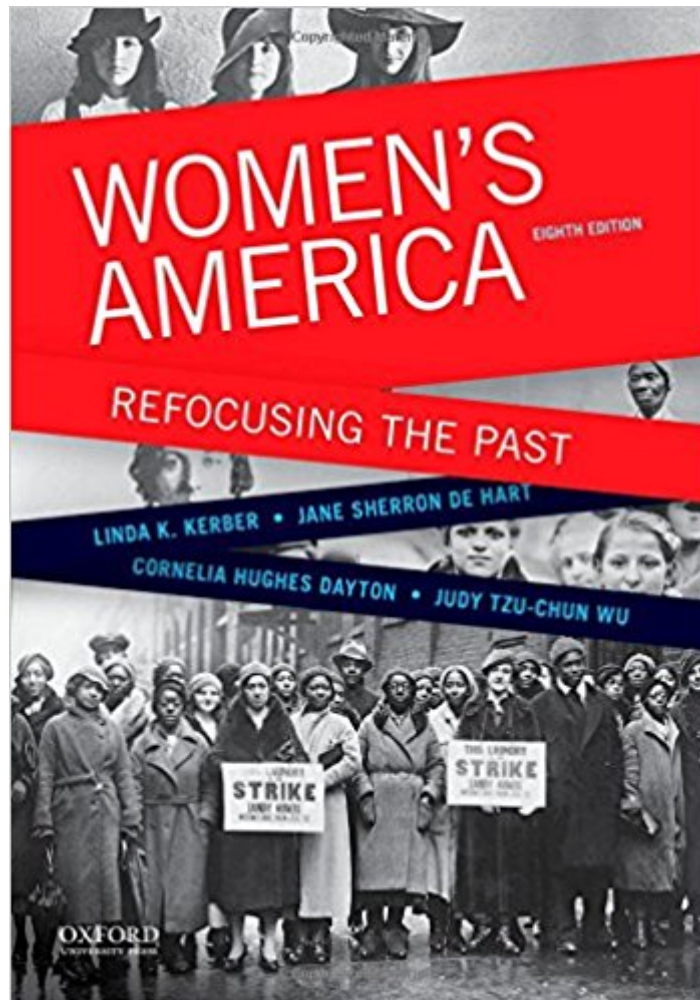




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Women's America: Refocusing The Past



Synopsis

Featuring a mix of primary source documents, articles, and illustrations, *Women's America: Refocusing the Past* has long been an invaluable resource. Now in its eighth edition, the book has been extensively revised and updated to cover recent developments in U.S. women's history.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Brilliantly and evocatively, Kerber, De Hart, Dayton, and Wu present a probing and comprehensive picture of women's experience in America. An indispensable book."--William H. Chafe, Duke University
"Women's America allows students to grapple with complex questions of political activism, sexuality, work, and family across time and place. Featuring carefully selected articles and primary sources--now organized both thematically and chronologically--the eighth edition provides both breadth and depth within a more streamlined framework."--Danielle J. Swiontek, Santa Barbara City College
"The documentary photographic essays encourage readers to engage both visual culture and contemporary commentary, bringing women's history to life in relevant ways. Spanning the range of women's experiences across race and class, this impassioned collection is a must-have for teaching and learning women's history."--Elizabeth Stordeur Pryor, Smith College

Linda K. Kerber is May Brodbeck Professor in the Liberal Arts and Professor of History, Emerita at the University of Iowa. Jane Sherron De Hart is Professor Emerita of History at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Cornelia Hughes Dayton is Associate Professor of History at the University of Connecticut. Judy Tzu-Chun Wu is Professor of Asian American Studies and History at

the University of California, Irvine.

Great!

Excellent compilation of well-written and important articles concerning women in our history!

full of good information

Textbook

I'm just a month into my fall semester but I have not had a hard time reading and staying focused. The book is very interesting and is easy to understand. I hate books with all these big words and different ways of putting things in perspective.

Happy with my item.

Product was just as described.

The introduction to this book suggests that women's history (and I mean in the USA) can be studied in stages, with each era of history bringing changes and progress. Take for instance Amelia Earhart, which the authors use as an example of courage. While she was definitely an innovator, as there were few women aviators at the time, she wasn't the first woman in the USA to show courage. Half a century earlier, hadn't thousands of women taken risks when their families moved into the Great Plains? Anyone who saw the recent remake of True Grit knows that the "pioneer woman" of the 1800s had to have assumed great risk. It is for this reason, that the authors advise the following criteria when reading this book; identify the historical source, ask who created it, ask why, ask how the attitudes (or laws) of the time influenced the recording, and ask who it was meant for. An early chapter here covers the issue of women in early America, with special emphasis on those that were enslaved. The authors write about how rice harvesting was a back-breaking job, often done by the women. They cut through the Uncle Ben and Aunt Jemima stereotypes, and show us how the reality was even worse. The women performed hard manual labor, and relatively few were tasked strictly with cooking, cleaning, and childcare. A more interesting piece is the issue of

something called Interspousal Tort Immunity. Under English Common Law, the husband and wife were considered one person, so they could not sue each other. The wife could therefore not claim any damages if her husband beat her or stole from her. The chapter is comically titled "Why Diamonds Really Are a Girl's Best Friend" in that the jewelry bestowed as an engagement gift was in fact a defense. A woman could sue a man for breaking an engagement, because it was considered a breach of contract. However, in the event of such a broken promise, she was expected to keep the jewelry, so she wouldn't have to humiliate herself by going to court. As for a married woman, her jewelry was the last thing that creditors could seize if her husband defaulted his debts. As I mentioned before, women of the pioneer era are detailed, along with convents in the cities. The contribution of the nuns was covered in an earlier book titled *Women of Faith*, where the Chicago nuns were the founders of education for children in Chicago. In *Women's America*, however, the New York nuns are said to have gotten some political clout (though not necessarily power) by establishing childcare and education institutions. It was the only situation where the male politicians would listen to the women, because without the nuns and their schools, the city would be caring for the poor on its own. In anti-tax USA, the last thing the politician wants to do is tax the men to pay for social services. As discussed in *Women of Faith*, the anti-Catholic sentiment of the time encouraged the establishment of the convent schools, as a way of alleviating (what was seen as) the Irish Catholic root of poverty. Further chapters discuss the change in rape prosecution, how the boredom of the post-war housewife led to Frieda's feminist movement, and the changes with regard to education, health, technology, law, and government. The authors do great justice to the history of American women with their unbiased research and writing. From the very beginning, they advise the scholar to examine the primary and secondary sources, so they can be aware of bias and undue favoritism. While this might seem new to some, keep in mind that bias is always evident in history. Remember the old adage, "history is written by the victors"? Now remember the other one, that "to the victors go the spoils of war"? By studying the sources carefully, you can get to the root of history, and cut through all the prejudices. That in itself is the basis for the study of any history.

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