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Race Relations in America: Examining the Facts [Book Review]

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opinion of journalists and his charge of “fake news” are represented here. The work also explores a wide range of viewpoints, from James Fenimore Cooper’s 1838 complaint about the tyranny of the press, to Barack Obama’s 2016 remarks about the polarization of the media.

**VERDICT**

A well-curated compilation of important primary documents representing more than 200 years of American aggression toward the media. General readers and students of journalism, communications, history, and political science will find this work useful.—Rob Tench, Old Dominion Univ. Libs., Norfolk, VA

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**LAW & CRIME**


In this engrossing work spanning the end of the Civil War through the start of World War II, Selzer (H. H. Holmes: The True History of the White City Devil) analyzes the scenes of notorious U.S. murders, including the killings of Lizzie Borden’s father and stepmother, the murder of Bobby Franks by Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb, the kidnapping and murder of Charles Lindbergh’s infant son, and the assassinations of presidents Abraham Lincoln, James A. Garfield, and William McKinley. Selzer explains that this era saw huge technological advances in policing, criminology, and forensics, and the adoption of practices such as handwriting analysis, fingerprinting, and ballistics. Maps are a primary feature of Selzer’s book; each entry contains either a street map or floor plan of the site of the murder with fascinating details such as the murderer’s movements or the location of the victim(s). Each entry also includes a brief description of the murder, expert analysis, and numerous, often gruesome photographs. The volume features a brief introduction about the birth of criminology and modern forensics, a criminology matrix, more than 700 illustrations, and suggestions for further reading. **VERDICT** Although there are other similar guides to science fiction (from Routledge and Cambridge, for example), Westfahl’s clear and lively presentation and rich historical perspective of literary robots and AI have caught up with fiction. For its proper historical perspective of literary robots and AI throughout popular culture, this title works well with Gregory Jerome Hampton’s Imaging Slaves and Robots in Literature, Film, and Popular Culture: Androids and Cyborgs in the American Imagination. Greenwood. Jul. 2021. 325p. ISBN 9781440873843. $97. REF

**REFERENCE**


This work about depictions of the Cold War in pop culture, Frazier (history, Gateway Community Coll., KY; Germany at War) covers nine films and one TV series. For each, he offers a plot synopsis, brief critical analysis, and historical background, then delves into the artistic aspects of the work, its cultural context, and its critical reception. Each entry also includes a list of further reading. The earliest of the films that Frazier examines is from the start of the Cold War (The Third Man, 1949), while the latest (Charlie Wilson’s War, Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy, Bridge of Spies, and the FX show The Americans) are from the 21st century. The book is part of ABC-CLIO’s “Hollywood History” series, which intends to address the accuracy of films and what they say about the era in which they were made. This focus sometimes limits Frazier’s book; for instance, he doesn’t cover Atomic Age monster movies like Them! or communist allegories like Invasion of the Body Snatchers; the most fantastic works are The Manchurian Candidate and From Russia with Love. The USSR produced many great films in the Cold War era, but most didn’t deal with contemporary matters and so fall outside Frazier’s scope. **VERDICT** It’s difficult to decide whom this volume is suited to. The history is accurate but very brief, while the film discussion is largely consumed by plot synopses. Not recommended.—Robert Mixner, Bartholomew Cty. P.L., Columbus, IN

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**LITERATURE**


Westfahl’s (literature, Univ. of La Verne, CA; editor of The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Science Fiction and Fantasy) has written widely on science fiction, but his new guide consists of totally new content, beginning with a series of historical essays putting the genre in perspective—from “Science Fiction in the Ancient World and the Middle Ages” to “Science Fiction in the Twenty-First Century.” These are followed by thematic essays about the natural sciences and science fiction; literature, films, and television; fine art and graphic novels; gender and sexuality; racial issues in the genre; global science fiction; and more. Alphabetical entries, which comprise the bulk of the two-volume set, discuss authors of science fiction (Isaac Asimov, Octavia Butler, Olaf Stapledon, Roger Zelazny); writers outside the genre who significantly influenced the form (Aristophanes, Franz Kafka, William Shakespeare); subgenres (Black science fiction, gay and lesbian science fiction, space opera, steampunk); particular motifs (androids, extraterrestrial worlds, virtual reality, zombies); and major works (novels Flatland and A Canticle for Leibowitz, TV program Doctor Who, and sci-fi predecessors The Divine Comedy, The Epic of Gilgamesh, and The Odyssey). Entries often include boxed sidebars and brief interviews with many of the living authors. **VERDICT** Although there are other similar guides to science fiction (from Routledge and Cambridge, for example), Westfahl’s clear and lively presentation and comprehensive knowledge and background will appeal to fans of the genre, as well as students (middle school through college) who are researching specific sci-fi authors, works, or themes.—Marcia G. Welsh, formerly at Dartmouth Coll. Lib., Hanover, NH

