



Booknotes: Stories from American History

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American history is shaped by great and small events, and in recent years a generation of writers has brought these events to life. They have shared these stories with the viewers of the long-running C-SPAN author-interview program *Booknotes*, and here some of the best have been collected for readers to savor. In this volume, more than eighty contemporary writers and historians examine seminal moments from American history, celebrated and uncelebrated alike.

Booknotes offers readers conversational essays edited from the interview show, providing an enticing selection of author-subject pairings. For anyone interested in America's rich history-and especially the devoted fans of C-SPAN's *Booknotes*-this is an engaging compendium of information, opinions, and new perspectives.

Booknotes: Stories from American History Details

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Scott Smith says

Excellent book! I highly recommend it. New information was learned in each and every section!

Deb says

This is an awesome, well written, factual, and to the point history book. It is serving me well as a great resource for teaching American history. I highly recommend this book to any history buff.

Sabrina says

Interesting book, though I thought it was filled with a lot of unnecessary details. Skipped certain chapters.

LG says

I'm a history buff, and I loved this book. It gives lesser-known perspectives into significant historical events.

The only thing I didn't like was that each excerpt ended way too soon and just whetted my appetite for more information.

Phana says

A behind the scenes look at what historians really think of their subjects. Good chapter on income tax... legislate a max limit? Nah, it could never go over 10%!

Judy Finn says

This book is a gem. It is a window into American history in a format that typically is not found elsewhere. The chapters are in chronological order so that even though each is from a different author and addresses a different topic, there is a nice progression as the book moves along. The chapter from pages 93 - 96 by Joseph E. Stevens is the best and clearest explanation of the American Civil War I've come across. As Stevens states: "As we look back at history, we feel that whatever happened was inevitable, and that's not true. The Confederacy could have won. And if it had won, we would be living in a very different country. That's really one of the amazing things about 1863 and what make it such an important year."

Another fascinating topic is "Women of the Slaveholding South" by Drew Gilpin Faust (pp. 86-92). I've now added her book "Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War" to read next.

Brian Lamb of C-SPAN is a terrific interviewer and has done an equally great job putting this book together.

David says

Enjoyable book for history buffs. Lots of "snippets" from contemporary authors.

Scott Pierce says

Really enjoyed the historical essays here, from Ambrose claiming that D-Day was the pivot of the 20th century (fail and it is either the Germans or the Russians), of McNamara claiming that Rusk believed until the end that we should have been in Vietnam, or quoting T.S. Eliot:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time

Chandler Jechura says

As with any work that consists of an anthology, this is going to be somewhat subjective to my tastes, and how useful I found all of these stories overall. Often, it is difficult to try and rate each work individually (I know, I tried with this book) and often one has to ask the question: Is this book as good as the sum of its parts? I have to say yes...with a caveat.

As can be said of any anthology, there are some good notes here, and some mediocre ones. Each author attempts to sell you on the book that they have just published, and that you should read it. The authors range from those that I vaguely know of, to those that have clearly not withstood the test of time, and now have been forgotten by the general public. Some of the topics are highly interesting, with ideas and works on everything from former slave ships, to the work of a president while he was in office. I think that this book got off to a rough start for me with the colonial era, since I simply knew much of the information already, and/or the works simply weren't written that well to make me want to read the author's text. Others were quite interesting, and a concise version of what the person wrote about made me want to find their book and read more.

But now to the caveat. There is simply no getting around the fact that this book is old...almost 20 years old, in fact. I would not bring this up, except for the fact that technology has passed the need for a book like this. Today, Booknotes has been off the air for over a decade, and many of the full interviews, running from 1989 to 2004, over an hour each, are available to stream online for free, or purchase on DVD if you really feel the need to do so. With that said, is there really a need to buy this book? If you want a more condensed version of the interview, perhaps, but who is to say that these are really the best stories, and that you won't miss

something by not looking at their website with over 800 interviews? Also, I must confess that I am the kind of person that likes to multi-task, or at times, simply not read a book, and these interviews are more preferable to listen to as I use the internet or do other menial tasks, which, if you are anyone like me, is something to consider. In the end, I would give this book a three out of five. If you find this at a used bookstore, perhaps you should pick this up, but I would suggest visiting their website first, if you plan on reading this book at all. You will get far more information there.

Donald Powell says

This is an excellent book. There are about eighty American History topics covered. The selection of topics is very wide and all interesting pieces of how this country got to this place. The book is a collection of paraphrased interviews of authors. You get a good thumb nail view of all of the books. There is a wealth of information, macro and micro, on all of the topics. It was fun, interesting and long. Because it is history it is not dated but it does not cover recent events after late 2001.

Don says

Unsure if you want to delve into a 450-page book about some aspect of American history? These vignettes from Brian Lamb with several dozen authors is terrific and will turn you onto some outstanding reads. Many of these writers are big-time historians who are pretty casual and tell great yarns. This is really good material, and it's not just the obvious stuff.

Donald Kagan on the Cuban Missile Crisis and Jack Rakove on Creating the Constitution, Pauline Maeir on Declaring Independence, David Kennedy on FDR ... And where else can you get 5-8 pages on the Scopes Trial, Jefferson Davis, the nurses captured at Bataan, Robert Frost at the JFK Inauguration, and five dozen more.

Patrick says

A bit boring read as I recall. Some interesting stuff but not enough to make me like the book.

Annette says

This collection (3rd in the series of Booknotes titles) of seventy-eight interviews from the founding C-Span CEO and author <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/st...> provides chapter summaries of seminal events in American history. Contemporary writers and historians focus on a moment or event(s) in history that influenced and shaped our country. Visit the Booknotes website <http://www.booknotes.org/home/> (lj)

Jeff Ransel says

Have had this book sitting around for many years. I think it was actually better to read now, rather than when it first came out as it was very interesting to see how much has changed in 20 years. The book describes the writing process of around 100 non-fiction writers. So many were struggling at the time with converting from pen and paper or typewriter to computer. Also going back to think about how deliberate/thoughtful a process writing used to be, and how now any hack can throw up an article on the internet they took 5 minutes to write.

Tim Patrick says

This book of about 80 C-SPAN interviews covers a wide range of historical American topics, from the Boston Tea Party up through 9/11. Because they are edited versions of television interviews, the chapters are at times stilted, and [editorial content in square brackets] appears in almost every paragraph. The authors range from never-heard-of-never-want-to, to those who were in the thick of the events they wrote about.
