Very Short Introductions online

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African History: A Very Short Introduction
John Parker and Richard Rathbone
Print Publication Year: 2007 Published Online: Sep 2013  
Publisher: Oxford University Press  
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Item type: book

African History: A Very Short Introduction looks at Africa's past and reflects on the changing ways it has been imagined and represented by examining the unity and diversity of African cultures, slavery, religion, colonial conquest, the diaspora, and the importance of history in understanding contemporary Africa. Africa has been known as ‘the cradle of mankind’, and its recoverable history stretches back to the Pharaohs. But the idea of study of ‘African history’ itself is new. Why is it still contested and controversial? Who invented the idea of ‘Africa’? How is African history pieced together, given such a lack of documentary evidence? How did Africa interact with the world 1,000 years ago?

American Cultural History: A Very Short Introduction
Eric Avila
Print Publication Year: 2018 Published Online: Aug 2018  
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Item type: book

American Cultural History: A Very Short Introduction provides a chronological look at American culture—the values, attitudes, beliefs, and myths of a particular society and the objects through which they are organized—addressing literature, music, art, architecture, theater, film, television, and the Internet. In doing so, it emphasizes culture’s role in the shaping of national identity and how previous generations of Americans have imagined themselves, their nation, and their relationship to rest of the world. Across the lines of race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, generation, and geography, diverse Americans have forged a national culture with a global reach, inventing stories to underscore the problems and possibilities of an American way of life.

American History: A Very Short Introduction
Paul S. Boyer
Print Publication Year: 2012 Published Online: Sep 2013  
Publisher: Oxford University Press  
DOI: 10.1093/actrade/9780195389142.001.0001
Item type: book
American History: A Very Short Introduction spans the earliest migrations to the present looking at the United States's failures to live up to its oft-stated ideals. The establishment of the North American colonies had very different meanings for colonists, native peoples, and enslaved Africans. The late nineteenth century saw industrial expansion, appalling conditions, and an exploited labor force. The twentieth-century emergence of a suburban society of consumer abundance meant a better life for many, yet left behind crime-ridden inner cities and spawned a stultifying mass culture. While American popular culture has demonstrated global appeal, the projection of U.S. military power abroad has sometimes failed in its purpose and damaged the nation's international standing.

American Immigration: A Very Short Introduction
David A. Gerber

American Immigration: A Very Short Introduction examines the many legal efforts to curb immigration and to define who is and is not an American. It looks at immigration from the perspective of the migrant — farmers and industrial workers, mechanics and domestics, highly trained professionals and small-business owners — who willingly upped sticks for the promise of a better life. Americans have come from every corner of the globe, and have been brought together by a variety of historical processes — conquest, colonialism, the slave trade, territorial acquisition, and voluntary immigration. What is the relationship between race and ethnicity in the life of these groups and in the formation of American society?

The American Revolution: A Very Short Introduction
Robert J. Allison

Between 1760 and 1800, the American people cast off British rule to create a new nation and a radically new form of government based on the idea that people have the right to govern themselves. The American Revolution: A Very Short Introduction provides a cohesive synthesis of the military, diplomatic, political, social, and intellectual aspects of the American Revolution, paying special attention to the Revolution's causes and consequences. It recreates the tumultuous events that led to revolution, such as the Boston Massacre and the Boston Tea Party, and highlights the major battles and commanders on both sides before exploring the aftermath of the Revolution and how the new republic developed.
The American West: A Very Short Introduction
Stephen Aron

The American West: A Very Short Introduction tracks “the West” from the building of the Cahokia Mounds around 900 AD, through early encounters with Europeans, to the Newlands Reclamation Act in 1902, and the post-World War II migration to California. It stretches the chronology, enlarges the geography, and varies the casting, providing a history of the American West that is longer, larger, and more complicated than popular culture has previously suggested. It is a history of how portions of North America became Wests, how parts of these became American, and how ultimately American Wests became the American West.

