

## TEXTBOOK EVALUATION FOR U.S. HISTORY SURVEY

The following textbooks and supplemental texts have been considered for courses in United States History Survey, Part I (i.e., from Native American beginnings up to and including the Civil War and Reconstruction). Readability, usability for instruction and assessments, cost, inclusion of visuals, and practicality have been assessed. Pertinent questions were asked about each resource. Would students read this book? Would they learn from it? Would they enjoy it? Also considered were compilations of primary documents, data or fact books, historical atlases, and supplemental readings.

### Textbooks

Brogan, Hugh. *The Penguin History of the USA*. Second edition. New York: Penguin, 1999.

This is a good read albeit from a British perspective. It is concise and lively and geared mostly to political and economic history. Pluses include low cost and readability. A minus would be it is only text and no visuals.

Johnson, Paul. *A History of the American People*. New York: HarperCollins, 1999.

Similar to Brogan's work in format and economy, this paperback is also written from a British perspective. It is a very good read but can be esoteric at times. Pluses include inclusion of anecdotal and biographical material, but the big picture gets lost sometimes in all the details.

Kirshon, John W., editor. *Chronicle of America*. Liberty, Missouri: JL International, 1989.

This oversize book has ample text and illustrations in a newsprint type format. Time lines in the left margin provide a quick reference to the volume's chronological structure. This would be a great supplemental text for a survey course, since it is attractive and interesting to read. But it gives no overall structure or outline of historical development except by way of year-by-year chronology. It also is very heavy due to being oversize, and possibly it is not in print currently.

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Henretta, James A., et al. *America: A Concise History*. Second edition. Volume I: To 1877. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002.

This book is reasonably priced and full of appropriate illustrations, maps, and charts. The text is readable, interesting, and connected thematically. A thematic time line and comments about economy, society, government, religion, and culture introduce each of the three main sections. A time line and bibliography concludes each chapter. Brief, primary source readings are peppered throughout the book. The appendix contains the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, the Constitution and its Amendments, a few excellent charts, and an index. This is a text of choice.

Murrin, John M., et al. *Liberty, Equality, Power: A History of the American People*. Second edition. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace, 1999.

This is a good text. It contains all of what is in Henretta's *America* and has a lot more material. It is a big book and perhaps too expensive for a survey course now.

Roark, James L., et al. *The American Promise: A History of the United States to 1877*. Boston: Bedford, 1998.

This is an interesting text and includes a lot of artifacts in the illustrations. But the length of the book, its cost, and the overabundance of detail make it less than practical to use in a survey course.

### Primary Source Supplements

Davis, David Brion, and Steven Mintz. *The Boisterous Sea of Liberty: A Documentary History of America from Discovery through the Civil War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

This inexpensive book is full of interesting primary source material, and the compilers' comments give good overviews for each of the documents. But the introduction, which is dense and rambles on for almost thirty pages, illustrates the wordiness that would probably hinder students from engaging this text and actually reading it. It would be used best as a reference tool.

Davis, Natalie Zemon, et al., editors. *The Bedford Series in History and Culture*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's. Various volumes in series.

This is the best series, in my opinion, of topical studies in American history with selected documents. Each volume is subtitled "A Brief History with Documents." Each has a lengthy introduction, a brief overview of each document, chronology, questions for consideration, selected bibliography, and index. The following could be used for a survey course.

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Blight, David W., editor. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave, Written by Himself*. Second edition. 2003.

Calloway, Colin G., editor. *The World Turned Upside Down: Indian Voices from Early America*. 1994.

Finkelman, Paul, editor. *Defending Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Old South*. 2003.

Rakove, Jack N. *Declaring Rights*. 1998.

Rockman, Seth. *Welfare Reform in the Early Republic*. 2003.

Kornfeld, Eve. *Creating an American Culture, 1775-1800*. 2001.

Frohnen, Bruce, editor. *The American Republic: Primary Sources*. Indianapolis: Liberty, 2002.

Like *Boisterous Sea*, this collection is seen best as a reference for political, legal, and religious documents about the founding of America and its constitutional heritage. It is a worthy volume but not suitable for a survey course. Some of the documents could be copied for use in the survey course, however.

Heffner, Richard D., editor. *A Documentary History of the United States*. Seventh edition. New York: Signet, 2002.

This is a handy, inexpensive collection of important documents for American history, however, would students be interested in mining its treasures without provocation via exam or quiz. Earlier generations of Americans endured lengthy orations without flinching, but the impact of visual stimuli on the current breed of young Americans has whittled their attention span to the unfortunate one-minute sound bite. These primary texts certainly get at the meat of the matters of United States history, but the page-length inserts of primary material in Henretta's *America* probably would be more palatable to students.

Paine, Thomas. *Common Sense*. Edited by Ed Larkin. Orchard Park, New York: Broadview, 2004.

