and the Indian Americans are some of the twelve groups that are addressed in more detail through these thematic essays.

The entries are written by 135 scholars from across the globe, and the names and institutional affiliations of these contributors can be found in volume 1. Each entry concludes with a list of further reading along with a comprehensive bibliography in volume 2. Although several entries include black and white photographs, the addition of a map of origin would have been a useful feature to incorporate with the introduction of each Asian American group. An index is provided in volume 2, and the topic finder in volume 1 may serve as an aid for those readers who are unsure of the information they may be seeking.

Franklin Ng and John D. Wilson’s six-volume set *The Asian American Encyclopedia* (Marshall Cavendish, 1995) is much larger in scope, yet the arrangement of *Asian American History and Culture: An Encyclopedia* is more user-friendly. *Asian American History and Culture: An Encyclopedia* also provides updated information on some subjects such as contemporary artists Ang Lee and Yo-Yo Ma.

Considering that the subject of Asian Americans is diverse and complex, the *Asian American History and Culture: An Encyclopedia* does an excellent job of informing the user about the issues Asian Americans have endured and continue to face. This reference work is recommended for high school, public, and undergraduate libraries, and especially for those that do not own Franklin Ng and John D. Wilson’s *The Asian American Encyclopedia* (Marshall Cavendish, 1995).—Megan Coder, *Senior Assistant Librarian, State University of New York, New Paltz*

Culture Wars: An Encyclopedia of Issues, Viewpoints, and Violence. Ed. by Roger Chapman. Armonk, N.Y.: Sharpe, 2010. 2 vols. alkaline \$249 (ISBN 978-0-7656-1761-3).

By many accounts, there exist today a great number of divisions within American society. The fractures receive considerable coverage in the media, but the background details and context are frequently missing from press coverage. *Culture Wars*, a two-volume encyclopedia recently published by Sharpe, presents most, if not all, of the contentious topics that exist in present-day America and highlights why these topics are so controversial.

Editor Roger Chapman’s introduction to the encyclopedia provides the reader with the history of culture wars, and how the culture wars have played out in the United States since World War II. While the inclusion of this history is admirable, and while the two-volume set contains an exhaustive list of entries on almost any conceivable topic that one might find relevant to the concept of culture wars, it is unclear why the introduction omits any information as to how specific topics were selected for inclusion within the encyclopedia. Reviewing the contents and reading through the entries suggest that the encyclopedia is concerned with how the culture wars are playing out in the present-day United States. While many entries cover issues of contemporary interest (such as abortion rights, the election of 2008, and Barack Obama), some figures and events of the past (such as Harry Truman, Vietnam Veterans Against the War, and the Chicago Seven) are also covered. The time period covered appears to be from the end of WWII to the present, while the geographic focus is on American events and international events that have greatly influenced the United States.

The entries are organized in alphabetical order. Each entry presents an individual topic and is signed by its author. At the conclusion of each entry, the reader is provided with a list of other relevant topics covered in the encyclopedia and further reading that may be of interest. Entries are evenhanded, succinct, and concise. The alphabetical structure makes it easy to locate information on each topic when the specific topic is known. A topic finder at the start of volume 1 assists in finding entries when only a broad category is known and allows the reader to browse by category. Volume 2 concludes with a bibliography and index.

Culture Wars may be useful as a supplement to Gale/Greenhaven Press’ *Opposing Viewpoints* series (1975–ongoing). Unlike *Opposing Viewpoints*, which covers specific issues exhaustively, *Culture Wars* offers concise introductions to the same or similar controversial topics. Purchasing the two-volume *Culture Wars* has the advantage of being an affordable alternative to purchasing each entry in the *Opposing Viewpoints* series. *Culture Wars* is recommended for high school libraries and larger public libraries.—Sharon Reidt, *Periodicals Clerk, Brooks Memorial Library, Brattleboro, Vermont*