American Women's History: A Very Short Introduction
Susan Ware

What does U.S. history look like with women at the center of the story? From Pocahontas to military women serving in the Iraq war, American Women's History: A Very Short Introduction chronicles the contributions, recognized and unrecognized, that women have made to the American experience. It recognizes the diversity of American women's experiences defined by race, ethnicity, and class, but also geography, sexual orientation, age, and religion. At the core of the narrative is the recognition that gender—the changing historical and cultural constructions of roles assigned to the biological differences of the sexes—is central to understanding the history of American women's lives, and the history of the United States.

Asian American History: A Very Short Introduction
Madeline Y. Hsu

Asians have migrated to North America for centuries, in search of opportunities and conveyed by increasingly dense, international circuits of trade, labor markets, and family networks. Asians joined a diverse array of immigrants arriving in capacities as diverse merchants, farmers, soldiers, missionaries, soldiers, artists, and students. They contributed significantly to the massive transformation of the United States into the wealthiest and most powerful nation in the world, particularly on the west coast and Hawaii. Asian American
History: A Very Short Introduction highlights how Asian immigration has shaped the evolution of ideological and legal interpretations of America as a “nation of immigrants.”

The Aztecs: A Very Short Introduction
David Carrasco

The Aztecs: A Very Short Introduction employs the disciplines of history, religious studies, and anthropology as it illuminates the complexities of Aztec life. This VSI looks beyond Spanish accounts that have coloured much of the Western narrative to let Aztec voices speak. It also discusses the arrival of the Spaniards, contrasts Aztec mythical traditions about the origins of their city with actual urban life in Mesoamerica, outlines the rise of the Aztec empire, explores Aztec religion, and sheds light on Aztec art. The VSI concludes by looking at how the Aztecs have been portrayed in Western thought, art, film, and literature as well as in Latino culture and arts.

The British Constitution: A Very Short Introduction
Martin Loughlin

The British Constitution: A Very Short Introduction explores one of the most unusual constitutional arrangements in the world. It considers the scope and nature of the British constitution and the challenges that have been generated by this approach. This VSI examines the origins of the British constitution and the alterations made to it in response to the changing nature of its state — from England, to Britain, to the United Kingdom, to the impact of Britain's membership of the European Union. Lastly, it examines the future prospects of the British constitution in an ever-changing political environment.

The British Empire: A Very Short Introduction
Ashley Jackson

The British Empire: A Very Short Introduction explores how the British Empire became so powerful and far-reaching. From the eighteenth century until the 1950s the British Empire was the biggest political entity in the world. What was the British Empire and what were its main constituent parts? How was the Empire ruled? What were its economic effects? What were the cultural implications of empire, in Britain and its colonies? These questions are
answered in this VSI and the life of the people living under imperial rule is examined. The legacies of the Empire and how it should be viewed in world history are also explored.

**Colonial America: A Very Short Introduction**

Alan Taylor

Colonial America: A Very Short Introduction presents the current scholarly understanding of the subject. During the past generation, historians have broadened that understanding by adopting both a trans-Atlantic and a trans-continental perspective, examining the interplay of Europe, Africa, and the Americas through the flows of goods, people, plants, animals, capital, and ideas. Colonial America produced an unprecedented mixing of radically diverse peoples — African, European, and Indian — under stressful circumstances for all. The colonial intermingling of peoples, microbes, plants, and animals from different continents was unparalleled in speed and volume. Everyone had to adjust to a new world of unpredictable social and cultural hybrids that compromised and complicated the ambitious plans of empire-builders.

**The Conquistadors: A Very Short Introduction**

Matthew Restall and Felipe Fernandez-Armesto

The Conquistadors: A very Short Introduction investigates the facts and myths behind the Spanish invasion of the New World. With startling speed, Spanish conquistadors invaded hundreds of Native American kingdoms, took over the mighty empires of the Aztecs and Incas, and initiated an unprecedented redistribution of the world's resources and balance of power. They changed the course of history, but the myth they established was even stranger than their real achievements. Subjects explored include New World civilizations prior to the invasions, the genesis of conquistador culture on both sides of the Atlantic, the roles black Africans and Native Americans played, and the consequences of the invasions.

