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## Book Reviews -- Monographic Musings

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**From the Reference Desk**  
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tenet of American regional policy as early as 1823 to a letter from a U.S. black soldier in the Philippines to selected dispatches by war correspondent Steven Crane to an excerpt from *The Military Policy of the United States* published in 1912.

*Encyclopedia of the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars: a Political, Social, and Military History* is easily the most thorough and comprehensive reference work dealing with these wars. Teaming with his co-editors **James Arnold** and **Roberta Wiener, Mr. Tucker** has produced an encyclopedia that meets the standards set in his previous award winning efforts. Both academic and larger public libraries will find it a useful addition to their collections.

Anyone interested in the historic interplay between American education and our societal values will appreciate this recent addition to the Sage Reference catalog. The *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Foundations of Education* (2009, 978-1412906784, \$425 – eReference price \$530) is a three-volume set that tackles this multidisciplinary, but important area of study. As noted by general editor

**Eugene F. Provenzo, Jr.** in his introduction, the social and cultural foundation of our education system “reflects the conflicts, tensions and forces in our society.” It is also arguable that the education system is at the forefront when these conflicts and tensions are played out. As one examines the scope and nature of the topics covered, this argument gains strength.

Besides discussing instructional issues like curriculum, evaluation and testing, and educational theories and models, there are a number of articles addressing major social themes. There are specific entries that deal with issues related to equality and stratification, multiculturalism and special populations, sexuality and gender as well as religion and social values. Readers will find coverage of topics as diverse as Black English Vernacular (Ebonics), the GI Bill of Rights, Busing, Migrant Education, Ethical Issues and School Athletics, Mainstreaming, the Social Impact of the Internet, the No Child Left Behind Act, Video Games and Learning, and Work based Learning.

The *Encyclopedia* is arranged for ease of use with the first two volumes offering more than 400 alphabetically arranged articles complete with “see also” references and lists of further readings. There is also a reader’s guide that groups related articles under 16 categories. The third volume provides biographical sketches of 130 “important men and women in

education” briefly discussing their influence. In addition, there is a compelling visual history of American Education using images ranging from those in Colonial primers and hornbooks to illustrations from 19th century magazines, and from photos of one room school rooms in Arkansas to those of civil rights demonstrations in the 1960s.

The third volume also contains an essay entitled “Toward a Renewed Definition of the Social Foundations of Education” that highlights another role that good subject encyclopedias often play. Such works can help clarify and “define” a discipline, especially one that is informed by a variety of fields. The *Encyclopedia* fulfills this function as well as offering possible new directions noting in the above mentioned essay that in particular “the integration of insights from the field of cultural studies can provide the basis for a new approach to the field.”

It is obvious that the *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Foundations of Education* is a serious and scholarly work that is intended for a specialized audience. This reference provides solid background and overview information while at the same time offering food for thought to both students and professional educators. Academic libraries that support either undergraduate or graduate education programs will want to add it to their collections. 🌿

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## Book Reviews — Monographic Musings

Column Editor: **Debbie Vaughn** (College of Charleston) <vaughnd@cofc.edu>

**Column Editor’s Note:** *Sadly, I am often stricken by tunnel-vision when it comes to the varying needs of patrons in different age categories. Because I am immersed in an academic setting, I am not always thinking about the different needs of both younger and older library users. The books reviewed in this month’s column help relieve me of my ivory tower post and remind me that libraries serve teens and pre-teens (and children and adults) in all areas of academic and personal development, and not just 18- to 24-year olds working through a liberal arts and sciences curriculum.*

*A big thank-you is in order for returning ATG reviewer **Joey van Arnhem** whose piece of **The Hipster Librarian’s Guide to Teen Craft Projects** comes just in time for fall and winter programming planning. Happy fall and happy reading, everyone! — DV*

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**Coleman, Tina, and Peggie Llanes.** *The Hipster Librarian’s Guide to Teen Craft Projects.* Chicago: ALA, 2009. 978-0-8389-0971-3. 104 pages. \$40.00.

