

economic side of imperialism, Porter incorporates the work of P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins whose theory of "gentlemanly" capitalist imperialism has "given a stimulating start to the first really post-imperial age of British imperial history." As the narrative unfolds, Porter views Britain as being as much a captive as a master of the ideal of imperialism, British freedom of action tempered by the need to hold onto the empire, which in the end they failed to accomplish. This reviewer found the new concluding chapter on the legacy of empire to be the most intriguing and clever, and wrapped in some faint whiffs of nostalgia for the empire. Porter quotes an article written by Lord Curzon in 1908 in which he predicts what will happen to Britain without the empire. According to Porter, Curzon had it right: "There we have it almost all: the economic decline, the narrowing of horizons, the loss of national identity, the tourists, consumerism, Americanism, Australian republicanism. It must have appeared a bleak prospect in 1908. But one can get used to such things." Porter argues that whatever happened to the formal structure of the empire "imperialism ... never did sink beneath history's waves." If somehow the empire supplied Britons with a belief that they belonged to something important, bigger than themselves, then that same spirit can be applied to a new Britain in the new European Union. Decline may no longer be the theme of British history.

Instructors should find both works useful for course adoptions. In particular it is important that the new research in imperial studies starts to reach textbooks. Hopefully, the new edition of *The Lion's Share* will be a harbinger of many more new studies.

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**Philip Jenkins.** *A History of the United States.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. Pp. xx, 317. Cloth, \$49.95; ISBN 0-312-16361-4. Paper, \$18.95; ISBN 0-312-16362-2.

This is a difficult book to review, because I am uncertain for whom it is intended. In 297 pages Philip Jenkins, Professor of History and Religious Studies at Pennsylvania State University, deftly and succinctly surveys the major bases of U.S. history--political, economic, social, and cultural developments. It is a small masterpiece of compression, and this, unfortunately, might be its weakness as far as high school and college classroom use is concerned. For students largely unfamiliar with this nation's history, the sweeping generalities encountered here will come across as just that, generalizations with no human flesh and blood attached. Jenkins can turn a good phrase, as when he puts the Scopes trial in "a realm somewhere between high drama and low farce," but most topics are covered so briefly, even less than in standard textbooks, that readers will witness a passing blur of names and events.

Moreover, in other respects this work could not do as a textbook for a survey class, unless extensive additional reading were assigned. The Declaration of Independence is included as an Appendix, but, inexplicably, not the Constitution. There is not a single

photograph. The author has been so ill-served by his editors in the tables and maps as to merit comment. One table lists total colonial population in 1770 as 1,046,000. Six pages later we learn that there were approximately 2.5 million Christians and Jews in the colonies in 1780, a remarkable 139 percent increase in ten years. Both a chart and a map of slave states omit Delaware, Maryland, and the District of Columbia. Another map, titled "Historical Areas of the United States," merely shows the states and some major cities (Boston is "Bolton," Tampa is "Tempa," and Cleveland appears twice). A Civil War map has more misspellings, misplaces Bowling Green, mislabels Missouri as Montana, and has Norfolk on the Del-Mar-Va peninsula and Fort Sumter far up the coast from Charleston.

Where Jenkins does make an unusual departure is in his emphasis, well articulated throughout, on political and religious dissenters and what he sees as their significant role in American history--be they dissident Puritans, Mormons in the mid-nineteenth century, utopians, urban workingmen protesters both before and after the Civil War, radicals in the World War I era, unemployed protesters during the Great Depression, and others. He draws an excellent comparison between the political and social extremism of the 1840s and the 1960s. And he closes by placing the recent events in Waco and Oklahoma City in the context of earlier American traditions of radical individualism and resistance to organized government. While this intriguing theme fails to make up for the other weaknesses of this book, it might prove profitable for the "general reader" of whom we so often speak.

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**William Sterne Randall and Nancy Nahra. *American Lives*. New York: Longman, 1997. Vol. I: To 1876. Pp. ix, 244. ISBN 0-673-46986-7. Vol. II: Since 1877. Pp. ix, 261. ISBN 0-673-46987-5. Each paper, \$23.06.**

Randall and Nahra collaborate productively on two volumes of short biographies composed of diverse historical figures covering the span of North American history. Although the sketches vary as much as the importance of the individuals considered, each offers a window on an important dimension of the American experience. An established biographer, Randall has been recognized for his work on Benjamin and William Franklin, Benedict Arnold, and Thomas Jefferson, all of which find their way, Arnold indirectly, into the first volume. While not sharing authorship, dedications and acknowledgments in Randall's previous works strongly suggest that Nahra actively participated in the preparation.

From Christopher Columbus to Charlotte Forten of the Reconstruction era, the first volume presents significantly different case studies. Each short biography consists of an introductory statement, a portrait, a sketch of about ten pages, a set of four helpful questions, and a bibliography of key secondary works. Randall and Nahra explore