This is an excellent edition of Paine's important pamphlet. It includes much interpretive and extra material, perhaps too much for a survey course. But Paine's voice for the American Revolution is extremely important.

Ver Steeg, Clarence L., and Richard Hofstadter, editors. *Great Issues in American History: From Settlement to Revolution, 1584-1776*. New York: Vintage, 1969.

This book is filled with interesting speeches and brief, informative introductions. It is similar to Henry Steele Commager's *Living Ideas in America* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951). But it may not be in print.

### Fact or Data Books

Klose, Nelson, and Robert F. Jones. *United States History: to 1877*. Fifth edition. Barron's College Review Series. Hauppauge, New York: Barron's Educational Series, 1994.

This is a good volume, although colorless (literally). The outline is good; it uses a topical approach to history; and it follows these subjects chronologically. Each chapter starts with a time line and ends with a book list and review questions. Appendices include answers to review questions, essay-type questions, primary documents, charts about United States history, a list of comprehensive books, a dictionary of important and difficult terms, and an index.

Miller, Marilyn, and Marian Faux, editors. *The New York Public Library American History Desk Reference*. New York: Macmillan, 1997.

A reference tool, the thematic arrangement makes this volume useful and interesting to explore.

Schlesinger, Arthur M., Jr., editor. *The Almanac of American History*. Revised edition. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1993.

This is like the *Chronicle of America* book, yet without the color and the amount of illustrations. It provides a chronological listing of events with brief explanations. It is a dandy reference tool if you are looking for something that happened in the United States on a specific date or in a certain year.

### Historical Atlases

Carnes, Mark C., John A. Garraty, and Patrick Williams. *Mapping America's Past: A Historical Atlas*. New York: Henry Holt, 1996.

This is one of the best historical atlases for the United States. Topically arranged by chronological periods, the maps are rich in color and superbly constructed. The text is very informative, and the illustrations and graphs enrich the whole. You get a good feel for the evolution of United States history by working through this volume.

Ferrell, Robert H., and Richard Natkiel. *Atlas of American History*. New York: Facts On File, 1993.

This is a colorless atlas except for dull brown and shades of grey. It contains helpful discussions, but it is focused heavily on military history.

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Frank, Andrew K. *The Routledge Historical Atlas of the American South*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

The whole of this slender volume is good for overview and review of general United States history with emphasis on the South. The atlas has good maps with ample text that is presented in topical fashion, i.e., nascent, antebellum, and confederate South.

Gilbert, Martin. *The Routledge Atlas of American History*. Fourth edition. New York: Routledge, 2003.

This is an interesting and informative atlas, albeit colorless, which is done in Gilbert's unmistakable style.

*Hammond Atlas of United States History*. Revised edition. Union, New Jersey: Hammond, 2004.

This atlas has some good maps and some well done political charts. A major plus is that it is inexpensive.

Homberger, Eric. *The Penguin Historical Atlas of North America*. New York: Penguin, 1995.

This is a nice atlas, but more geared to the whole continent (i.e., including Canada and Mexico). It has a good mix of text, maps, charts, and illustrations.

### Supplemental Reading

Ayres, Thomas. *That's Not in My American History Book: A Compilation of Little-Known Events and Forgotten Heroes*. Lanham, Maryland: Taylor Trade, 2000.

This is a fun book that is informative. It could be used for extra credit or presentations, i.e., storytelling.

Berkin, Carol. *A Brilliant Solution: Inventing the American Constitution*. Orlando, Florida: Harcourt, 2002.

This is a lively read on the formation of the constitution by a well-known scholar.

Hakim, Joy. *A History of US*. Third edition. Eleven books in series. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

This series, written primarily for secondary school students, is rich with illustrations and a simple story-like text. It is a pleasure to read but might be too basic for university level.

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Holder, Angela Roddey, and John Thomas Roddey Holder. *The Meaning of the Constitution*. Third edition. Hauppauge, New York: Baron's Educational Series, 1997.

Heavy in application of the constitution via case studies, this work could be made available to those students whose interest is constitutional law.

Kadzis, Peter, editor. *Blood: Stories of Life and Death from the Civil War*. New York: Thunder's Mouth, 2000.

Students need not read the entire work but selections based on interest and presentations (i.e., dramatic readings about the Civil War). The readings represent diverse perspectives, and the issues that generally guide treatment of the war based on cultural, economic, or military concerns are all here.

Needleman, Jacob. *The American Soul: Rediscovering the Wisdom of the Founders*. New York: Tarcher/Putnam, 2002.

This book can guide class discussions or serve as the basis for essay exams.

O'Brien, Cormac. *Secret Lives of the U.S. Presidents: What Your Teachers Never Told You about the Men of the White House*. Philadelphia: Quirk Books, 2004.

This is a fun, fact-filled book that can be used for extra credit or alternate reading.