

World Religions: Almanac, Biographies, Primary Sources. By J. Sydney Jones and Michael O'Neal. Ed. by Neil Schlager and Jayne Weisblatt. World Religions Reference Library. Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2006. 5 vols. alkaline (ISBN 1-4144-0227-7).

This set consists of a two-volume almanac, two volumes of biographies, a volume of primary sources, and a soft-cover cumulative index, all designed to appeal to and instruct young readers (middle- and high-school), in the basics and some of the details of world religion. Included throughout are black-and-white illustrations, sidebars, glossaries, timelines, bibliographies/webliographies, subject indexes, and "research and activity ideas." The "Almanac" volumes cover the history, traditions, and worldviews of the world's major and more minor religions and their sects and offshoots; also addressed are the texts and teachings, philosophies and practices, and influences on culture and society of these religions. The biographical volumes outline the lives and contributions of fifty men and women critical to the historical and contemporary development of religion. Lesser-known figures are included along with major players, and there are many biographies of people whose names the average student would not likely recognize. The "Primary Sources" volume offers eighteen excerpted writings, speeches, and sacred texts from across the religious spectrum. Primary sources are grouped into three thematic chapters: "Creation Stories and Foundation Myths," "Characteristics of the Divine," and "Religion as a Guide to Living."

The *Almanac* is the most comprehensive element in scope and succeeds in laying the groundwork for more detailed or specific lines of inquiry. The biographical volumes are both interesting and well-rounded; taking the article on Abraham as an example, the story of this figure and his familial relationships is told with admirable completeness and an acknowledgment that it is part history, part legend, and part guesswork. These elements are woven into an informative whole. The "Primary Sources" volume is necessarily more limited than its companion volumes, given the scope, level, and physical size of the work; it is more representative than comprehensive. The cumulative index is very clearly laid out and user-friendly.

There are a number of recent sources that bear comparison. Christopher Partridge's *Introduction to World Religions* (Fortress Pr., 2005) may be desirable as a supplemental source to *World Religions*, with its full-color photos, maps, and diagrams, and its closer examination of the complexity of the subject matter. A source that covers similar ground on a grander scale is Martin Palmer's *The Times World Religions* (Times Bks., 2005), but this is more suitable for an adult readership. Ian Markham's *A World Religions Reader* (Blackwell, 1996) is another resource for first-time students of religion, and is somewhat similar in scope to *World Religions*. It, too, may be a welcome supplement, as Markham combines scriptural passages with classic statements of major thinkers and institutions, offering a closer focus on the role of women and enabling cross-religion comparison.

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presents primarily basic and essential information. This fact, along with the tone, scope, and even the graphic design of the books, indicates this set for use in a high school or middle-school library. One overall criticism could be that the work's presentation has an innocuous quality; perhaps it could have been a little more thought-provoking or challenging through a deeper delving in some areas. But in general, it is a source capable of satisfying the curiosity of young readers and directing them to further study.—*Benedette Palazzola, Assistant Librarian, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor*

Professional Materials

Karen Antell

Editor

The Big Book of Children's Reading Lists: 100 Great, Ready-to-Use Book Lists for Educators, Librarians, Parents, and Children. Nancy J. Keane. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2006. 288p. \$35 (ISBN 1-59158-334-9).

The Big Book of Children's Reading Lists contains one hundred book lists organized for easy use. This resource is divided into three parts: "School Subjects," "Character and Values," and "Genres and Themes." The first section of the book includes subjects such as "Folklore from Around the World," which is divided by countries, and "Language Arts," "Science," and "Social Studies," which are divided into themes and concepts. "Art" and "Mathematics" each have lists that include literature to assist parents, teachers, and librarians with the introduction or reinforcement of skills in those areas.

In section two, the author has organized wonderful lists of children's books for parents, teachers, and counselors. The lists cover literature that deals with tough issues such as anger management, grief, honesty, and responsibility.

The author devotes a large part of the third section to all kinds of alphabet books, memoirs of famous historical figures, and wordless and pop-up literature. Contrary to what one might expect, these books are not only for primary students. Many of these lists include highly informative nonfiction literature with facts about the ocean, animals, landscapes, and U.S. history.

The literature on each list has been published over the past decade, and every title included was still in print at the end of 2005. The author's introduction grants librarians and teachers permission to copy and use the lists in creative ways to help promote reading in their classrooms and school environments.

In addition to the lists are "Ready to Copy and Use" bookmarks of suggested reading for children. The bookmark categories include: "If you liked . . . try . . .," "If you like scary books try" The bookmarks lend themselves to use for book-talking a particular theme or genre.

The index includes book titles and author names for