

of years accomplished little. They became the dupes and victims of Europeans, enslaved and exploited, and now their descendants must look to a mythical African past for purpose and meaning. Such a denigration of the African-American struggle, which Walker regards as a triumph, clearly angers him.

Given the popularity of Afrocentrism and its spread through the academic community and popular culture, anyone teaching history or otherwise interested in the nature of historical methodology should read Walker. The manipulation of history to create a particular attitude or support a political point of view is, as Walker acknowledges, sometimes a way of creating unity and gaining power. To deny a people the heritage they and their forefathers built is not acceptable. Walker shows that historians should help African-American students to appreciate their own real history and not pursue distortions of the past in the name of identity, especially since their actual past offers them an identity worthy of enormous pride.

Walker's prose conveys his ideas and passions effectively, despite a painful tendency to fall into the jargon of social science. His arguments are clear, thoughtful, and easy to read. His concern for the discipline and its practitioners comes through forcefully. Even those who disagree with his conclusions will be engaged and will find much to think about if they are sincerely interested in historical scholarship and how it influences those who study it.

The value of this book for courses in historiography and methodology is obvious. It offers useful examples of how historians analyze material, and historical knowledge can shape our understanding of contemporary culture. Its applications go beyond metahistory, however. Students of modern American society and education will find much to explore in its pages, and anyone investigating African-American history should examine Walker's conclusions. Walker will help such students understand not only one way African Americans have come to view themselves but also an element in their contemporary efforts at gaining a sense of identity within American culture. Thus, although the title might not suggest it, this book can be a valuable part of a variety of courses.

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Don Nardo, ed. *The Great Depression*. San Diego: Greenhaven Press, Inc., 2000. Pp. 223. Cloth, \$24.96; ISBN 0-7377-0231-1. Paper, \$15.96; ISBN 0-7377-0230-3.

The Great Depression, part of the Turning Points of World History series published by Greenhaven Press, suffers from several glaring weaknesses despite its inclusion of essays by notable New Deal historians and some usable primary source documents. The major weakness is that, in spite of being part of a series on World History, it focuses solely on the United States. One current goal of historical literacy is to help students understand the broader global context of events and, based on this

criterion, the book fails. A discussion of the Good Neighbor policy is the only place where this world context is at all discussed, and then only in a limited fashion.

Another glaring weakness in this text is the editor's assertion that the stock market crash caused the Great Depression instead of explaining the more complex picture of how the stock market crash was more correctly a symptom of the problems in the U.S. and world economy. And, although the book contains a good discussion of the far-reaching effects of the stock market crash, it makes no mention of buying stock on margin. Students cannot understand the crash without understanding the true nature of the stock speculation that was taking place in the 1920s.

Furthermore, the editor mistakenly leads the reader to believe that Franklin D. Roosevelt had a grand plan for solving the Great Depression. He does not lay the proper groundwork for helping students understand that Congress and the nation were only willing to accept such radical government intrusions into the traditionally more private sectors of the economy precisely because the economy had significantly weakened in the months between Roosevelt's election and his March inauguration. Missing is a clear discussion of the pragmatic nature of Roosevelt's approach and a better understanding of the role his advisors played. While the editor concedes that all New Deal programs did not work, he could have easily strengthened his work by better explaining the trial-and-error learning curve of the Roosevelt administration.

Another critical element missing from *The Great Depression* is a discussion of the role played by both the Republican critics on the right and the "thunder on the left" generated by men like Louisiana Governor Huey P. Long. These critics from both sides of the political spectrum, along with the eventual reluctance of the Supreme Court to continue to support such broad executions of power by Roosevelt, significantly affected the direction of the later years of the New Deal.

There is also no clear analysis of the economy and its additional nosedive in 1937. Students need to understand how this economic downturn connects to their evaluation of whether or not the New Deal was solving the problems of the Great Depression. And, again, another critical element is missing—a discussion of the role of World War II in ending the Great Depression.

Although there are notable essays by such well-known New Deal scholars as William Leuchtenburg and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., these excellent selections cannot make up for the other weaknesses that litter the work. The essays themselves, although divided into reasonably-titled chapters, seem disjointed and sometimes lack a connection to one another. More explanation by the editor could have solved this problem.