

use this work to initiate an investigation into what happened to your local Indians. Who were they; what treaties did they sign; how did the federal government convince them to leave; to where were they removed; and then what happened to them? Most students do know something about Indians and seem to have a strong curiosity about their way of life. They also know that Indian history gives them a different point of view of their own history. It is one that raises harsh questions about the justice of decisions and events.

Another approach is to look at Hollywood's interpretation of events between 1820-1890. Compare *They Died With Their Boots On* to *Little Big Man*. Indians and Custer are quite different in each movie; then compare Weeks's general account to those movies. Such an approach can lead to a different avenue of inquiry—a discussion about historiography of the Indian. Students will probably see similarities between the fictional Grandfather of the latter movie to the real Black Kettle in Weeks's book. The made-for-television movie, *Lonesome Dove* has a devilish Indian, Blue Duck, who ends his life like the real-life Satanta, a fearsome Kiowa chief. Did the author, Larry McMurtry, pattern Blue Duck after Satanta? Of course, there are many other movies that fit in with Weeks's book. *The Unforgiven*, *The Searchers*, *A Man Called Horse*, and *Ulzana's Raid* are four that come to mind. The important thing about this study is that it makes the reader want to know more about the Indian problem.

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John Niven. *The Coming of the Civil War 1837-1861*. Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1990. Pp. xiv, 181. Paper, \$8.95.

The price of books these days has made reading lists difficult to make up for those of us who teach at colleges and universities where most students have modest budgets. Many instructors may find that this book, and others in Harlan Davidson's American History Series, edited by John Hope Franklin, will go a long way in solving that problem.

Niven's book makes no pretense to being an exhaustive survey of the era from Martin Van Buren to the firing on Fort Sumter. As he explores the background of the Civil War in this short discussion (there are only 143 pages of narrative), he finds the cause of the war to be slavery, pure and simple. It was slavery that led to sectionalism, and of course the war was the extreme expression of north-south sectionalism. He mentions other issues, such as the role of the Know-Nothings, the impact of the Kansas-Nebraska bill and the Kansas controversy, the pace of modernization, emotionalism and mistrust, and economics, all emphasized in a way that makes the sad outcome seem so inevitable. State rights and racial adjustment are included, of course, but the bottom line was that the war was caused by slavery. "The institution of slavery precipitated the conflict," believes Niven, "because it stood in the way of a modernizing process that was changing the character not just of the United States but of the entire Western world." There is no beating about the bush here, for limitations of pages and price force him to come right to the point.

Some instructors may find that much important detail is omitted in this largely political study of the generation before the war. This is true, for Niven paints in broad strokes. Yet it is difficult to see how he could have included much more without making the book longer and hence more expensive.

Instructors will find this straight-forward account of the pre-Civil War era useful. The dilemma is that if one teaches the coming of the war, the war itself, and the Reconstruction in a single course, Niven tells only part of the story. The problem is partially solved, for Michael Perman's *Emancipation and Reconstruction, 1862-1879*, which appears in the same series, can be hooked on to Niven. (The resulting gap in coverage could be picked up by lectures, for Perman concentrates narrowly on emancipation, although his Reconstruction discussion is more comprehensive.) One bonus is that Niven starts his story a little earlier than historians of this era usually do, providing useful background.

One final feature of *The Coming of the Civil War* that many instructors will appreciate is an excellent bibliographical discussion. Students who cannot grasp the concept of revisionism should get the point when they read the first half of this essay.

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