Reviewed by **Jolanda-Pieta (Joey) van Arnhem, M.F.A.** (Library Technologist, Technical Services, College of Charleston Libraries) <vanarnhemj@cofc.edu>

The *Hipster Librarian’s Guide to Teen Craft Projects* provides hands-on DIY projects that use economical modern materials and common crafting techniques to create a fresh and current teen crafting program at public libraries. The selection of projects are shaped to bring mainstream popular culture to library programs and hooks in to the burgeoning DIY subculture that is the counter-movement to the prevailing techno-gadget revolution. The selection of materials and crafting projects are handpicked to help your program flourish even if it is competing against other community

activities and ever present budget limitations. The projects focus on providing an outlet for teens that promote self-expression, creativity, individuality, and creative thinking skills that lead to research and appreciation for the arts and life-long application to other areas of their lives.

The forward, written by teen services author **Heather Booth**, provides a wealth of practical information and sound advice on finding, purchasing, storing, and organizing the materials needed to create a library crafting program. **Booth** provides an informative and



insightful overview on where and how to get materials and supplies at a low cost, including using recycled materials, shopping at thrift, dollar and hardware stores, using the Internet to price shop, repurposing materials, and accepting donations from patrons to encourage community participation in your library crafting program.

The twelve chapters correspond to twelve projects provided by **Tina Coleman** and **Peggie Llanes**, which range from making easily displayable visual statements to creating wearable items of personal adornment that express the individuals unique personality and self expression. The “Blank Books” chapter provides a personally designed, individual guide for budding artists to sketch, write, and express themselves. The “Vinyl Totes” project is reminiscent of ReadyMade’s fun, easy and creative reuse projects that promote sustainability. The “Pressed Flower Note Cards” chapter plays into the “handmade global economy” and can be used to create custom handmade note cards, as often seen on sites like **CafePress** and **Etsy.com**, the pinnacle of participatory culture. The T-shirt reconstruction project inspires the creation of urban, edgy shirts with a touch of cyberpunk. Clothes made in this project hold

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up alongside increasingly popular products of growing independent T-shirt companies like **Threadless.com** and **6dollarshirts.com**.

These types of projects only add to the perception of the library as the local cultural center. The authors' ideas for adoption in other library activities are included in each chapter, in addition to step-by-step photos, and printable instruction sheets for each project. Each project is broken down into relevant and straightforward sections including "Difficulty", "Time", "Supervision", "Group Size", and the ever-important "Mess Factor." The authors' suggestions for "Prep Work" and the comprehensive list of tools, supplies, materials and room requirements make organizing and carrying out these craft projects easy and fun.

The "Spin-off Ideas" and "Adaptations" provided by the authors help facilitate the use of this book for a wide range of audiences. The list of books and Websites they provide will get you started on tailoring and expanding your craft program once you have mastered the basics. The *Hipster Librarians Guide to Teen Crafts Projects* is all you need, however, to get your crafting program started! The book can be purchased online from the ALA store ([www.alastore.ala.org](http://www.alastore.ala.org)). Printable instruction sheets are also available online for each craft and the authors have created a Website at [www.arystocrafts.com](http://www.arystocrafts.com) to keep adding to their ideas. Coleman and Llanes' audience is not only teen programs in public libraries. The projects and ideas in their book can be applied to any organization looking for an avenue to bolster community, creative thinking, creative problem solving, and self-expression.

## Rumors from page 52

Well, Tom became director of the University of Akron Press!

Speaking of university press directors, we are looking forward to the appearance of Doug Armato, director of the University of Minnesota Press (once at the University of Georgia press) during the 2009 Charleston Conference!

And I shouldn't leave off the incredible Sandy Thatcher who is writing our university press column for *ATG* even though he is retiring! We don't have a column this time but Sandy says he's not quitting and we plan to hold him to it!

Speaking of the Charleston Conference, I have heard from several of you with regrets that you cannot attend the 2009 Conference because of budget shortfall. Registrations are robust but not as robust as they were last year which was a banner year. Anyway, looking on the positive, there will be more room to spread out! Still, it's not too late to register at <http://www.katina.info/conference>.

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*The Brontës*. Ed. Harold Bloom. *Bloom's Classic Critical Views*. New York: Infocase, 2008. 978-1-60413-136-9. 263 pages. \$45.00.

and

Brackett, Virginia. *Bloom's How to Write About the Brontës*. *Bloom's How to Write About Literature*. New York: Infobase, 2009. 978-0-7910-9794-6. 281 pages. \$45.00.

