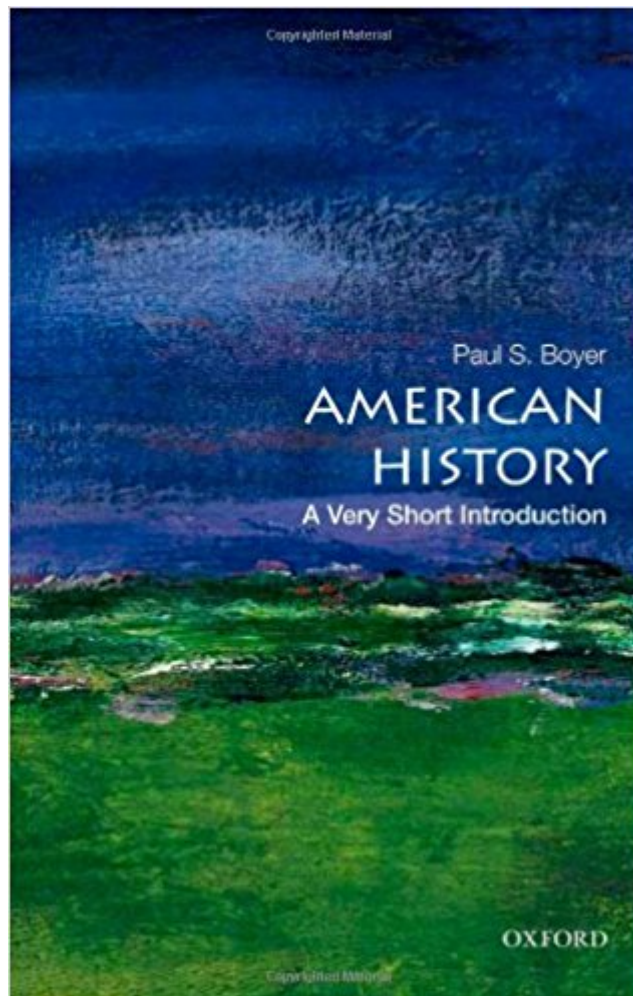




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American History: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)



Synopsis

In a miracle of concision, Paul S. Boyer provides a wide-ranging and authoritative history of America, capturing in a compact space the full story of our nation. Ranging from the earliest Native American settlers to the presidency of Barack Obama, this Very Short Introduction offers an illuminating account of politics, diplomacy, and war as well as the full spectrum of social, cultural, and scientific developments that shaped our country. Here is a masterful picture of America's achievements and failures, large-scale socio-historical forces, and pivotal events. Boyer sheds light on the colonial era, the Revolution and the birth of the new nation; slavery and the Civil War; Reconstruction and the Gilded Age; the Progressive era, the Roaring Twenties and the Great Depression; the two world wars and the Cold War that followed; right up to the tragedy of 9/11, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the epoch-making election of Barack Obama. Certain broad trends shape much of the narrative--immigration, urbanization, slavery, continental expansion, the global projection of U.S. power, the centrality of religion, the progression from an agrarian to an industrial to a post-industrial economic order. Yet in underscoring such large themes, Boyer also highlights the diversity of the American experience, the importance of individual actors, and the crucial role of race, ethnicity, gender, and social class in shaping the contours of specific groups within the nation's larger tapestry. And along the way, he touches upon the cultural milestones of American history, from Tom Paine's *The Crisis* to Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*. *American History: A Very Short Introduction* is a panoramic history of the United States, one that covers virtually every topic of importance--and yet can be read in a single day.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

American History: A Very Short Introduction provides its reader with as comprehensive a look at American political, social and cultural history as is possible in under 200 small pages (the standard format for the "Very Short Introduction" series, whose books are not only short but small as well) and in a well written manner. Virtually every event, person of significance and movement in American history receives at least a mention, which must have been a difficult task to accomplish given the strictures. What it does not do, however, is provide consistently up to date scholarship or a proper sense of proportion of America's triumphs to failures. It also contains a few errors and some of Boyer's interpretations of events will provoke disagreement with those who do not share his political leanings. Boyer essentially begins with the English settlement of North America, dispensing with the pre-Columbian native peoples, Leif Ericson and non-English Europeans in only a few pages. The colonial period is one of the book's strengths as Boyer explains the development of the English settlements at Jamestown and Plymouth and the social development of the New World as different from that of the Old. The events leading to the Revolution are also nicely cataloged, and Boyer takes us from the post-Revolutionary war period through the Gilded Age in a fairly conventional manner. Some of Boyer's interpretations of events rely on dated scholarship, however. A simplistic search for foreign markets accounts entirely for the Spanish-American War. His account of the New Deal places the stock market crash in the role of catalyst of the Great Depression failing to mention the role of monetary policy, which is at the core of today's economic understanding.

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