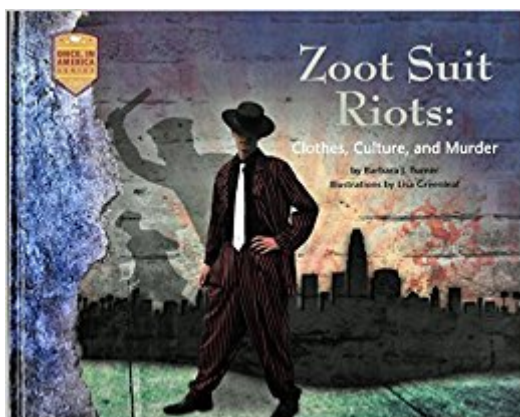


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Zoot Suit Riots: Clothes, Culture And Murder (Once In America)



Book Information

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Customer Reviews

*Disclaimer: As a middle school teacher, I was given a complimentary copy of this book to review. *Zoot Suit Riots: Clothes, Culture, and Murder* by Barbara J. Turner is the second book in a series focusing on topics in American history. It chronicles the struggle of Mexican-Americans, primarily in California, during the WWII era. The book focuses on several high-profile criminal cases featuring Mexican-Americans. There is no doubt that this is an important topic in American history, and the theme of intolerance and injustice with regard to "outsiders" or people perceived as being "different" is one that still resonates today. Pros: I felt that the book would be a decent introduction to the wider topic of civil rights. The writing is manageable for middle-level readers, and the book includes a lot of photographs, cartoons and other graphics to illustrate its points. Cons: Although the book uses specific court cases to support the general theme of mistreatment of Mexican-Americans, it tends to gloss over many important facts. There is a lot of use of vague phrases such as "Many farmer owners didn't like the idea" (of hiring Mexicans as workers), "Some people believed the...headlines were over-exaggerated", and "Many white Angelenos saw it as a good thing" (referring to American sailors beating up Mexican Americans). These non-specific phrases are presented as fact in the story, with no further references to support them. In addition, the book unnecessarily vilifies the police. Phrases such as "The police reacted. Or overreacted" and "[The police] even resorted to violence" seem to specifically blame the police for the actions of the gangs, again without any references supporting those statements. The section titles are often inflammatory,

such as "Justice or Sham?" and "A Tainted Trial." In the modern era where police are often under attack for simply doing their jobs, I find this stance at best distasteful and at worst irresponsible. Conclusion: As stated above, the book may work as a good overview or introduction to the topic of civil rights. I would, however, make it clear to students that the book has a definite bias and that any good argument needs specific references to support statements that it wishes to present as fact.

I currently teach middle school social studies after switching from teaching Language Arts for a number of years. I require my students to read historical fiction or non-fiction related to history as part of their overall grade. Going through my shelves, I was surprised at how few books there were on my shelves to meet my student's needs. I read Zoot Suit Riots: Clothes, Culture, and Murder by Barbara J. Turner and was immediately captivated by the contents and the many visual graphics that were used to assist with deeper comprehension. While I would agree with an earlier post on some "generalities" and "how the police were portrayed", it is an excellent book to open upon any number of class discussions. This is the type of book that with a good teacher to guide discussion, students would be invested and perhaps even motivated to read more on their own. I do hope that there will be more historical titles forthcoming.

This book is quite appealing. When you first look at it, it seems to be a children's storybook. However when you open it, it is something much more than that. This book is a colorful alternative or addition to a textbook. It is jam packed with information and includes illustrations for easier comprehension. Vocabulary words are bolded throughout and defined in a glossary at the end that is helpful to readers. This book highlights a part of American history and thoroughly explains all aspects of it. As it is written, it is more encompassing than reading dry history. I believe this format will engage students in middle school or early high school. by Teachermom, High School English Teacher

Those who don't know history are doomed to repeat it. This phrase kept coming to mind as I read this book. The Zoot Suit Riots are not a well known part of American history but students should learn about the mistakes made by this country in addition to the great achievements.

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