

# JAMES BENNETT

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## SAMPLE REVIEWS

### **ARBA 2007, entry 459**

**World History: The Modern Era.** <http://www.socialstudies.abc-clio.com/>. [Website].

Santa Barbara, Calif., ABC-CLIO, 2007. Price negotiated by site. Date reviewed: July 07.

This product, aimed primarily at high school students, is comprised of two parts; one for students and one for librarians and teachers. The student side of this product does contain a substantial amount of information, including a rich array of primary documents. Another strength of this resource is how materials are divided and easily recognizable. Biographies, documents, and essays are clearly marked and the various components are visible and accessible. Entries are presented with an objective viewpoint, but unfortunately are unsigned and undated. Longer entries do contain brief bibliographies, but many of the bibliographies seem dated. For example, Bill Clinton's biographic entry does not include any books after 1994 and George W. Bush's biographic entry only includes books from 1999 and 2000.

This site includes a few extra items as well. There is a handy internal dictionary and students are encouraged to e-mail the editors (through an "Ask the Cybrarian" link). Hopefully students will be savvy enough to figure out what a cybrarian is. Also, a section on "How to Cite" is provided, but only for MLA style.

The teacher tools are underwhelming. The test creator makes 10 or fewer multiple choice questions based on the concept chosen by the teacher, such as the causes of World War I. There is a feature to create research lists. The only other tool only available on the teacher side may be the most useful. Called "Correlations," this feature is the most useful tool provided. This tool ties the entries found throughout the world history site to specific textbooks or to the various academic standards, national and state, around the country.

This is a good product, but flawed. Since this product would have to be purchased annually, it is recommended only for large school libraries.—**Allen Reichert**

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### **ARBA 2008, entry 484**

***Crimes and Trials of the Century.***

Steven Chermak and Frankie Y. Bailey, eds. Westport, Conn., Greenwood Press, 2007. 2v. illus. index. \$199.95/set.

ISBN 13: 978-0-313-34109-0.

*Crimes and Trials of the Century* offers insights into some of the more compelling criminal cases of the past one hundred years. Contributors to this two-volume set include mostly graduate students and professors of criminal justice, criminology, and sociology. Written in a clear and concise manner, each of the volume's 35 chapters touches on various aspects of crimes and trials that only careful research might uncover. Each volume begins with an introduction that provides a social and historical context for understanding the cases that follow, which appear roughly in chronological order based on the starting point of the events described. Discussed in these introductions are changes in the American criminal justice system and legal issues that were dominant during different time periods, as is the impact of popular culture and the mass media on different criminal cases. Each chapter in *Crimes and Trials of the Century* is devoted to a separate criminal case and contains several important pieces of information, including a summary of the crime, the setting, and the participants; the actions of the media covering the case; the trial (if there was one); the final resolution of the case; the relevant social, political, and legal issues; and the significance of the case and its impact on legal and popular culture. Sidebars also appear throughout each chapter and provide additional information on criminal cases, including timelines, additional backgrounds on key persons, related cases, and key terms and concepts. A list of suggestions for further reading appears at the end of each chapter, as does a list of references utilized by the contributors. Finally, found at the end of the second volume is a general bibliography that provides a longer list of suggested readings, as is a comprehensive index of names, cases, and topics covered throughout the set. Black-and-white photographs of key figures and locations from different cases, along with easily identifiable headings and sidebars, make for a visually attractive presentation.

While certainly not a comprehensive overview of criminal cases from the past 100 years, *Crimes and Trials of the Century* contains profiles of some of the more significant ones in terms of their impact on the public conscience and American criminal justice system. Crimes and criminals profiled in this set include The Black Sox Scandal, Alphonse Capone, Bonnie and Clyde, The Lindbergh Baby Murder, The Sam Sheppard Case, The Emmett Till Murder, Charles Manson and the Tate-LaBianca Murders, Ted Bundy, Theodore John Kaczynski, Jack Kevorkian, The Rodney King Beating Trial, Timothy McVeigh, The Columbine High School Shootings, and The Scott Peterson Trial. A number of popular cases from the past 100 years, as well as numerous details of cases profiled throughout this set, were excluded due to space limitations. Nevertheless, *Crimes and Trials of the Century* offers an excellent starting point for those interested in crime history and the media. It is recommended for both public and private libraries and would serve as a nice supplement for a variety of criminal justice, criminology, and sociology courses.—**James Roberts**

# JAMES BENNETT

ARBA 2007, entry 1039

**Columbia Encyclopedia of Modern Drama.**

Gabrielle H. Cody and Evert Sprinchorn, eds. Irvington, N.Y., Columbia University Press, 2007. 2v. index. \$395.00/set. ISBN 13: 978-0-231-14032-4.

Covering 540 individual plays, 640 playwrights, and 63 countries, this encyclopedia is one of the most comprehensive reference works about modern world drama to have appeared in a long time. Starting from about 1860 (with the advent of the innovative Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen) to the present, it strongly emphasizes works and authors, with considerable attention to those that are less known or from a more diverse pool (women, non-Western, and people of color). The attention given to stagecraft, with no mention of actors and directors, is so relatively minimal that those topics could easily have been eliminated without diluting the overall effectiveness of the work.

Author entries (by far the largest percentage) deal more with the role of the author in the cultural context of the opus rather than individual plot summaries of major works, which is handled by individual play entries instead. Author entries are followed by a play list; both those and the play entries include a very selective (averaging three to five) list of sources for further reading, mostly but not always in English. The bibliographies for the countries are somewhat longer. All entries are signed. Both the editorial board and the contributors are respected scholars that equally represent theater and literature departments in U.S. universities. The system of using capital letters to refer to cross-references works well and has almost become a de facto standard in reference works these days, supplanting the former q.v. The lack of a detailed table of contents is more than compensated for by a synoptic outline at the end of the second volume; this index includes listings of countries; plays; playwrights; movements, forms, and genres; companies, groups, and theaters; and concepts and terms. The work's real retrieval value lies in yet another index that organizes all entries by country, thereby pulling all related topical articles together. A concluding general index is excellent at accessing names and titles that are embedded in other entries but do not merit a separate listing.

A reference work of this size is bound to foster some concerns about what is included and omitted. One question, for example, the omission of Crowley's seminal gay play *The Boys in the Band* (1968), while Sherman's later *Bent* (1979) merits its own entry. The article on the theater in Palestine, although important, covers six pages, longer than those for Norway, Spain, Greece, and even Israel. The sources for the entry for the Spaniard Benito Pérez Galdós ignore those secondary works dealing with his theater and instead unfairly include only those about his novelistic output.

*The Columbia Encyclopedia of Modern Drama* differs from other standard reference sources in this area, such as Gassner and Quinn's long-time standard *The Reader's Encyclopedia of World Drama* (1969) or the five-volume *McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of World Drama* (1984) by its greater currency, inclusion of a more diverse population, and its nearly equal emphasis of playwrights and works. Despite the relatively minor misgivings, it is a worthy investment for reference collections in all libraries.—**Lawrence Olszewski**