

“play” and how “kids” learn best when they are having fun, the reader is taken on a journey of self-discovery and educational enlightenment. In particular, the authors drive the reader to examine time-honored assumptions about teaching and learning in light of what we know today about human development, cognitive learning, and developmental frameworks. By centering this work on what we know about kids and their learning, the authors call into question much of what happens in schools—rote memorization and standardized test preparation. Thus, each essay, written by distinguished educators and museum professionals, provides a multitude of suggestions for connecting young people to history by making “student-centered” activities and exhibits, whether at museums or in their classrooms, the centerpiece of a visionary ideal for optimum learning.

As each essayist says in his or her own style and voice, learning is not the accumulation of facts, but immersion in an experience whereby learners embody their learned knowledge as a living example of what they know and more importantly come to believe. These sharp educators and museum curators tell us repeatedly that for students (or kids) truly to learn they must “own their subject matter.” They must develop a genuine affection for their learning and, even with something as esoteric as history, personal ownership will most likely come with personal immersion. To paraphrase the authors, “fun begets learning and learning begets understanding.” Not just for history buffs, this multi-dimensional edited collection will resonate with teachers, curators, and parents who know that learning by doing is the opening to smart instruction. This good book shows us how.

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**Conal Furay and Michael J. Salevouris. *The Methods and Skills of History: A Practical Guide*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 2010. Pp. 282. Paper, \$26.95; ISBN 978-0-88295-272-7.**

Conal Furay and Michael Salevouris attempt in *The Methods and Skills of History* to address an important problem in contemporary education: that students lack historical literacy. Their aim is to provide students with the tools to begin to “think historically.” Each of the fourteen chapters addresses a specific element within the field of history that is necessary for students to understand in order to do the work of historians. The authors begin each chapter with an introductory essay, followed by a series of exercises designed for students to practice the skills of history discussed in the chapter. Thus, the excellent organization of the book lends itself to teaching the skills of history as a process that students can manage through incremental steps. The first five chapters cover historical thinking, focusing on everything from causality to historical context. Several chapters on how historians conduct research, both primary and secondary, provide students with an understanding of how historians “do” history.

The final two chapters on historiography help students know better how the discipline of history operates.

The essays at the beginning of each chapter do a nice job of introducing students to the different elements within the field of history. The authors, however, face a serious challenge: making abstract concepts such as “sensitivity to context” understandable to undergraduates. Although the authors intend their essays to be “meaningful” to students, most of the essays tend to be dry and might only be able to hold the attention of the most passionate history majors. The exercises, though, are the least appealing aspect of the book for students. They focus far more on teaching the skills of history rather than inspiring interest in history. For example, in one exercise on historical context, students are provided with a description of an event (Oliver Cromwell’s massacres of Wexford and Drogheda) and then five separate passages meant to provide additional historical context for the event. In the exercise, students are asked to write what specific pieces of information from each passage provide further understanding of the massacres by broadening the context. While the exercise will enable students to understand the importance of historical context, many students might see the exercises as busy work and be turned off.

The problem with the exercises is actually a larger problem with the book in that it would be difficult to use as a supplementary text for content-based courses. The examples discussed in the introductory essays and the exercises are mostly related to topics in both European and American history. The authors might have done this intentionally so the book could be used in both European and American history courses. However, there are so few examples and exercises related to any one period in European or American history that it would be difficult to incorporate the book into a content course. In this respect, the book appears best suited for courses in Historical Method, where it can be assumed students already have a background in both European and American history, and thus the exercises can be presented as a review of familiar material.

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**John P. Kaminski.** *The Great Virginia Triumvirate: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson & James Madison in the Eyes of Their Contemporaries.* Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010. Pp. 264. Cloth, \$27.95; ISBN 978-0-8139-2876-0.

John Kaminski has dedicated his career to studies of the Founding Fathers. In the process, he has collected a large database that he tentatively calls “The Founders on the Founders,” a collection of contemporary descriptions and opinions voiced about the revolutionary elite. Many items come from little known newspaper and manuscript sources. Kaminski’s subjects are three leaders seen through the eyes of contemporaries. His intent is to reawaken public interest in the first Virginia Presidents. Although he