

Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Documentary and Reference Guide.

Edited by Priscilla Roberts. Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Press, ABC-CLIO, 2017, 367 p. \$108.00 (ISBN 978-1-4408-4390-7). E-book available (978-1-4408-4391-4), call for pricing.

The Arab-Israeli conflict continues to spark confusion, emotion, and anger in educational environments. Tension around these topics remains so high that strict ground rules and active arbitration remedies exist for those who wish to edit the Wikipedia articles for Israel, Palestine, and the Arab-Israeli conflict. As events progress in these regions, these Wikipedia articles experience a flurry of activity as editors around the world work to update and improve their content. This is the downfall of any traditionally published encyclopedia; once published, it becomes a snapshot in time, a historical artifact, as opposed to a living document that captures past, present, and future tense. The other disadvantage of traditionally published encyclopedias is that editors often give subject experts a template and writing guidelines for the entries that can make the subject expert look incompetent. Dr. Priscilla Roberts's "documentary and reference guide" to the Arab-Israeli conflict, for this reason, has strengths and weaknesses.

Roberts is a history professor at the University of Hong Kong, specializing in twentieth-century international history, Asian-Western relations, and Anglo-American foreign policy. Her research background gives her the required context to present information about the Arab-Israeli conflict in an objective, factual manner. Prior to this current guide, Roberts has edited two other encyclopedias about the Arab-Israeli conflict: the four volume *Encyclopedia of the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Political, Social, and Military History* (coedited with Spencer C. Tucker, ABC-CLIO, 2008) and the single volume *Arab-Israeli Conflict: The Essential Reference Guide* (ABC-CLIO, 2014). At first glance, the 2017 documentary and reference guide and the 2014 essential reference guide appear identical, but there are some differences of which a researcher should be aware.

In the documentary and reference guide, Roberts provides an introduction that includes a section "The Challenge of Interpreting the Arab-Israeli Conflict." There she explains that on both sides there has been secrecy and falsification of evidence that has led to a multitude of confusing documents that obfuscate the truth. Roberts has settled on ninety-one core primary-source documents related to the conflict and arranged them in chronological order in five sections: (1) "The Origins" (i.e., the foundation of the conflict beginning in the nineteenth century, before the founding of the modern Israeli state); (2) "The 1950s and 1960s"; (3) "From War to Genuine Negotiations: 1973–1985"; (4) "The Way Forward: 1986–2000"; and (5) "The Second Intifada, September 11, 2001, and Beyond." This is an improvement from the essential reference guide, which provided a summary of the conflict and forty-nine reference entries that cover the significant countries, people, events, and organizations involved in the conflict. In the documentary and reference guide, each entry

provides a summary box identifying the name of the document, when and where it was published, and its significance to the history of the conflict. After each document, Roberts follows with a section titled "Analysis," but the title is misleading, as it implies that Roberts will provide an interpretation of the document. Instead, Roberts summarizes the content of the document and provides historical and cultural context for its creation and wording. It would have been more accurate to title these subsections "Summary and Historical Background." This editorial decision could have been dictated by ABC-CLIO and not Roberts herself.

In the documentary and reference guide, Roberts is the sole author. While this makes for an even tone and uniform writing style for this encyclopedia, it is disadvantageous when writing about a topic that involves multiple perspectives. Roberts's neutral, objective voice of the removed Western academic, paired with an Israeli voice and a Palestinian voice for this volume, would have made it a true documentary and reference guide. While Roberts provides an extensive bibliography of resources that served as the backbone of her research for this volume, they are not arranged by chapter, so there is no way for the researcher to trace from where she received her information for each "Analysis" section. This was the strength of the 2014 reference guide—each entry, written by a different academic, provided an extensive "Further Reading" section.

If libraries choose to acquire Roberts's 2017 documentary and reference guide, they should keep her 2014 essential reference guide, as the 2017 guide provides explanation for the primary-source documents referenced in the 2014 guide. At this time, no other broad yet well-researched survey of the Arab-Israeli conflict exists as a single-volume reference resource. Libraries with the pair of Roberts's resources would still need *The Encyclopedia of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (ed. Cheryl A. Rubenberg, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010), a three volume series that provides other nuances of the conflict, such as Israeli laws in the occupied territories and Palestinian school textbooks that indoctrinate students in anti-Semitism and terrorist activity.

Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Documentary and Reference Guide would be appropriate for high school, academic, and large public library collections. At the same time, don't weed any of your other encyclopedias on Israel, Palestine, and their conflict any time soon, and put the Israel, Palestine, and Arab-Israeli conflict Wikipedia pages on your watchlist for the most up-to-date information on these topics.—Rachel Wexelbaum, Associate Professor and Collection Management Librarian, St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud, Minnesota

The Big Con: Great Hoaxes, Frauds, Gifts, and Swindles in American History.

By Nate Hendley. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2016. 380 p. \$89.00 (ISBN 978-1-61069-585-5). E-book available (978-1-61069-586-2), call for pricing.

All cons require two participants: someone who lies and someone who believes. From the vantage point of someone not currently in the middle of being swindled, one can feel