



## Encyclopedia of African American History, 1619-1895: From the Colonial Period to the Age of Frederick Douglass: Three-volume set (The African American History Reference Series)

From Oxford University Press

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**Encyclopedia of African American History, 1619-1895: From the Colonial Period to the Age of Frederick Douglass: Three-volume set (The African American History Reference Series)** From Oxford University Press

It is impossible to understand America without understanding the history of African Americans. In nearly seven hundred entries, the *Encyclopedia of African American History, 1619-1895* documents the full range of the African American experience during that period - from the arrival of the first slave ship to the death of Frederick Douglass - and shows how all aspects of American culture, history, and national identity have been profoundly influenced by the experience of African Americans.

The *Encyclopedia* covers an extraordinary range of subjects. Major topics such as "Abolitionism," "Black Nationalism," the "Civil War," the "Dred Scott case," "Reconstruction," "Slave Rebellions and Insurrections," the "Underground Railroad," and "Voting Rights" are given the in-depth treatment one would expect. But the encyclopedia also contains hundreds of fascinating entries on less obvious subjects, such as the "African Grove Theatre," "Black Seafarers," "Buffalo Soldiers," the "Catholic Church and African Americans," "Cemeteries and Burials," "Gender," "Midwifery," "New York African Free Schools," "Oratory and Verbal Arts," "Religion and Slavery," the "Secret Six," and much more. In addition, the *Encyclopedia* offers brief biographies of important African Americans - as well as white Americans who have played a significant role in African American history - from Crispus Attucks, John Brown, and Henry Ward Beecher to Olaudah Equiano, Frederick Douglass, Sarah Grimké, Sojourner Truth, Nat Turner, Phillis Wheatley, and many others.

All of the Encyclopedia's alphabetically arranged entries are accessibly written and free of jargon and technical terms. To facilitate ease of use, many composite entries gather similar topics under one headword. The entry for *Slave Narratives*, for example, includes three subentries: *The Slave Narrative in America from the Colonial Period to the Civil War*, *Interpreting Slave Narratives*, and *African and*

*British Slave Narratives*. A headnote detailing the various subentries introduces each composite entry. Selective bibliographies and cross-references appear at the end of each article to direct readers to related articles within the *Encyclopedia* and to primary sources and scholarly works beyond it. A topical outline, chronology of major events, nearly 300 black and white illustrations, and comprehensive index further enhance the work's usefulness.

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## **Editorial Review**

From School Library Journal

Grade 8 Up—The approximately 700 main and subentries in *African American History* include biographies both of prominent African Americans and of other influential figures, such as John Brown and Lydia Maria Child, along with discussions of wider topics, such as Stereotypes of African Americans. The articles close with numerous cross-references and meaty bibliographies, enhanced in the final volume by a detailed chronology (to 1895) and index. Articles analyzing the racial attitudes of major Founding Fathers and each president, plus others that tackle many seldom-examined subjects, such as African Americans in the shipbuilding caulker's trade or relations with immigrant Asians, exemplify the unusual depth of coverage here. Palmer's expanded version of *Culture and History* widens the North American focus of the original (Gale, 1996) and its 2001 supplement to include topics and people in Caribbean and Latin American history. Comprising reprints, new contributions, and updated entries in roughly equal numbers, the 1300 alphabetically arranged articles range from three paragraphs on novelist William Attaway to multipage surveys of Social Dance, Afro-Cubanismo, and other broad subjects. Each entry closes with a bibliography, and nearly all feature cross-references. The previous edition contained more than twice as many illustrations, but this one improves access to its many updated charts and tables by moving them to a separate volume, which also features more than 130 pages of primary-source documents and a comprehensive index. Both sets merit consideration for collections supporting academically oriented research, but next to Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s essential, monumental *Africana* (Oxford Univ., 2005), they make supplemental purchases.—*John Peters, New York Public Library*

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From [Booklist](#)

\*Starred Review\* As researchers discover more layers of African American history, it becomes increasingly difficult to contain the whole sweep of African American experience in a few reference volumes. This set from Oxford concentrates on history during a relatively short period and is to be followed in 2007 by a second set, *The Encyclopedia of African American History, 1896 to the Present: From the Age of Segregation to the Twenty-first Century*. The division between the two sets is based on the fact that Douglass died in 1895, and *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which ushered in segregation, was upheld by the Supreme Court in 1896.

The goal of both encyclopedias, as editor Finkelman explains in his introduction, is "not only to educate and teach people about black history, but, more importantly to show users of these volumes how the history of America is, to a great extent, the history of race and race relations." In the set under review, more than 700 alphabetically arranged entries cover aspects of daily life (*Childhood, Food, Work*); concepts (*Acculturation, Perfectionism*); events (*American Revolution, Harpers Ferry raid*); institutions (*Democratic Party, Howard University*); movements (*Great Awakening; Slave resistance; Suffrage, women's*); and places (Brazil, Detroit, Kentucky) as well as topics in the arts (*Minstrel shows, Oratory and verbal arts*); law (*Jim Crow car laws, Missouri Compromise, Voting rights*); religion (*African Methodist Episcopal Church, Baptism, Black theology*); and more. A substantial number of entries are biographical.

Entries range in length from 500 to 1,200 words, and each includes a bibliography. Composite articles, among them *Black nationalism, Native Americans and African Americans*, and *Slave narratives*, contain subentries with separate bibliographies. In volume 3 readers will find the directory of contributors, a list of

entries arranged under broad topics, a chronology, and a detailed index. Approximately 300 black-and-white images are scattered throughout the text.

This is the third major set on African Americans to be published in the past year. The second editions of both *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience* (also from Oxford) and *Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History: The Black Experience in the Americas* (Macmillan) encompass wider geographical areas as well a broader range of topics. All three sets have many entry headings in common, but the tighter focus of *The Encyclopedia of African American History, 1619-1895* means it has a place for *African Grove Theater; Burned-Over District, New York; Caulker's trade* (practiced mostly by African Americans, including Douglass, before the Civil War); *Florence Settlement; Franklin, Benjamin, and African Americans*; and many other topics covered only peripherally, if at all, in the other sets. Libraries that can afford just one set might do better with *Africana* or the Macmillan encyclopedia because they cover more ground and have more visual appeal. The latest Oxford set is highly recommended for all academic and large public libraries and any library specializing in African American studies. *Mary Ellen Quinn*

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## Review

"A necessary reference for well rounded academic collections...A major contribution."--*Against the Grain*

"The set offers depth, reaching most important persons, events, and developments through 1895 but is written for easy access with multiple cross references, chronologies, topical outlines, and a comprehensive index.... Highly recommended."--*Library Journal*

"The latest Oxford set is highly recommended for all academic and large public libraries, and any library specializing in African-American studies."--*Booklist, Starred Review*

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