

# Reviews



*Twentieth Century History 1900-1945* History Teachers' Association of Victoria, 2006

*Twentieth Century History 1945-2000* History Teachers' Association of Victoria, 2007

Books: \$30 each. CD-Rom: \$120.

Available for order from HTAV at <http://www.htav.asn.au/publications/index.html>

These two volumes are new publications from HTAV are accompanied by a Twentieth Century History Teacher Resource CD-Rom. The CD-Rom was not included for review, but extracts can be downloaded from the HTAV website. Eight different authors contributed to these texts and their impressive and relevant credentials are presented at the front of each book. The Volume 1 authors were Anthony Bidgood, Helen Calvert, Melissa J. Clarke-Birch, John Hewitt, Adrian Puckering and Michael Spurr. The Volume 2 authors were Penny Evans, John Hewitt, Adrian Puckering, Michael Spurr and Scott Sweeney.

These two books have a straight-forward and easy to follow layout with clear text and chapters. They are black and white which probably contributes to the very reasonable price of \$30 each. Despite this, there is a multitude of relevant and clear pictures, maps and statistics included.

The topics covered start with the events leading up to World War One and continue through to the last chapter on contemporary issues 'A New World Order' including Africa and debt, China and India, and terrorism. Other topics covered include: The Great Depression, the inter-war revolution in the Arts, The Cold War, decolonization, post World War II economics and the second wave of feminism, amongst others.

Each chapter begins with an overview. For example, the first chapter of *Twentieth Century History 1900-1945* begins:

*As the twentieth century began, Europe's dominance of the globe seemed complete, irreversible and secure. The agricultural and industrial revolutions had brought wealth and technological advantages that saw Europeans build immense overseas possessions, No one, it seemed, could challenge the might of the Europeans except perhaps the Europeans themselves..."*

Next, there is a timeline of important events covered by the chapter. The chapter itself is divided into sub-chapters which consist largely of an overview of the topic with relevant illustrations and some document studies. At the end of the chapters are suggestions for further reading and endnotes. In the first volume, one chapter has a section on the historiography of the topic (World War One) and in the second volume, some chapters have conclusions which touch on historiography and draw links with other chapters.

At the end of each book is a glossary; however there are no indexes.

My first impression of these books, apart from the ease of reading the text and navigating the chapters, was that they were largely a secondary overview of events with insufficient supporting document studies and only infrequent references to approaching history as contestable. However, when I had a look at the sample activities from the teacher's CD-Rom it became apparent that these black line masters were intended to support the text and provide the activities and analysis.

The CD-Rom provides a staggering array of different sorts of activities, including:

- An overview of student comprehension of each chapter- consisting of detailed short answer comprehension style questions.
- Film studies – e.g. *Titanic*, *The Last Emperor* and *Animal Farm*.
- Literature studies
- Computer/ Internet tasks
- Thinking tasks – e.g. flowcharts
- Map Exercises
- Visual Analysis tasks – e.g. of photographs or political cartoons
- Document Analysis tasks
- Multiple choice revision tests
- Essay topics – the ones available were all couched as 'Discuss, using Evidence' questions
- Historiography based document studies

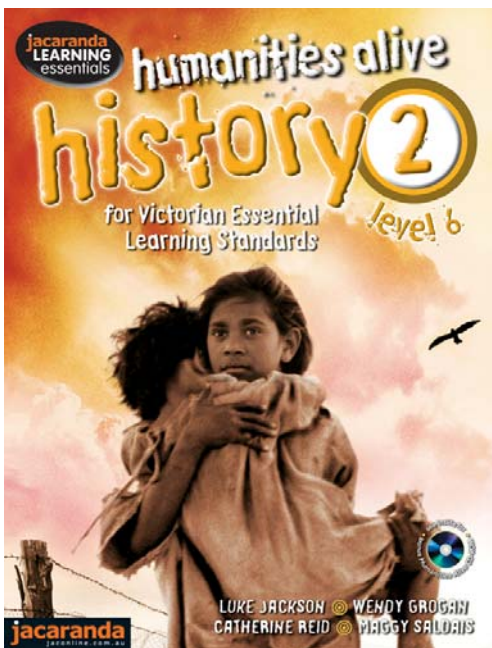
I was very impressed with the range of interesting and motivating activities provided on the CD-Rom. There was a strong emphasis on causes and consequences and on the context of the historical events being studied. There were also some activities which explored the contestable nature of sources and different perspectives on events. For example, a document study on John Reed's *Ten Days that Shook the World*, asks questions such as:

