

Clarice Swisher, ed. *John F. Kennedy*. San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press, 2000. Pp. 240. Paper, \$14.96; ISBN 0-7377-0224-9.

This is a classroom text anthology of secondary writing, with a few documents, on the presidency of John F. Kennedy and thus reflects some strengths and weaknesses of anthologies. A diversity of authors offers multiple points of view on different aspects of Kennedy's administration. This is well done on civil rights, where Henry Fairlie and Allen J. Matusow offer contrasting insights, and in the chapter assessing Kennedy, where three authors highlight his policy weaknesses, character flaws, and contributions to liberalism. Anthologies can also be tools for interpretation and historiography. This strength is not well developed. Headnotes do not mention schools of interpretation, and only a few selections represent different schools of thought. Especially lacking are right-wing opinions of Kennedy. By limiting their text to select topics, anthologies can offer greater depth of analysis. This strength, too, is only partly realized. While civil rights, Berlin, and Latin American policy are discussed in detail, only limited aspects of other topics, such as economic policy, are presented. Kennedy's personal life and background are discussed at length, while some important areas of his presidency, such as Southeast Asia, are scarcely touched.

The weakness of anthologies are evident to varying degrees. The disjointed text is alleviated by grouping readings into topical chapters. But most readings are excerpts from books or abridged articles, leaving some topics with inadequate backgrounds to appreciate their significance. Headnotes are short and summarize the contents of the excerpt rather than putting it into broad perspective. Anthologies can also be a mixed genre of selections that are difficult to interrelate. This is most obvious in the first chapter, on Kennedy's ancestors, which says little about him and only obliquely relates to his presidency. Another problem is selections that are essentially narrative descriptions of events that do not readily fit in with the broader analyses of his presidency.

Crucial to any anthology are the skills of the editor. These are evident in some aspects of the book, missing in others. Many readers will find the overview essay at the beginning disappointing. It is essentially hagiography, repeating the Camelot image of Kennedy and his family with heavy emphasis on their personal lives and too little on main trends running through his presidency. No mention was made of other essays. Throughout the book, the editor does a good job of inserting subtitles to provide an outline of what each article covers. Occasional boxed excerpts from other sources are in some essays, and footnotes clarify names and terms. This anthology has more auxiliary features than many. Several of Kennedy's speeches are appended, and there is a chronology, a limited bibliography, and an index. Finally, the editor is responsible for errors of fact. Two unfortunate ones were a headnote that attributed to Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. a book by his father, and not correcting Fairlie's misspelling

of the Los Angeles lawyer-editor Loren Miller as "Loreen" and referring to him as "she."

This book has possibilities as a text on the Kennedy era for a course in recent United States history or for a survey, especially for faculty who like to include personal anecdotes and lives with political analysis. But if the class is using several books, this work, by its nature, might be difficult to combine with monographs or period histories. For teachers who want primary documents, the Kennedy speeches are offered at the end with no accompanying explanations, and readers have to pick out scattered references to them in the articles. For advanced courses or ones devoted extensively to Kennedy, most excerpts are too short and lacking in interpretation to serve as anything beyond an introduction to the period.

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