



The Elusive Eden: A New History of California

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The Elusive Eden charts the historical development of California, beginning with the evolution of the landscape and climate and the arrival of the first inhabitants, the Indians, through social, political, and environmental controversies of the present and the future. The book portrays a land of remarkable richness and complexity, settled by waves of people from diverse cultures. The text is organized chronologically into 10 parts, each developing a major theme or issue for a particular period in California's history. The first chapter of each part is a narrative that spotlights and dramatizes the personal responses of significant individuals at critical moments of historical change. The authors stress issues of current importance such as: ethnic groups, women, environmental history and social and cultural history.

The Elusive Eden: A New History of California Details

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From Reader Review The Elusive Eden: A New History of California for online ebook

Kenny says

This would be an excellent thing to read if you were a high school senior and had a lot of time. It's a good survey of CA history, but not enough detail for me, too much time spent on less important issues (to the exclusion of highly important ones), and, most damning, the writing needs to be much more concise. The authors use way too many words and sentences to convey an idea. The narration shouldn't meander, it should get right to whatever is of value. For the last half of this book I consistently skipped the first paragraph of every section.

Still, there is A LOT of good information in here, and when the authors are telling the smaller stories that are sprinkled through the book (mini-biographies, shorter treatments of individual narratives) the book can be both informative and gripping.

Erika says

There were some areas that were so very interesting and others not so much, but I loved learning about my state.

Geoffrey Benn says

This is essentially a textbook, which I would guess would be targeted at freshmen-level college courses. It covers the history of California from pre-Spanish colonization through 2002. I read the book in hopes of better understanding the underlying causes of some of California's current political and economic difficulties. I was not disappointed. The most interesting aspects of the book for me were the story of the relatively recent rise of southern California as well as the history of water use issues in the state.

Adrian Rose says

This book is one that has been a staple among college state history classes for almost a decade. Regularly updated by its four authors, all of whom are college history professors at various institutions, it is the most comprehensive account of California's history to date.

The book is broken up into ten separate parts, all of which represent a recognized era in state history. Each part begins with a story of a person or event, which is meant to typify the social struggles present in the following chapters. For this reason, the chapters do not appear to progress chronologically, but this arrangement does make for an imminently readable format. The entire history of California is here, including the Gold Rush of the mid-1800s, the effects of the Great Depression and the two World Wars of the early 1900s, and the major earthquakes of 1906 and 1989. In each section, the treatment of minorities, including Native Americans, is described, and the place of women in each era is examined. The last section brings historical events up into the 21st century. In the back of the book there is a superb list of suggested reading for further study, which includes the books that the separate authors have penned independently.

Though the history of the area where I live is more connected with that of the state of Nevada than it is with California, I felt that it would be advantageous to know the history of the state that I am a resident of. Not all of California's history is pretty, but then, there is little history that is. However, California's represents a unique perspective on the human drive to settle new territories, no matter where those territories may be found, or the reasons for coming to them in the first place. Whether it was for land, gold, trade, or just to start a new life, the people that came to California stayed to mold a new state, one which is now known as the richest, most progressive state in the nation. There is a saying that one cannot know where one is going if it is not known where one comes from. This is where the people of California come from, the struggles they have gone through, the obstacles and disasters that have afflicted them, and their unwavering determination to build a better way of life. This is California, the 31st state of the United States of America.