Reviewed by Debbie Vaughn (College of Charleston)  
<vaughnd@cofc.edu>

My husband, a former literary academic turned corporate consultant, tells me that Harold Bloom has sold out. (Ironic, is it not?) But has he? As I look at *The Brontës*, a volume in Bloom's *Classic Critical Views* series, I wonder if the academic superstar has churned out a few armchair-academic titles, and, if so, for what purpose?

I dig into the book. Bloom has written a lovely introduction that places the Brontë sisters in the context of the literary chronology, and that is age-appropriate for the intended audience (ninth grade and up). Bloom can be prone to R.W. Apple-like melodrama when it comes to writing, but I find none of that here; instead, he is matter-of-fact and concise. The volume editor, Tabitha Sparks, has included a robust collection of excerpts of literary criticism in *The Brontës*. The book is divided by Brontë sister (Charlotte, Emily, and Anne). Each sister's section begins with a one-page biography followed by the criticism excerpts, which are organized by theme (personal, general, and works). Each excerpt is introduced with a few sentences about the author, explaining the role s/he played in the Brontës' lives and/or in literary scholarship. In a word, this volume is tight. *The Brontës* is easy to follow and it lacks what might be considered by some to be superfluous text. The excerpts give the reader only the information that is necessary to understand the significance of the criticism and its role in explicating the Brontë sisters' works. In some instances, the excerpted text is primary in nature, coming from correspondence. Primary sources: one of the jewels of research! Using Bloom's *Classic Critical Views* series in conjunction with Bloom's *Modern Critical Views* series could give students a thorough understanding of Brontë studies.

It occurs to me, though, that Bloom's series are never-ending. In the *Addlestone Library*, we like to teach students about the "library brand of information." Bloom seems to be cultivating his own brand of information. Can this be so? To try to assuage my inner-cynic, I dive into *Bloom's How to Write About the Brontës*. Interestingly, the introduction to this volume, also written by Bloom himself, is very similar to that of *The Brontës*. The book's author, Virginia Brackett, offers invaluable ideas to student-scholars, not only concerning the Brontë sisters' works but also about writing, period. The first chapter — "How to Write a Good Essay" — could be quite informative for a ninth grader and a concrete review of basic writing skills for a first-year college student. This 40+ page chapter heavily references the sixth edition of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* and even includes (just like the *MLA Handbook*) a sample essay

exploring garden imagery in Charlotte's novel *The Professor*. Following the first chapter, Brackett dedicates chapters to the Brontës' novels — *Jane Eyre*, *The Professor*, *Shirley*, *Villette*, *Agnes Grey*, *The Tenant of Wildfell Fall*, and *Wuthering Heights* — as well as a handful of Brontë poems. Each rich chapter provides tips for readers to engage themselves with the work, clues they might note as they take in the story, and hints about different literary mechanisms that season the writing. Also, each chapter presents numerous sample topics divided into the following categories: Themes; Character; History and Context; Philosophy and Ideas; Form and Genre; and Language, Symbols, and Imagery. A bibliography and list of online sources complete each chapter. *Bloom's How to Write About the Brontës* is like an English instructor, librarian, and writing lab tutor condensed into a neat package. This book would be extremely helpful for the student who does not have easy access to one of the aforementioned professionals (perhaps in an online learning environment). Beyond that, this book also would be quite beneficial to those teaching any one of the Brontës' works; Brackett is, after all, a professor of English and a widely-published expert on British literature.

Both of these books would be solid additions to your collection if your library does not already possess an extensive set of Brontë material. But for those library collections that are already Brontë-rich, I return to the question sparked by my husband's original claim: is Harold Bloom really a sell-out? I pause and ponder. Considering his ever-growing brand of literary criticism, he might be. However, to be fair, I do believe Bloom's potential Faustian trade-offs are dwarfed by some much more pressing concerns. Let's be honest: while these books are certainly high-quality, Bloom's ever-growing *Classic* and *Modern Critical Views* series (that's series, ahem, plural) aren't saying anything new. Even *Bloom's How to Write About Literature* series, which most definitely can benefit student researchers, cannot substitute for real, live, personal, and human instruction and assistance. In the current budget-cutting climate, instead of buying books that essentially digest what has already been written and taught about the Brontës, why don't we teach students to find the criticism in its original publications? Why keep students from the joy and satisfaction of that a-ha moment when their hours of Brontë exploration results in their own conception of an essay topic? Finally, amidst all of the literary criticism excerpts and food-for-thought that Bloom's series push, what is being left out? 