- Why do you think the source was produced?
- Does the source offer different perspectives on the subject matter?
- Is there anything about the source that makes you think it is reliable, or that you can trust it?

A visual document study regarding China and imperialism in the early twentieth century asks questions such as 'Explain the strengths and limitations of this image in understanding the reasons for the problems faced by China in 1900?'. However, most activities were based around comprehension or interpretation.

The document studies provided in the texts (roughly 5 or 6 per chapter) have pertinent analysis questions, for example regarding the purpose or bias or intended consequences of the document, but are not very detailed. I could not find any evidence of a system of questioning (e.g. working from comprehension to interpretation to analysis etc), nor is there any chapter or section which introduces skills such as critical use of sources, research procedures, locating sources, perspectives etc. As a consequence of this lack of a systematic approach to the critical aspect of historical study, I wondered whether these texts were intended for a Year 10 history course. Certainly, the combination of informative text book and black line masters from the CD-Rom could be used very effectively; however, the teacher would need to ensure that ample critical evaluation was undertaken.

*Reviewed by Kira Sampson*



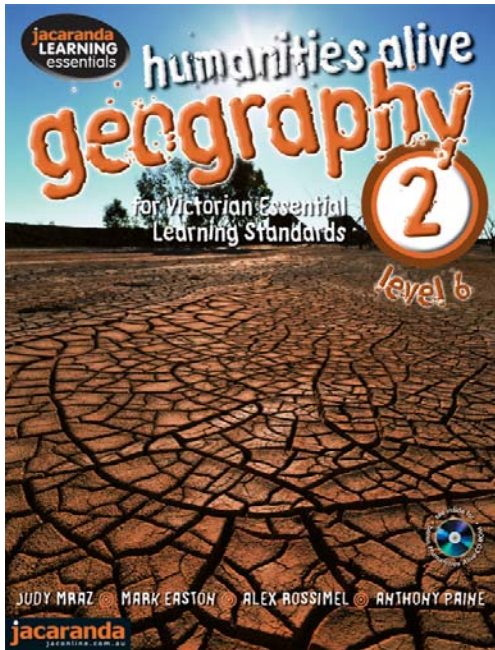
Jackson, L. et. al. (2007), *Humanities Alive – History 2*, Jacaranda Learning Essentials, John Wiley & Sons, Milton. 237 pages paper back. RRP \$54.95

*Humanities Alive – History 2* is one of the Jacaranda Learning Essentials Series designed for Level 6 of SOSE. It includes some interesting and relevant History topics with chapters on First Australians, The Europeans Arrive, Gold Fever, Becoming Australian, World War One, Between the Wars, World War Two and Australia in a Changing World. Of particular interest is the last chapter which looks at some more modern topics like ‘Aussie Troops in Iraq’, ‘Australia and Refugees’, ‘Human Rights in East Timor’ as well as the ‘Technological Revolution’. This is an attractive and appealing text for students of Years 9 and 10 History.

This book is attractively set out with plenty of colour and excellent visual sources to attract the student. At the end of each chapter is a ‘Check and Challenge’ Section along with a ‘Summary of Key Terms’. Each individual section is set out over two pages with text, sources and stimulating activities to complete. This text accompanied by a CD-ROM with an electronic copy of the text in PDF format, links to activity sheets, links to Key Terms, links to Web Sites and sample

assessment. While it has been written for the Victorian system, there is plenty to offer Queensland schools for Years 9 and 10.

