

New & Noteworthy Books and Reports: October 2019

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1. Big Wonderful Thing: A History of Texas

By Stephen Harrigan

Explores the wide range of Texas history, geography, and experience through the eyes of a journalist and novelist. Presents narrative in chapters that read like magazine articles, rich in detail and well-illustrated with photographs, paintings, and maps. Portrays both famous figures and the lesser-known from diverse backgrounds who have impacted Texas' political, economic, and cultural landscape.

University of Texas Press, 2019. 834 pages.

976.4 H235B 2019

2. The Geography of Risk: Epic Storms, Rising Seas, and the Cost of America's Coasts

By Gilbert M. Gaul

Investigates the cost of sustaining coastal communities' recurrent experiences of hurricanes, coastal erosion, and flooding. Questions the cyclical pattern of the government annually spending billions of dollars to rebuild damaged coastal housing and infrastructure, while heavily subsidizing flood insurance. Points out the futility of developing barrier islands and other areas that may not be sustainable much longer.

Sarah Crichton Books, 2019. 286 pages.

363.34922 G235G 2019

3. The Knowledge Gap: The Hidden Cause of America's Broken Education System--and How to Fix It

By Natalie Wexler

Criticizes the current focus on reading comprehension in American elementary education, which was reinforced by federal No Child Left Behind requirements and standardized testing. Argues that the educational system should focus more on teaching knowledge and critical thinking, including social studies and science, and that this content-focused curriculum should begin at an earlier age.

Avery, 2019. 324 pages.

372.6 W541K 2019

4. Love Your Enemies: How Decent People Can Save America from Our Culture of Contempt

By Arthur C. Brooks

Considers the idea that the current atmosphere of intolerance and incivility in the U.S. has created a culture of contempt, allowing us to devalue people who disagree with us. Argues that the seemingly "soft" virtues of love, friendship, and warm-heartedness, are actually the best qualities to achieve real progress in today's mean-spirited political and cultural conversations. Provides strategies on how to "disagree better" when engaging in public discourse with ideological opponents.

Broadside Books, 2019. 242 pages.

320.973 B791L 2019

5. Troubled Water: What's Wrong with What We Drink?

By Seth Siegel

Argues that cost containment has been prioritized over public health, leading to drinking water in many United States communities being contaminated with various undesirable chemicals. Explains how known technology and affordable investments in water utilities and private

wells could provide Americans with very clean and healthy drinking water.

Thomas Dunne Books, 2019. 330 pages.
613.287 S115T 2019

6. Peg Leg: The Improbable Life of a Texas Hero, Thomas William Ward, 1807-1872

By David C. Humphrey

Details the life of Thomas William Ward, an Irish immigrant and notable public figure in Texas history who was elected chief clerk of the House of Representatives, 1839-1840. Examines his service during the Texas Revolution, including the loss of his leg at the siege of Bexar which resulted in his nickname "Peg Leg." Discusses his terms as land commissioner of the General Land Office and involvement in the Archives War, his three separate tenures as mayor of Austin, and his appointment as the United States consul to Panama. Illustrates Ward's fiery personality and temper, exemplified by his readiness to engage in duels and his difficult marriage and contentious divorce with Susan L. Marston.

Texas State Historical Association, 2009. 340 pages.
327.730092 H884P 2009