

Turning The Page: A Children's Civil War Resource, From A To Z

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Review

TURNING THE PAGE

A children's Civil War resource, from A to Z

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Clinton, Catherine *Scholastic Encyclopedia of the Civil War*. Scholastic, ISBN 590372270

Scholastic Encyclopedia of the Civil War is a collage of the Civil War set in chronological order and illustrated with period images. Designed for children 9-14 years old, the book is organized into six chapters followed by a short index. Catherine Clinton presents the War through human interest pieces, historic illustrations, and photographs, giving young readers a sensitive interpretation of this history.

Clinton attempts to explain the many ways this tragic war affected the people living in the North, South, West, and in slavery. Among the political events, social histories, and battle descriptions are relevant biographies, eyewitness accounts, famous and infamous letters, and journal entries.

The book's thoughtful cover design is indicative of the approach to the material inside. Young scholars may find it impossible to resist reading the unique entries that make this resource an up-to-date interpretation of the Civil War. Clinton has included articles that are surprising (for example, pets in army camps) and others that are emotional (such as the story of a nine-year-old drummer boy). This approach to presenting history may bring today's children closer to understanding the actions and fate of Americans during the Civil War.

Although Clinton has packed her volume with a diverse collection of information, readers should keep in mind that the book is not intended to serve as a detailed reference. Designed for children, the book offers only brief treatment of some subjects. (For instance, fighting in many arenas is discussed, although naval participation is not fully explained.)

Locating specific topics through the table of contents may be difficult unless students are already familiar with the history of the Civil War. The index is only two and a half pages, and students who have found a desired topic may not necessarily find other relevant information that is of interest because entries are not cross-referenced and not all of the side notes and human interest articles in the book are listed in the index. Although a few terms are defined within the text, a glossary of names and terms for quick reference is not included.

Providing a reference source, however, is not the only goal of a work such as this. Another is getting students to see themselves as a part of America's history so that they are turned on to the *study* of it. **Scholastic Encyclopedia of the Civil War's** artful use of human interest articles and eye-catching visuals of real people may help students make that connection.

Julia Rose is curator of education at Magnolia Mound Plantation in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She has directed education departments in historical museums for more than 15 years.