*Reviewed by Carmel Harman*



Maaz, J. et. al. (2007), *Humanities Alive – Geography 2*, Jacaranda Learning Essentials, John Wiley & Sons, Milton. 223 pages paper back. RRP \$54.95

*Humanities Alive – Geography 2* is one of the Jacaranda Learning Essentials Series designed for Level 6 of SOSE/GEOGRAPHY. It includes some very relevant and current topics with chapters on Coastal Systems, Water, Tourism – the last resort, Pollution, Urban Development, Helping the Developing World, Threatened Environments and Climate Change. Items of interest include the chapter on “Water” with its emphasis on the present Australian water situation and the chapter on ‘Climate Change’ which looks at Global Warming, consequences and taking action. This is a fantastic text for students of Years 9 and 10 Geography and Science.

As with the equivalent History book reviewed above, *Humanities Alive – Geography 2* is attractively set out with plenty of colour and excellent visual sources to attract the student. At the end of each chapter is a ‘Check and Challenge’ Section along with a ‘Summary of Key Terms’. Each individual section is set out over two pages with text, sources and stimulating activities to complete. This book is also accompanied by a CD-ROM with an electronic copy of the text in PDF format, links to activity sheets, links to Key Terms, links to Web Sites and sample assessment. Again, while written for the Victorian system, there is plenty to offer Queensland schools for Years 9 and 10.

*Reviewed by Carmel Harman*



Gudrun Pausewang 2006, *Dark Hours*, translated by John Brownjohn, Allen & Unwin , Crows Nest. 216 pages, paperback, \$16.95rrp.

This is an unusual book, one that should find a special place in recommended reading about Nazi Germany. The author, Gudrun Pausewang, is a leading German children's author and her novel has been translated very effectively into English by John Brownjohn, himself an acclaimed translator.

The book recounts the dramatic, sometimes harrowing experiences of 15 year old Gisel and her family as they flee both Allied bombing and Soviet troop advances in the dying days of World War 2. Separated from the adults, Gisel assumes responsibility for her younger siblings. For much of the book the children are trapped in a darkened, sealed room – the result of a bombing raid – and the chapters describe a remarkable and gripping story of determination, hope, despair and survival.

*Dark Hours* is presented as Gisel's memoir, but a memoir written decades later – in 2005 – as an extraordinary birthday gift from the now 67 year old Gisel to her 16 year old granddaughter. This device produces much of the richness of the book, as the narrative (presented in the present tense through the eyes and words of the young Gisel) includes various musings on some vital historical questions – why did so many Germans flock to Hitler; who was responsible for the war; was the Allied carpet bombing of German cities justified; how much did the German civilian population know about the Holocaust. Helpfully for young students, the book includes sufficient historical background to explain the predicament in which Gisel and her siblings find themselves. And, to supplement that detail, the book finishes with a six-page summary of German history from 1918 to 1945.

I found the book a gripping read. Page after page, as the story of the youngsters' entombment in the dark and dank room continued, I found myself caring more and more

about their plight and hoping for their rescue. I was also intrigued by the extraordinary role played by Gisel as she struggled to keep her siblings alive (especially as water became scarce) and to raise their spirits (as days passed with no contact with the outside world). It would be interesting to hear young Australian readers discussing this awesome shouldering of responsibility in such a dire situation.

Pausewang is no dispassionate storyteller. As a biographical note explains, she is a peace activist. Her questioning of war and its effects is a discernible thread running through the narrative. But not in a strident, proselytizing way. Rather, deep questions about warfare arise as a natural response to the unfolding story of dislocation, suffering and endurance. Only in the final historical overview does Pausewang's voice become directly didactic, culminating in her statement that 'The history of Germany during the twentieth century should be a lesson to people of all nations'.

History students who love stories could be offered this book as extra, enriching reading. As well, teachers could select key episodes from the book to bring alive the effects of the war on ordinary families, and to stimulate discussions about some of the big questions about politics and warfare.

*Reviewed by Brian Hoeppe*