

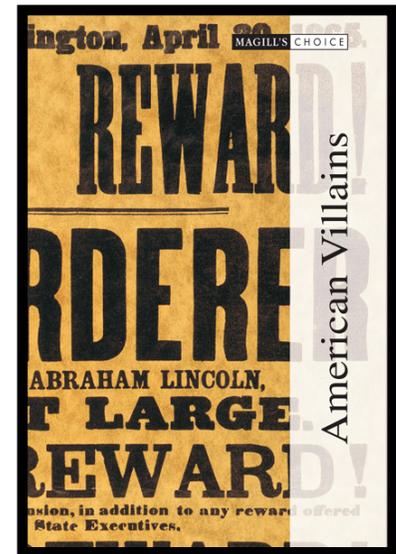
Magill's Choice: American Villains

Reviews

“Another installment in Salem's "Magill's Choice" series, this set covers the most notorious villains of our time—defined broadly as criminals, terrorists, spies, corrupt politicians, and cult leaders. Of those 177 articles, 169 have been culled from Salem's three-volume *Great Lives from History: Notorious Lives* (2007). The remaining articles discuss such lesser-known individuals as Tom Bell, Tommy Lucchese, and Mildred Gillars. The 1000-word entries cover individuals like Lizzie Borden, Joseph McCarthy, David Berkowitz, Scott Peterson, and Darlie Routier but exclude O.J. Simpson, John Walker, and the military personnel involved in the Guantánamo Bay abuse scandal. Article titles and index entries appear inconsistent: the index does not include nicknames or monikers even though that information is included within the articles themselves. For example, the notorious Axis Sally appears in both the index and the table of contents only as Mildred Gillars, while the article on Charles Arthur Floyd is titled and indexed under Pretty Boy Floyd, with no cross reference to his legal name. Suggested web sites, which appear at the end of Volume 2, are accurate but not necessarily current to 2008. Of the 93 contributors, seven are independent scholars, and the contributors' list is limited to names and, where available, institutional affiliations. **BOTTOM LINE** While of interest to public libraries, this set will be most useful for high school libraries; others will likely prefer the larger and more comprehensive three-volume set.”

-Library Journal

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“Salem Press took 177 entries from the 3-volume set, *Great Lives in History: Notorious Lives* (see ARBA 2008, entry 443), to make the easier-to-handle 2-volume set *American Villains*. This set focuses on the most infamous American criminals from the pre-Revolutionary era to the late twentieth century. All of the short biographies are written by experts and are signed, following a strict format that lends uniformity to the multi-authored work. Facts on the subject’s early life, criminal career, and legal outcome are presented in a readable style. The discussion of impact is valuable, showing how some aspect of crime influenced American culture. Suggestions for further reading accompany each entry, often pointing to primary sources. Media productions of the subject matter are listed, if appropriate. Sidebars supply in-depth information, and wanted posters or mug shots illustrate some entries. Myths surrounding the crime/criminal are debunked or explained, careers inventoried, and fascinating or little-known facts disclosed, without sensationalism or yarn-spinning.

Villains are listed alphabetically by name, and each volume includes the contents for both volumes and a pronunciation guide. A chronological list and a category of crime index are found in volume 2. Another index lists any people mentioned, such as victims, law enforcement, or other. Over 20 authoritative crime- or criminal-focused Websites are listed, and all but one was accessible in September 2008.

This is recommended for libraries not owning the parent volumes. The structure and organization provide easy access to specifics about people whose stories have become legend.”

-ARBA

“These essays first appeared in Carl L. Bankston’s *Notorious Lives* (Salem, 2007), but several of the entries have been updated. The concise biographies of 177 disreputable Americans begin with essential background and then describe the subjects’ criminal activities; punishment, if any; and lasting effect. An immense variety of wrongdoings is addressed in the profiles, which cover individuals from the 18th century to today. Subjects include Richard Girnt Butler, official spokesperson for the Aryan Nations; pirate Rachel Wall; mafia leader Frank Costello; and such well-known figures as Benedict Arnold, John Wilkes Booth, Al Capone, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, and Jeffrey Dahmer. Black-and-white photographs and primary-source excerpts accompany many entries. Back matter includes an annotated Web site list and a chronological listing of entries. This diverse set will supplement research in areas of history, psychology, sociology, law, and criminal justice.”

-School Library Journal