

Reference Books

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Editor

American Civil War. Ed. by Steven E. Woodworth. Gale Library of Daily Life. Detroit: Gale, 2008. 2 vols. \$211 (ISBN 978-1-4144-3009-6).

The Gale Library of Daily Life series comprises a variety of reference books detailing the social and cultural aspects of life during major events in history from around the world. These two volumes on the *American Civil War* are an important addition to this growing series.

Essays are written by a variety of contributors, including professors, park rangers, and historians, and give detailed coverage of the topics selected. The volumes are divided into broad sections: a soldier's life; family and community; popular culture; religion; health and medicine; work and economy; politics; effects of the war; and reconciliation and remembrance. Each section starts off with an essay outlining the basic characteristics of that segment of life and placing it in context with the other topics covered. The sections are then further divided into essays that describe aspects of day-to-day life during the American Civil War on both sides of the conflict. For example, the section discussing a soldier's life includes brief pieces on conscription, drill training, uniforms, women on the battlefield, and spies. Contemporary letters, photographs, illustrations, and advertisements are placed liberally throughout the volumes and provide thoughtful complements to the related entries. Each entry concludes with a bibliography of recent books and articles. The volumes are supplemented by a chronology of the war and a detailed index.

There are, of course, numerous works on the topic of the American Civil War, but, as the editor states, no other Civil War work focuses so completely on components of daily life as these two volumes. David S. Heidler's five-volume set, *Encyclopedia of the American Civil War: A Political, Social, and Military History* (ABC-CLIO, 2000) has a much broader focus and, although articles are included about social life, there is not as much detail. In closer competition is Dorothy Dennen Volo's single-volume *Daily Life in Civil War America* (Greenwood, 1998). Volo's work is denser, with fewer illustrations, and therefore not as easy to read and flip through, nor does it give as much range while maintaining depth as the *American Civil War* does.

These volumes are recommended for academic libraries and, at the affordable price, for high school libraries as well.—*Jamie Seeholzer, First Year Experience Librarian, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio*

American Heroes. Ed. by Salem Press. Magill's Choice. Pasadena, Calif.: Salem, 2008. 3 vols. alkaline \$217 (ISBN 978-1-58765-457-2).

American Villains. Ed. by Salem Press. Magill's Choice. Pasadena, Calif.: Salem, 2008. 2 vols. alkaline \$120 (ISBN 978-1-58765-453-4).

Defining the qualities and achievements that make an individual a hero is highly nuanced process. It is thus a relief that the editors of Salem Press begin *American Heroes* with a publisher's note stating that the set's 209 subjects were chosen because "through their actions [they] have provided inspiration in all walks of society" from times ranging from the American Revolution to the present. Each entrant receives a five- to six-page signed essay that begins with a précis of their vital statistics and their accomplishments. The essay then provides more substantial information on their early life, their accomplishments, and their lasting significance. Phonetic guides to subjects' names are included, along with annotated bibliographies suggesting sources for further information. The final volume contains indexes of subjects by category, ethnicity, and name.

There are few surprises with regard to subjects, and many entrants are familiar names. The editors have made one potentially controversial choice by selecting Louis Farrakhan for inclusion, although their rationale is provided in Farrakhan's entry. It is curious to note that 2008 Democratic presidential contenders Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton are included while the Republican nominee, John McCain, is not. And while the format is standard throughout the three volumes, the writing style is not uniform. There are several instances in which the reader is provided with seemingly inconsequential or faulty information. For example, the essay on Walter Reed notes that Reed's mother was his father's first wife, but no information is provided about any additional wives his father may have had, or what, if any, effect his mother's death may have had on Reed as a boy. The essay on Ralph Abernathy states that it was his experiences in the Army that gave him "firsthand knowledge of segregation," which seems curious given that Abernathy spent his childhood in the Deep South. Despite these instances, the information laid out in each essay is usually succinct, and the annotated bibliographies will be of great assistance to students embarking on research projects.

Perhaps because villainy is a quality easier to ascertain, the editors of Salem Press offer no explanation of how the 177 subjects featured in *American Villains* were chosen, save that they were culled from *Great Lives from History: Notorious Lives* (Salem, 2007). According to the publisher's note, the essays "have been updated to reflect the latest on the status of the criminals and other infamous personages covered," though there is no information about how many essays have been updated, nor how much total information has been added.

As with *American Heroes*, the set covers Americans from the Revolution to the present, although these entrants lived

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notorious rather than inspiring lives. The essays in this set are similar in format to those in *American Heroes*, albeit shorter, with each subject getting a one- to three-page signed essay. The final volume of the set contains indexes of subjects by time period, by category, and by name, and potentially useful websites that can be used to further research these subjects and other criminals are also listed. The most noteworthy aspect of *American Villains* is the subject matter. Many of the subjects, especially the more recent and the less noteworthy, will not be found in more traditional biographical sources. The essays in this set, along with the information offered on further resources, will be valuable to high school students researching notorious personages.

