

narratives he uses were written by officers, the perspective on prison life is sometimes skewed a little. While officers planned amateur theatricals, sports contests, and kept up the mess, the rank and file did not fare so well. Nor did the other allied prisoners. In a typhus epidemic at Schneidemühl camp in 1914-1915 some 20 Britons died, but Russian deaths averaged 30 per day or 11,000 for the duration of the epidemic. Romanian, Serbian, and other allied prisoners likewise suffered terribly.

Still, in comparison to German treatment of prisoners, both military and non-combatant, in World War II, what British prisoners experienced in World War I seems mild and their accounts of it almost quaint. Rarely did the prisoners suffer from hunger because the Red Cross and other relief organizations saw to it that each POW received thirteen pounds of bread and one ten-pound parcel every two weeks. The German allowed these through to the very end of the war, even as the Germans' own rations were running short. There was little brutality or punishment, except of course for men who made escape attempts. However, in anticipation of Saddam Hussein's "human shields," towards the end of the war the Germans deliberately located POW camps in areas vulnerable to allied air attacks. As a precaution, though, Britain did the same thing on a limited scale.

At the end of the book, Jackson adds a brief chapter on the condition of German POWs in Britain. What is striking is the tremendous increase in numbers over the duration of the war: from 69 camps with 26,000 German prisoners and internees in April 1915 to 518 camps with 250,000 captives in October 1918. Treatment was humane, if not munificent, and Jackson relates only one spectacular German escape from Britain.

*The Prisoners* provides an interesting perspective on a little-known side of World War I. If that perspective is mostly British and a bit aristocratic, it is valuable nonetheless. Students and teachers will find here some of the drama, tedium, and humaneness that prisoners experienced while the great machine of war churned bloodily toward its end. Such insights make the whole event more real.

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**R. Jackson Wilson, et al. *The Pursuit of Liberty: A History of the American People*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1990. Second edition. Vol. I: 560 pp. Paper, \$27.00; Vol II: 634 pp. Paper, \$29.75.**

Reviewing textbooks is like visiting the dentist for a checkup. The experience may be painful or it may be beneficial for you. Since Frances FitzGerald's onslaught on the American textbook in the 1980s, publishers at the collegiate and pre-collegiate levels have been experimenting in order to upgrade and improve the backbone of classroom instruction, the textbook. Many publishers have heeded FitzGerald's remarks about the dullness of textbooks by expending large sums of monies on the production of a grand design classroom teaching package. Textbooks now come fully supplemented and include glossy transparencies, computerized test packets, blackline document masters, student worksheets, map exercises, drills, skills, and other frills. Despite all this seventh avenue marketing, what have publishers done to the textbook itself? Has it been substantially improved? Is it still all gloss and glitter with no substance?

Textbook writing has become a lost art. Seldom does one writer attempt the task of analyzing the historical scene, whether it be American, European, or World in perspective. Where are the Beards, Muzzeys, and Toynbees when you need one? For better or worse, textbooks are now written by committee. No one person seems to have the time (or probably even the wherewithal) to tackle the full-time task of developing a synthesized version of history and historiography as it developed over the past three decades. Usually a team of college-level historians surround themselves with a geographer, a curriculum developer, a reading specialist, and one or two master teachers when developing today's packaged historical products. The material is then field-tested in a variety of school settings—inner city, suburban, and rural—to show that indeed this production will meet ALL students' needs.

Despite these recent efforts by publishers to improve their classroom products, many recent forums such as the Bradley Commission and the Commission for Social Studies still bemoan the lack of synthesis in historical writing and research, especially in textbooks. So what can the classroom student and his mentor use if there are not any suitable books with which to study and analyze the past? The obvious answer is to choose from the best of the lot until a "new" history is written.

