

Richard Middleton. *Colonial America: A History, 1607-1760*. Cambridge, MA and Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1992. Pp. vii, 443. Cloth, \$54.95; paper, \$19.95.

Middleton's book is intended to serve as the primary text for courses on early American history, and teachers will find that it merits serious consideration. The first seven chapters, comprising almost 200 pages, provide a relatively straightforward and heavily chronological description of seventeenth-century developments. Nine chapters then follow with a largely topical discussion of eighteenth-century political, social, and economic life. The inclusion of numerous maps and illustrations, along with nineteen original documents, enhances the book's usefulness for students. Both students and teachers will be impressed with the historiographical discussions found in the footnotes of every chapter; indeed, for teachers struggling to keep up with that imposing mass of new scholarship that has so enriched the study of colonial history, these footnotes and the extensive bibliography will be extremely welcome.

Like all texts, some sections are stronger than others. Middleton deliberately chose not to include any discussion of the "pre-Columbian" era. Teachers adopting this book will thus need to add material on the native American civilizations from some other sources. Moreover, the life and vitality of the seventeenth-century men and women who colonized America do not always shine through his narrative, and readers get relatively little sense of how the concerns of men like Nathaniel Bacon or women like Anne Hutchinson are relevant to the late twentieth century. Here the text does at least provide an adequate foundation for additional classroom lecture and discussion, which will be critical if students are to get an understanding of how the past and present are related.

By contrast, the chapters on eighteenth-century colonial America are, on the whole, quite impressive. Economic patterns, family life, the status of women, slave society and culture, Indian society and culture, immigration patterns, political institutions, and the struggle for empire all receive exemplary treatment. Each chapter can stand on its own or, depending upon the interest of teacher and students, serve to stimulate additional dialog. The chapters on family life, on women, and on slave society and culture should be particularly effective at informing students and helping them see those relationships between past and present. The chapter on native American society and culture includes more details on tribal customs and differences than most teachers will need, but amid the details are solid generalizations about how disease, war, and hunting patterns decimated the Indian population following the beginning of European settlement.

On balance, then, Middleton has written a solid text on early American history, though teachers might want to supplement it with materials that focus on some of the interesting personalities of the period. As a candidate for classroom adoption and as a convenient tool for helping teachers keep up with recent scholarship, this book should have considerable appeal.

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