

**Peter Charles Hoffer.** *The Brave New World: A History of Early America.* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006. Pp. 554. Paper, \$35.00; ISBN 0-8018-8483-7.

Instructors of courses in colonial America should consider this thorough textbook. By developing a unifying theme for understanding early America, Peter Hoffer keeps the text focused. While living standards and freedom improved for many, he argues, others labored as subordinates. But the story, as the author emphasizes, is more complex, as even oppressed people had human agency. Hoffer does a remarkable job developing this theme throughout the book. In particular, his discussion of relations between Native Americans and Europeans is balanced. In his presentation of trade relations, for example, he provides the point of view of both sides, placing the reader in the mind of both the European and Native American.

One of the great strengths of the book is that Hoffer recognizes that, in order to understand how Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans encountered each other, the reader needs extensive information about who these people were before they collided. Moreover, while the book might be about colonial North America, an entire chapter is devoted to Spain and its colonies to provide a context for the exploration and colonization of North America. This second edition also has an important added chapter on the American Revolution, enabling instructors to end in 1783 rather than in 1775, if they choose.

There are, however, limitations to the textbook that are important to note. Some historically significant topics are given limited space. There is scant attention, for instance, to non-British immigrants, so that the story of ethnic diversity among colonials remains untold in this text. While the Protestant Reformation is discussed, the focus is on its relationship to politics and exploration. The reader does not come away with an understanding of the theology of Protestant sects.

Instructors considering this text should also be aware that the writing can be dry at times. While the book has a unifying framework to keep it focused, the author's narrative often provides details of events at length without explaining to the reader their significance. Long sentences with listings of names and dates, without a clear point, can confuse undergraduate readers. In this sense, however unintentional, the writing style reinforces the notion that history is all about knowing facts.

For instructors whose students tend to be highly motivated history majors, I would recommend this book as a textbook to complement any monographs assigned for the course. Instructors who have a significant number of students from other majors, however, might want to consider a more accessible text. That said, anyone teaching the history of early America will find useful material in *The Brave New World* from which to develop lectures. The discussion of slavery in eighteenth-century South Carolina is just one of many examples. Hoffer integrates well some of the most recent research on the subject to tell the story of the oppressive nature of slavery in the colony, while also highlighting the ways in which slaves resisted. Equally important,

comparisons are made to slavery in Virginia. With the numerous examples available in the narrative, instructors have both the framework and the stories to offer an interesting lecture. Hoffer's excellent bibliographic essay, which illustrates the depth of his knowledge in the subject, also provides a plethora of sources that instructors can refer to, either to utilize as monographs in the classroom or for their own edification.

Medaille College

Daniel P. Kotzin

**Susan Dunn, ed. *Something That Will Surprise the World: The Essential Writings of the Founding Fathers*. New York: Basic Books, 2006. Pp. 450. Cloth, \$32.00; ISBN 0-465-01779-7.**

Every teacher who makes a commitment to using primary sources in the classroom either faces a lack of easily accessible materials or such a cornucopia of resources that making the best selection is time-consuming and complicated. For those educators who teach early American history or history of the American Revolution, the latter scenario is more often the case. The founders were prolific writers and the ongoing publication of their public and personal writings shows no sign of tapering off in the years to come. While this might seem like an enviable position for teachers and students alike, the process of selecting the appropriate resources for the content and approach utilized by the teacher in the classroom will be more successful if the primary source material is tailored to the particular goals of the instructor.

This collection of primary sources is unique in its predominant focus on the personal correspondence of Washington, Jefferson, Adams, Hamilton, and Madison. Dunn organizes the material by author and precedes each section with a very brief, but illuminating introduction. This approach is to be lauded because it allows the reader to enter into the personal intellectual arena of the founders without heavy-handed editorial directions, a problem that often deters from many other similar compilations. A brief introductory essay by Joseph Ellis is interesting but adds no new insight to the materials.

The selection will provide teachers and students with a look into the more personal processes of decision-making and governance. It is often difficult for students to recognize and empathize that the founders were struggling on a very personal level with ideas many of them sensed would have a profound impact on a world much larger than their own. They had a sense of humor, they were governed by passions, they had personalities that clashed and complicated the development and implementation of their collective ideas. Through the selection offered by Dunn, students and teachers will come to understand the dynamic intellectual struggles and compromises inherent in their achievements. Students will see them as friends, rivals, husbands, and fathers. Tempers flare, friendship is offered, and loyalties are defended in their ongoing collaboration.