

History and Cultures

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Alexie, Sherman. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. Little, Brown and Co., 2007.

Born with water on the brain, Arnold Spirit, aka Junior, transfers to an all-white school off his reservation. He knows he won't easily fit in, but with self-determination and a solid personal identity, he has the chance to succeed.

Alsenas, Linas. *Gay America: Struggle for Equality*. Amulet, 2008.

This work provides a chronological overview of public attitudes toward homosexuality throughout American history, as well as the experience of gay people during these prescriptive, restrictive, and even dangerous periods.

Anderson, Scott. *Lawrence in Arabia: War, Deceit, Imperial Folly and the Making of the Modern Middle East*. Doubleday, 2013.

Lawrence was a player in a thrilling game of territorial machinations filled with deceit, spy craft, and dubious treaties. From World War I through the modern day, cultural clashes and fallout from these double-dealings are illuminated in this engaging history that uses the famous adventurer as its linchpin.

Brown, Daniel James. *The Boys in the Boat: 9 Americans and their Epic Quest for Gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics*. Viking, 2013.

Building to the suspense of a race won by seconds, this tale follows the nine young men who traveled from Seattle to Berlin to compete in crew at the spectacular and infamous Nazi Olympics.

Bryson, Bill. *At Home: A Short History of Private Life*. Doubleday, 2010.

Bill Bryson turns his eye for intriguing connections to exploring the history of the structure of the house from ancient times to recent innovations.

Chang, Iris. *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II*. Penguin, 1998.

Barely a postscript in Japanese history, this book tells the story of the horrific torture and murder of hundreds of thousands of Chinese citizens took place over the course of just seven weeks.

Demick, Barbara. *Nothing to Envy: Ordinary Lives in North Korea*. Spiegel & Grau, 2009.

Get a glimpse of what life is like in this oppressive and secretive nation through the lives of some ordinary people who managed to escape.

Diaz, Junot. *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. Riverhead Books, 2007.

A self-proclaimed "ghetto nerd," outcast and animé-loving Oscar Wao is the latest in a long line of doomed generations to suffer the dreaded fuku curse of his native Dominican Republic. With only humor and talent as his weapons, he perseveres, knowing "you can never run away. Not ever. The only way out is in."

Egan, Timothy. *The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl.* Houghton Mifflin, 2006.

In this layered account of the great dust bowl, Egan shares incredible eyewitness accounts and explores the convergence of failed agricultural practices, ill-fated government policies, and the costs of “get rich quick” schemes.

French, Howard. *A Continent for the Taking: The Tragedy and the Hope of Africa.* Alfred A. Knopf, 2004.

To put it mildly, colonialism has not been kind to Africa. From rubber and diamonds to oil and coltan, it is a continent of fabulous natural resources that continues to be the focus of greed and exploitation. Part journalistic voyage, part memoir, this is an exploration of colonialism’s ongoing legacy.

Hochschild, Adam. *King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa.*

Houghton Mifflin, 1998.

History echoes across time, and nowhere is this clearer than in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in central Africa. The brutality of Belgium’s colonial occupation of the Congo is a surprisingly unknown and ugly historical interlude and resulted in the first ever human rights campaign.

Hoose, Phillip. *Claudette Colvin: Twice Towards Justice.* Melanie Kroupa Books/Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009.

Months before the landmark 1955 Montgomery bus boycott began, one fifteen-year-old girl refused to give up her seat and became a key part of the legal battle to overturn segregation.

Kouno, Fumiyo, and Naoko Amemiya and Andy Nakatani, trans. *Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms.* Last Gasp, 2009.

A poignant and delicate look at the lingering effects during the weeks, years, and decades after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.

Kurlansky, Mark. *Salt: A World History.* Penguin, 2003.

War. Empire. Revolution. Currency. Table salt? Explore the history of the world through this surprisingly complex condiment that has enabled exploration, caused wars, and driven empires.

Lewis, John, Andrew Aydin and Nate Powell. *March: Book 1.* Top Shelf, 2013.

This remarkable graphic memoir charts John Lewis’s progress from a young man preaching to his chickens to joining the nonviolent Civil Rights movement to his seat in the United States Congress.

Marable, Manning. *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention.* Viking, 2011.

A nuanced and thoughtful examination of a complex man who was both a powerful advocate for social change in America and a controversial public figure shrouded in competing myths.

Reiss, Tom. *The Black Count: Glory, Revolution, Betrayal, and the Real Count of Monte Cristo.* Crown Trade, 2012.

Everyone knows *The Three Musketeers* and *The Count of Monte Cristo*, but few realize the inspiration for these action-packed tales was Dumas’s own real-life hero: his father, a mixed-race soldier who rose to become a general in Napoleon’s army.

Sheinkin, Steve. *The Notorious Benedict Arnold: A True Story of Adventure, Heroism, and Treachery.* Roaring Brook Press, 2010.

This action-packed story reveals how a Revolutionary War hero became the most famous traitor in American history.

Ulrich, Laurel Thatcher. *Well-Behaved Women Seldom Make History*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2007.

The historian to whom this oft-quoted maxim is attributed provides intriguing examples of women's contributions to history.

Von Drehle, David. *Triangle: The Fire that Changed America*. Atlantic, 2003.

In 1911 New York, a fire in a shirtwaist factory staffed mostly by women trapped and killed 123 working there. Von Drehle uses this disaster as the focal point for a history of the rise of unions in the U.S. during this era.

Walker, Frank X. *Turn Me Loose: The Unghosting of Medgar Evers*. University of Georgia Press, 2013.

The tragedy of Evers's death is revealed through poems in the voice of his widow, brother, the wives of his killer, and the killer himself.

Wein, Elizabeth. *Code Name Verity*. Hyperion, 2012.

The Nazis catch a female spy during World War II in occupied France. To save her life, she slowly reveals her mission and in the process discloses the story of the relationship between herself and her best friend, whose life and mission become entwined with hers in the strong bonds of friendship and trust.

Wilson, G. Willow. *Alif the Unseen*. Grove Press, 2012.

In an unnamed Middle Eastern country, computer hacker Alif falls for the wrong girl and runs afoul of her fiancé, the vicious head of state security. The bigger problem is there is only one ally who can save him: a deadly world-weary jinni.

Wolf, Allan. *The Watch that Ends the Night*. Candlewick, 2011.

A retelling of the tragedy of the sinking of the Titanic, from many points of view, including all classes of people on the ship, telegraph messages, and even the iceberg itself.

Zinn, Howard. *A People's History of the United States 1492-Present*. HarperCollins, 2003.

A comprehensive history of the United States, from the impact of Columbus's and others' arrival in the New World through modern times. This is the history that is usually not told, about America's misuses of African Americans, Native Americans, and other traditionally disenfranchised groups. The history covered is from 1492-2001.