**The Cultural Revolution: A Very Short Introduction**

Richard Curt Kraus

The Cultural Revolution: A Very Short Introduction illuminates China's decade-long Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Moving beyond Mao Zedong, this VSI links Beijing's elite politics to broader aspects of society and culture, highlighting many changes in daily life,
employment, and the economy. It also situates this very nationalist outburst of Chinese radicalism within a global context, showing that the Cultural Revolution was mirrored in the radical youth movement that swept much of the world. It was during the Cultural Revolution that China and the United States tempered their long hostility, which sowed the seeds for China's subsequent decades of spectacular economic growth.

The Founding Fathers: A Very Short Introduction

R. B. Bernstein

The Founding Fathers: A Very Short Introduction provides an overview of the brilliant, flawed, and quarrelsome group of lawyers, politicians, merchants, military men, and clergy known as “the Founding Fathers,” what they did, and what history has made of them. It traces the dynamic forces that molded Washington, Franklin, Jefferson, Adams, Hamilton, and their contemporaries as British colonists in North America and as intellectual citizens of the Atlantic civilization’s Age of Enlightenment. It analyzes the American Revolution, the framing and adoption of state and federal constitutions, and the key concepts and problems that both shaped and circumscribed the founders’ achievements as the United States sought its place in the world.

Gandhi: A Very Short Introduction

Bhikhu Parekh

Gandhi was one of the few men in history to fight simultaneously on moral, religious, political, social, economic, and cultural fronts. During his time as a lawyer in South Africa he developed his strategy of non-violence — the idea of opposing unjust laws by non-violent protest — which he made the basis of his successful struggle against British rule in India. Gandhi: A Very Short Introduction outlines both Gandhi’s major philosophical insights and the limitations of his thought. It looks at Gandhi’s cosmocentric anthropology, his spiritual view of politics, his unique form of liberal communitarianism, and his theories of oppression, non-violent action, and active citizenship.

The Great Depression and New Deal: A Very Short Introduction

Eric Rauchway

The Great Depression and New Deal: A Very Short Introduction
The Great Depression and the New Deal: A Very Short Introduction explores the roots, events, and legacy of the Great Depression and Roosevelt's New Deal. America's post-war laissez-faire economic policies resulted in an economic upheaval of unprecedented severity, to which President Roosevelt responded with a vigorous (and sometimes unconstitutional) set of Depression-fighting economic measures, which were only justifiable in the face of such a global economic disaster. Key New Deal programmes are examined, such as the National Recovery Agency, Public Works Administration, and Social Security, revealing why some worked and others did not.

The Habsburg Empire: A Very Short Introduction
Martyn Rady

From the 13th to the 20th centuries, Habsburgs ruled much of Central Europe, and for two centuries were rulers of Spain. Through Spain, they acquired lands around the Mediterranean and part of the New World, spreading eastwards to include the Philippines. Reaching from South-East Asia to what is now Ukraine, the Habsburg Empire was truly global. The Habsburg Empire: A Very Short Introduction looks at the history of the Habsburgs from their 10th-century origins in Switzerland, to the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire in 1918. It introduces the pantheon of Habsburg rulers and discusses the lands and kingdoms that made up the Empire and the moments that shaped their history.

The Holy Roman Empire: A Very Short Introduction
Joachim Whaley

The Holy Roman Empire: A Very Short Introduction outlines the fascinating thousand-year history of the Holy Roman Empire from 800 to 1806, and its legacy for the two centuries after its dissolution. Founded on the basis of Charlemagne’s Frankish kingdom, its imperial title went to the German monarchy that became established in the 9th and 10th centuries. They claimed Charlemagne’s legacy, including his role as protector of the papacy and guardian of the Church. Throughout its lifetime, the empire’s growth and history was shaped by the major developments in Europe, from the Reformation to the French revolutionary wars. The legal traditions established by the empire have shaped the history of German-speaking Europe ever since.

Iran: A Very Short Introduction
Ali Ansari
Iran has rarely been out of the headlines. Yet extensive media interest has tended to hinder rather than help our understanding of Iran as an idea, an identity, and a people, leading to a superficial understanding of what is a complex and nuanced political culture and civilization. Iran: A Very Short Introduction presents a radical reinterpretation of Iranian history and politics, placing the Islamic Revolution in the context of a century of political change and social transformation. It considers the various factors that have contributed towards the construction of the idea of Iran and the complex identity of Iranians themselves, to provide a more realistic understanding for us all.