Five notable scholars, R. Jackson Wilson, James Gilbert, Stephen Nissenbaum, Karen Ordahl Kupperman, and Donald Scott, have attempted to wrestle with today's upheaval in curriculum development as well as the shifting winds of pedagogical change by approaching the study of the American past in an innovative way. Starting from the premise that students today "seem to know

something in general, but nothing in particular," the authors have produced a college-level textbook, *The Pursuit of Liberty: A History of the American People*, based on two convictions. First, that it is "possible for students to see and understand the ways that specific sequences of human action were related to the general setting in which they took place." Second, "historians ought not to keep a secret of the remarkably exciting and dramatic ways people actually acted in the past." Since "most history textbooks contain no narrative, no stories, no accounts of the dramatic," the authors have designed a textbook that involves the "sometimes triumphant, often shameful efforts and struggles of human beings."

In the *Pursuit of Liberty*, the authors alternate between the specific and the general, between narrative and explanation in hopes that in the end the reader "will have a much better grasp of the way history works." For example, each chapter begins with a story, a narrative if you please, of Bacon's Rebellion, the Salem Witch Trials, the Trail of Tears, Nat Turner, the Haymarket Riot, Hiroshima, or Chicago 1968. These episodes foreshadow the explanations that follow. The episodes (the specifics) establish the tone for the chapter discussion (the general). The narrative is interspersed intermittently with maps, prints, charts, and sidebars that graphically depict the content mentioned. A wonderfully creative section entitled "American Images" punctuates the narrative presentation with additional pictorial information. The authors have followed the old adage that a picture is worth a thousand words and utilize the pictorial image as another potential teaching device to entice today's visually sensitized youth.

The authors, obviously influenced by their own historical training and educational upbringing in the 1960s, cleverly grab the reader's attention with provocative human interest stories, such as Lizzie Borden's, that could be found in any of today's grocery-line checkout counter press offerings. Once hooking the reader's attention, the authors slide into discussion of the sometimes less than interesting study of, say, the Gilded Age. Let's face it, not all of history is exciting or glamorous but the authors have attempted to smooth over the "dull" spots. Throughout the chapters they have adeptly hung biographical hooks on which to capture the attention of the modern reader who is accustomed to the synesthesia of MTV. These biographical sidebars are representative of the people who have made America what it is today [Anne Hutchinson, John Marshall, Sequoyah, Jackie Robinson, and the Marx Brothers] and are part of the humanness that the authors offer as one of their themes throughout the book. The authors have cogently chosen figures from the entire kaleidoscope of American heroes, heroines, and villains. Succinctly put, *Pursuit of Liberty* is a 1960s interpretation of American history. It highlights social injustices and flaws in American society that have been overcome by humaneness and because of this humanity, America has become a better place in which to live.

The rest of the book is traditional in layout—a valuable chronology section, further reading on each subtopic in the chapter, maps, charts, and prints. *Pursuit of Liberty* is a highly illustrated book; scarcely a page goes by without graphics appearing. The prints, especially the section on "American Images," will excite the imagination—hangings of witches will stir the reader's interest to see what may be on the next page.

On the down side the color is visually unappealing and macabre in nature. The block lettering is unattractive stylistically and gives the book a primer style format usually reserved for handicapped readers. One hopes that the reader's initial eye reaction to the printing and coloring won't dull the senses because the authors have produced an excellent, readable, and exciting textbook of which Frances FitzGerald could be proud. Although some critics may disagree with the authors' approach to the study of the American past as unconventional and somewhat sensationalized, *Pursuit of Liberty* offers much to today's students of Clio.

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**Diana Karter Appelbaum.** *The Glorious Fourth: An American Holiday, An American History.* New York and Oxford: Facts on File, 1989. Pp. 180. Cloth, \$19.95.

Diana Karter Appelbaum, author of a similar book on Thanksgiving, has written a concise, popular history of Fourth of July celebrations from the Declaration of Independence in 1776 until the 1986 centennial of the Statue of Liberty. She presents a delightful chronicle of how patriotic commemorations have changed to reflect the changing nature of American society. Her thesis is that the national holiday "has been imperialist and nostalgic, frivolous and political, drunken and teetotal, but always, it has been an accurate mirror of the mood of the American people."