Both *American Villains* and *American Heroes* are recommended for high school and larger public libraries, although a library that owns *Great Lives from History: Notorious Lives* probably doesn't need to add *American Villains* to its collection.—Sharon E. Reidt, *Library Clerk, Brooks Memorial Library, Brattleboro, Vermont*

Blood on the Stage: Milestone Plays of Crime, Mystery, and Detection: An Annotated Repertoire, 1900–1925. By Amnon Kabatchnik. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow, 2008. 417p. alkaline \$100 (ISBN 978-0-8108-6123-7).

Blood on the Stage describes eighty-four plays (not eighty, the number specified on the back cover) dealing with a wide range of criminal acts, including spying, political intrigue, and chicanery. Author Amnon Kabatchnik eschews comprehensiveness, instead drawing from plays written and produced in the English language from 1900 through 1925. He believes that his selections, made on the basis of literary worth, historical significance, innovative nature, and so on, mirror the “history and trends of world theatre” (xi). The resulting range of choices is surprisingly broad, and includes not only expected genre pieces but also such mainstream standards as *Desire Under the Elms* by Eugene O’Neill and *The Adding Machine* by Elmer Rice.

The work is arranged chronologically by date of original production. A typical entry summarizes the plot of the play in some detail, discusses its production history, and offers a biographical sketch of its author or authors. Yet Kabatchnik seldom stops here. For instance, his entry for *The Scarlet Pimpernel* by the Baroness Orczy and Montagu Barstow also describes the play’s inspiration, Orczy’s development of the material into a series of novels, the dashing Pimpernel’s subsequent appearances in motion pictures and on television (including the 1999–2000 A&E series), and Orczy’s many other works. Several short appendixes extend the chronological and thematic range of the book.

The work’s only obvious technical fault lies in its lack of “see” and “see also” references. Thus the reader of the entry on *The Secret Woman* by Eden Phillpotts is not led to the separate entry for *The Shadow* by the same author. Having to fall back on the work’s table of contents or index for such an obvious piece of information should not be necessary.

Kabatchnik has enjoyed a distinguished theatrical and academic career. He clearly finds the byways of his subject as interesting as the plays themselves, and the sheer readability of his work exceeds that of many reference books. There do not appear to be any comparable works available, and while its rather steep price may put it beyond the reach of small theatre collections, *Blood on the Stage* is warmly recommended for purchase by all that can afford it.—Grove Koger, *Albertsons Library, Boise State University, Boise, Idaho*

Climate Change: In Context. Ed. by Brenda W. Lerner and K. L. Lerner. Detroit, Mich.: Gale, 2008. 2 vols. \$245 (ISBN 978-1-4144-3614-2).

As global warming and related climate changes become accepted as scientific fact, it is increasingly important for libraries to have resources that inform and engage their communities on these serious global issues. However, there are few reference titles currently available that address the topics of climate change and global warming. *Climate Change: In Context* is a new title in Gale’s In Context reference series that offers a cross-curricular approach to understanding this important environmental and societal issue. In response to the reports of the 2007 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) editors Brenda W. Lerner and K. L. Lerner have gathered eighteen contributors to create a two-volume reference work of 250 signed entries on the scientific causes and global consequences of climate change.

Climate Change: In Context provides topical entries in alphabetical order that vary in length from three to six pages. Each entry includes an introduction, historical background and scientific foundations, impacts and issues, and bibliography. A highlighted sidebar, “Words to Know,” assists with understanding the scientific and technical terminology in each entry, and the text is complemented by color photographs and illustrations to create an attractive page design. The text in both volumes is prefaced by a glossary, an “IPCC Guide to Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Definitions,” and a chronology, and an extensive list of sources and an index complete the second volume.

Climate Change: In Context is an important work that fulfills its purpose “to help . . . students understand the essential facts and deeper cultural connections of topics and issues related to the scientific study of climate change and its impact on humanity” (xxvii). The contributors have written entries on scientific and science-related topics in language that is understandable to the layperson, and the appealing layout makes for easy browsing by the reader. The intended audience for this work is “high school and early college age” (xxvii), but this reviewer would recommend *Climate Change: In Context* for any academic, school, or public library.

In comparison, the only recent reference title that addresses global warming in a similar fashion is S. George Philander’s *Encyclopedia of Global Warming and Climate Change* (Sage, 2008); however, in breadth of coverage and presentation, *Climate Change: In Context* is far superior.—Paul MacLennan, *California State University, East Bay Library, Hayward*