**PERFORMING ARTS**


In this work about depictions of the Cold War in pop culture, Frazier (history, Gateway Community Coll., KY; Germany at War) covers nine films and one TV series. For each, he offers a plot synopsis, brief critical analysis, and historical background, then delves into the artistic aspects of the work, its cultural context, and its critical reception. Each entry also includes a list of further reading. The earliest of the films that Frazier examines is from the start of the Cold War (The Third Man, 1949), while the latest (Charlie Wilson’s War, Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy, Bridge of Spies, and the FX show The Americans) are from the 21st century. The book is part of ABC-CLIO’s “Hollywood History” series, which intends to address the accuracy of films and what they say about the era in which they were made. This focus sometimes limits Frazier’s book; for instance, he doesn’t cover Atomic Age monster movies like Them! or communist allegories like Invasion of the Body Snatchers; the most fantastic works are The Manchurian Candidate and From Russia with Love. The USSR produced many great films in the Cold War era, but most didn’t deal with contemporary matters and so fall outside Frazier’s scope. **VERDICT** It’s difficult to decide whom this volume is suited to. The history is accurate but very brief, while the film discussion is largely consumed by plot synopses. Not recommended.—Robert Mixner, Bartholomew Cty. P.L., Columbus, IN

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**SOCIAL SCIENCES**


In this extremely well-crafted addition to ABC-CLIO’s “Contemporary Debates” series, Khanna and Matsumoto (both sociology, Univ. of Vermont) expertly tackle some of the thorniest topics in current American race relations. They answer 34 questions...
across seven chapters on the definitions and realities of race, systematic racism, power and privilege, crime and criminal justice, social policies, immigration, and the future of race relations in the United States. Their aim, which is superbly outlined in the preface, is to persuade readers to examine race in the context of historical circumstances and contemporary research rather than through their inherent biases and limited personal experiences. The format is simple: Each chapter contains a brief general introduction; a series of questions with one- to two-page answers that use quantifiable, evidence-based data; a detailed explanation of the facts behind the answers; and a list of resources for further reading. Khanna and Matsunoto discuss white privilege, show that Black Americans are more likely than white Americans to be killed by the police, and dispel the misconception that immigrants take jobs away from U.S.-born workers. The volume concludes with a thought-provoking piece asking if the election of Barack Obama marked the beginning of a new “post-racial” United States. In their responses, the authors plainly argue that American society is marked by systemic racism that is far from resolved.  

VERDICT A balanced and thorough look at the United States’ most important contemporary race issues, with timely content and excellent supporting documentation.—Rob Tench, Old Dominion Univ. Libs., Norfolk, VA

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**Comics Plus**

**LibraryPass.complusapp.com**

By Francisca Goldsmith

**CONTENT** Comics Plus is a database of new and backlist comics and graphic novels from more than 120 publishers. In addition to the comics, the resource contains topical and genre lists and well-designed training and publicity materials for library staff. New titles are added every Wednesday.

Publishers include some with international roots such as Kodansha; some with a focus on the very young, such as Toon Books; curriculum-related publishers such as Capstone; longtime comics publishers such as Andrews McMeel; companies that create graphic novel and prose works, such as Rosen; and widely recognized graphic novel publishers including Dark Horse Comics, Archie, and NBM and its youth imprint, Papercutz. The range of publishers excludes imprints from any of the “Big Five,” Drawn & Quarterly and Marvel and DC. At the time of this writing, negotiations are in process with Image Comics.

Categorization of titles is fine-grained, with each book described in multiple and searchable ways among more than 50 LibraryPass category tags, which include adaptions, LGBTQ, memoir, nonfiction, and political. For each title, users will find bibliographic information, intended audience age, and a plot summary provided by the publisher.

**USABILITY** Comics Plus offers unlimited access and simultaneous use for all content. All reading is done within the LibraryPass ecosystem, on a smartphone or tablet or within a web browser. Once a title is selected and opened, it is considered moved to the user’s personal self and remains there until the user removes it. Manga published in traditional right-to-left orientation maintains that format in the screen versions. Readers can easily track their relative place in the story, as all books indicate the number of pages read and the total number of pages.

The LibraryPass platform is designed to make the sequential art format more accessible through libraries, including public, school, and academic institutions. Authentication options specifically for public libraries and those geared to school libraries are provided, and directions are supplied for school libraries using MackinVia accounts. A well-working app for iOS is currently available, and an Android app is forthcoming.

Content is divided into five age tiers (children, kids, teens, young adult, and adult), and libraries can control access for younger and/or teen readers with a variety of authentication options. The age ratings reflect sophistication of presentation style as well as subject content, thus addressing visual literacy development. Libraries can also turn off access to any individual titles, thus maintaining complete control of the collection for their local communities.

Users can search Comics Plus by category or publisher or by typing a desired term into the search box; they can also filter content by recently added, popular, and featured comics. Multiple themed lists (spooky reads, arts and crafts, pride, American history, and more) offer browsers and library staff many discovery possibilities.

**PRICING** Pricing for annual subscriptions varies by package, institution (public, college/university, or K–12 schools), and population served (for public libraries) or full-time enrollment (for K–12 schools, colleges, and universities). Packages include the children’s library (for ages five through 14) and all-access (which includes mature content); institutions can remove titles deemed too mature for their population.

**VERDICT** Comics Plus is an excellent resource to build and expand both sequential art collections and public awareness of the format’s diversity and appeal. The content is broad, deep, rich, and nuanced and offers high-interest options for dedicated and novice comics readers alike. Supporting resources, including the fea-