



# After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection

*James West Davidson , Mark H. Lytle*

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For more than twenty-five years, *After the Fact* has guided students through American history and the methods used to study it. In dramatic episodes that move chronologically through American history, this best-selling book examines a broad variety of topics including oral evidence, photographs, ecological data, films and television programs, church and town records, census data, and novels. Whether for an introductory survey or for a historical methods course, *After the Fact* is the ideal text to introduce readers, step by step, to the detective work and analytical approaches historians use when they are actually doing history.

## After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection Details

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## **From Reader Review After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection for online ebook**

### **Em Elizabeth says**

I can honestly say that this is the first assigned textbook that I LOVED reading. It spans American history, offering insights that actually blew me away. The authors introduced points and tied together concepts in logical, brilliant ways. Plus, there was a whole chapter about Jacob Riis, a super cool historical figure who doesn't get enough love in history books!

I'm really glad I actually bought this book rather than rented it from the campus bookstore!

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### **Mark Flowers says**

UPDATE: some thoughts on how to use this book to read other history texts are here:  
<http://crossreferencing.wordpress.com...>

This is one of my all time favorite history books. Davidson and Lytle go through American history, starting in Salem and ending at Watergate and pick out a variety of interesting cases through which to show how historians do their work--critical analysis of documents, grand theories, interpretative models, and more. Each chapter is a fabulous piece of history in its own right, and altogether they form a picture of how history should be done and how it should be presented to readers. Just fantastic.

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### **Checkman says**

One of my old college history textbooks that I've managed to hold onto over the past twenty-seven years. Yesterday I pulled it off the book shelve and read it again. It's aged very well and it's still applicable. Teaches young historians how to "read between the lines" and apply some critical thinking to history. Very glad I've held onto it.

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### **David says**

This is a fascinating book, combining traditional narratives of various moments in American history, with a deeper exploration of how historians question and deepen those narratives to uncover the true meaning of past events. Each chapter pairs a particular event with a particular historical approach such as grand theory, great man history or organizational theory models. Davidson and Lytle write accessibly, with two audiences in mind. This book could easily be used in an undergraduate or high school AP US history course, but is also geared toward the lay reader, especially those for whom history is synonymous with a simple record of the past.

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### **Andrea Wright says**

Read it for a history class and as far as text books go, it worked well.

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### **Frederick J says**

An interesting and very readable introduction to the historian's craft.

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### **Krystal says**

I read this book for my seminar class in college and it drastically changed the way I viewed history ever since. The main premise - that the version of the story you are hearing is just that, a version, and must be subjected to critical evaluation - made me look at everything differently, from the news to stories people tell me at the dog park. No one can be completely objective in their telling of an event and what they say (and don't say!) is significant.

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### **Sara says**

I read this book for my Bibliographic & Research Methods in Archives class during my MLS. It was one of the more enjoyable textbooks that I read.

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### **Martha says**

It's probably cheating to rate this book when I never finished it, but it was an interlibrary loan that I had to return. Anyway, I am fairly certain that the last part of the book was as superb as the first. It is a fascinating view of the process of examining history, as applied to different famous historical events (Salem witch trials, etc.) and I plan to buy my own copy.

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### **J says**

This was a really cool textbook. My professor didn't assign as many chapters as I would have liked, but what he did assign was really interesting. This textbook teaches you how to use certain sources and what questions to ask through really interesting periods in history. (For example, there were a lot of maps that displayed the socioeconomic status of the population and focal trading points of Salem before the witch trials began.) Overall, this was a pretty fun textbook.

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### **Gwen says**

The writing in this revisionist history book is easily accessed. The stories the authors tell are filled with little known details that make you, the audience, ponder the traditional versions of the history topic. Not only does the reader gain deeper understanding of specific historical events, she also learns new techniques for studying and teaching history in a more critical manner.

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### **Nicholas says**

After the Fact reinterpretation & reconstruction...over and again conventionally wisdom, status quo, accepted fact. The Point Of View (which is indeed the overarching theme of the work) of the historical subjects, events, etc...and the multiplicities of POV is what the historian must investigate. The raw data of the past has to be woven into history. These vinagettes are about questioning the text...asking questions you did not know they could ask. One engages in a thoughtful and imaginative puzzle. Although, at moments in this work, one is overwhelmed by the sheer number of historical curiosities and the race to incorporate as many connecting factors as possible. Nonetheless, it is an engaging piece of historical scholarship.

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### **Susanna Grant says**

this was actually a textbook for one of my history courses in college but my husband and I both have come to regard it as one of our all time favorites

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### **Chris says**

I enjoyed this look at historical study. It is good for any historiographical approach towards history and looks in-depth at the study of history. An interesting book to read and really easy to follow.

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### **Dixie says**

I've read two of the chapters and it's a very informative supplemental book! I recommend it to anyone interested in this part of history!

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