

literate style reveal the disappointing reality for African-American women in courts of the period.

Perhaps the best of the group is Martha Prescott Norman's "Shining in the Dark: Black Women and the Struggle for the Vote, 1955-1965." It recounts the extraordinary suffering African-American females underwent once they had attained the right to vote. Upon registration, these women faced evictions, unemployment, shootings, threats--all in an attempt to assert themselves politically. After reading this piece, I was shocked to think this occurred just a little over three decades ago. Norman, herself a former member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, was a witness to many of the events and personalities with which her essay deals. It is a fine piece of prose, one that will make a real impression on students who read it.

This book would definitely be suitable for use in the college classroom, an excellent tool for any sort of Afro-American history course. Additionally, southern history courses, women's history courses, or twentieth-century American history classes could utilize the information in this collection as supplemental reading assignments. Sometimes touching, and at other times shocking, *African American Women and the Vote* is a valuable addition to the burgeoning field of African American history. Its portrayal of ethnic unity and tenacity makes for excellent academic reading.

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Kenneth S. Greenberg, ed. *The Confessions of Nat Turner and Related Documents*. Boston & New York: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1996. Pp. xii, 148. Paper, \$7.95; ISBN 0-312-11207-6.

Paul Finkelman. *Dred Scott v. Sandford: A Brief History with Documents*. Boston & New York: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1997. Pp. xii, 240. Paper, \$7.95; ISBN 0-312-11594-6.

As most history teachers already know, it is a difficult task finding just the right supplemental readings for a class. If a book is too dense or detailed, many students simply will not read it. Too specialized, however, and the students are unable to place it in any kind of general context. Most teachers constantly search for that elusive balance--don't overwhelm the students, yet try to pique their interest while also introducing relevant historical materials.

Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press once again has presented historians with two works that will certainly meet those perplexing classroom needs. I have used several of their books in my college history classes and they have always been read with enthusiasm by the students. In *The Confessions of Nat Turner* and *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, Bedford has further strengthened its continuing series in History and Culture

and published two books that history teachers can use to enhance the study of the United States in the antebellum era.

Most history books supply only the basic information concerning Nat Turner's rebellion, so many students never acquire a full understanding of that uprising and its implications. In August 1831 Turner and about 60 other slaves killed between 57 and 60 whites on plantations around Southampton, Virginia. Turner and his associates were captured and hanged several months later. Few texts delve any further into this fascinating and important story.

But Nat Turner's rebellion deserves a more exhaustive analysis. At this same time, the state of Virginia was debating various forms of manumission and some Southerners were actually considering the idea of a future without slavery. In effect, it was Turner's violent and bloody insurrection that helped to crystallize Southern sentiments against emancipation and few anti-slave voices were raised in the South for the next three decades.

Nat Turner is also a critical historical figure because he was able to talk about the rebellion. This book includes his now famous "Confession" and examines Turner's motivations and convictions in extensive detail. After his capture, local lawyer Thomas R. Gray visited Turner and recorded this series of confessions. The words of Turner can help students understand the insurgents and the attitudes of African Americans toward the Southern slave system. Turner's powerful words and thoughts provide the central focus of the book.

Along with Turner's confession, there are a number of other important historical documents. There is a series of newspaper editorials from the South that reveal the fears and anxieties that were beginning to grip the South as the danger of continued slave uprising became a real possibility. Also included is Thomas Dew's defense of slavery. Dew, a Southern intellectual, published his apology of slavery at nearly the same time as both Turner's rebellion and the Virginia debates on the general abolition of slavery. Kenneth Greenberg calls Dew's analysis "an important conservative response to Turner's insurrection."

The Confessions of Nat Turner and Related Documents would work very well in any college history class primarily because it explains both the specific and the general historical issues in a thorough manner. Turner's rebellion itself is discussed in satisfactory detail. But the consequences of his actions--the larger historical picture--are also examined. The book can be used to study both slavery and the general history of the antebellum era. It can also be a wonderful resource in understanding Southern fears and trepidations in the critical period of the 1830s when the termination of slavery was actually debated in the Old South.

Dred Scott v. Sandford is a slightly different kind of book. The Dred Scott Supreme Court case was one of the most momentous political events of the 1850s, helping bring about the sectional split that led to the Civil War. In 1857, the Southern-led Supreme Court ruled that blacks could never be considered citizens of the United

States, and that Congress had no power to regulate slavery in the territories (which they had done in the Missouri Compromise). The *Dred Scott* decision, as editor Paul Finkelman writes, was about slavery, freedom, the constitution, and the political situation in antebellum America.

This book does a superb job placing the Scott case in the political context of the period and connecting all the aforementioned issues. While *The Confessions of Nat Turner* can be read as a social history of slavery, *Dred Scott v. Sandford* is a much more political and legal narrative. Finkelman takes great pains to describe contemporary issues, like territorial expansion, sectionalism, and political party upheaval, which affected the Scott case. The case actually proves to be a convenient way to understand the complicated political situation of the 1850s, for it symbolizes much of the turbulence that was taking place in the nation.

Dred Scott v. Sandford also contains a wealth of documents. Finkelman has included the opinions of the justices, newspaper editorials about the case from all sections, and various political debates and speeches, including what future president Abraham Lincoln said about the case. In fact, the document section contains lengthy excerpts from the 1858 Lincoln-Douglas debates. That dress rehearsal for the upcoming 1860 presidential campaign between two leading Illinois politicians revealed what each party saw as the primary issues and consequence of the *Dred Scott* judgment. Including these historical debates adds considerably to an already generous selection of primary documents.

The narrative and the documents in both of these books are invaluable. I especially liked the newspaper editorials, for they show the reaction of the country to these defining events. In the Turner case, we observe the South beginning to defend their "Peculiar Institution." In the Scott decision, we can see both the North and South making their arguments concerning the territories, the future of slavery, and the future of the nation.

These books also contain good bibliographies and a section entitled "Questions for Consideration." These questions are valuable for both the history teacher and the student attempting to understand the complexity of the materials.

I highly recommend either of these books for both introductory or upper-division college history classes. And I anxiously await additional history books from Bedford.

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