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## The Crusades : the authoritative history of the war for the Holy Land, by Thomas Asbridge (book review)

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# short takes: The Crusades

Asbridge, Thomas. *The Crusades: The Authoritative History of the War for the Holy Land*. Ecco: HarperCollins. Mar. 2010. c.784p. ISBN 978-0-06-078728-8. \$34.99. HIST

Covering the 200-year period of the Crusades in a single volume is a monumental task, but Asbridge (medieval history, Queen Mary, Univ. of London) handles it well, presenting an evenhanded view of the actions of Christian and Muslim forces and paying particular attention to the larger-than-life figures of Richard the Lionheart and Saladin. In addition to relating the facts of the expeditions, he explores both the motivations of the Crusaders (religious devotion played a part but was often combined with the need of leaders to harness the violence of their subjects and consolidate their own power) and the reasons that Christians eventually failed to retain any hold on conquered territory. These perspectives have been lost to the romanticized image of the Crusades and its appropriation into modern propaganda—which underscores Asbridge's conclusion that drawing too many parallels between the Crusades and today's conflicts is both inaccurate and dangerous. Strongly recommend for interested general readers and of some value to academics for its use of both Christian and

Muslim primary sources.—Kathleen McCallister (KM), Univ. of South Carolina Lib., Columbia

Phillips, Jonathan. *Holy Warriors: A Modern History of the Crusades*. Random. Mar. 2010. c.464p. illus. ISBN 978-1-4000-6580-6. \$30. HIST

Written for general rather than academic readers, this work is centered more on character than on chronology. Though Phillips (Crusading history, Royal Holloway, Univ. of London) follows the overall time line of the Crusades, his narrative often pauses to provide extensive sketches of figures and events not part of most popular histories of the Crusades. Phillips also continues past the ostensible "end" of the Crusading era in 1291, exploring some of the later Christian-Muslim battles that occurred outside the Middle East and analyzing how the cultural idea of Crusading developed as both action and metaphor from the medieval era to the modern day. Though somewhat brief considering the vast amount of history it covers, this work succeeds in providing a vivid and engaging narrative for a general audience while demonstrating excellent scholarship and a bal-

Freelance journalist Schama, daughter of esteemed historian Simon Schama, undertakes a nonfiction debut most writers only dream about. She stumbled upon a page-turning topic in a footnote to an article on Wilkie Collins's *Man and Wife*, a novel based on a real-life episode. Her retelling of the history of one of Victorian England's most notorious scandals reads like a novel itself (the more so because she does not provide endnotes or a bibliography), detailing every aspect of the bigamy trial of William Charles Yelverton, which dominated the front pages of Irish, Scottish, and British newspapers in 1861. Although the story of Yelverton and his first wife, Theresa Longworth, practically tells itself through court documents, letters, and public opinion, Schama adds a journalist's touch in her story development. The latter part of the book deals with Theresa's later life in America as a self-made woman still haunted by her past. **VERDICT** History buffs and those who enjoy a good, old-fashioned scandal will find charm here, but it will not be as useful to serious students or specialists.—Suzan Alteri, Wayne State Univ. Lib., Detroit

★Sides, Hampton. *Hellhound on His Trail: The Stalking of Martin Luther King Jr.*

and *the International Hunt for His Assassin*. Doubleday. Apr. 2010. c.480p. ISBN 978-0-385-52392-9. \$27.95. HIST

Martin Luther King's murder on April 4, 1968, which destroyed Lyndon Johnson's hopes for a Great Society and fragmented beyond repair the nonviolent Civil Rights Movement, was neither the result of an FBI conspiracy nor the impulsive act of a deranged killer, claims Sides (*Blood and Thunder: An Epic of the American West*), but rather a carefully planned assassination by James Earl Ray. Sides follows Ray from his escape from the high-security Missouri State Penitentiary, a year before the murder, to Mexico and then to Los Angeles, where Ray, a lifelong racist drifter going by the alias Eric S. Galt, fell under the political spell of presidential candidate George Wallace. Galt stalked King in Selma, AL, and in the civil rights leader's hometown of Atlanta before fatally shooting him in Memphis, TN. Sides's riveting account shows how the FBI, along with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Scotland Yard, worked through a mountain of leads and evidence to build an indisputable case against Ray. **VERDICT** Sides skillfully weaves his narrative as his book builds to the fateful conjunction of King

and Ray in Memphis and to Ray's capture in London two months later. The results are a spellbinder that all interested readers will find hard to put down.—Karl Helicher, Upper Merion Twp. Lib., King of Prussia, PA

Snyder, Christina. *Slavery in Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America*. Harvard Univ. Apr. 2010. c.344p. illus. maps. index. ISBN 978-0-674-04890-4. \$29.95. HIST

Native American slavery was brought to the scholarly forefront with Allan Galloway's *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670–1717*. Now Snyder (American studies & history, Indiana Univ.) examines captivity in the same region from pre-Columbian times to the 1840s but focuses on the evolution of slavery from the perspective of individual Native American groups. She demonstrates that captivity, before the arrival of Europeans, played an important role in Native societies, as some captives became kinfolk while others became slaves. The Europeans introduced slavery for profit and racialized slavery in the region, which had different consequences for different Native groups. The scale of slavery grew exponentially, with some Native groups ac-

anced presentation of Christian and Muslim viewpoints.—KM

★Rogerson, Barnaby. *The Last Crusaders: The Hundred-Year Battle for the Center of the World*. Overlook, dist. by Penguin Group (USA). Mar. 2010. c.512p. illus. maps. index. ISBN 978-1-59020-

286-9. \$35. HIST

Rogerson (*The Heirs of Muhammad*) focuses not on the more famous Crusades from 1095 and 1291 but on a later series of clashes between various Christian and Muslim forces in and around the Mediterranean, beginning with Portugal's capture of the city of Ceuta in 1415 and ending with the battles at Lepanto in 1571 and Alcácer Quibir in 1578. The author imbues his text with an excellent sense of person and place, presenting not only the exploits of both Christians and Muslims on the battlefield but also their shifting alliances and internal struggles. He also explores how military technologies and the expansion of trade and exploration helped shape the conflicts. This thoroughly readable book provides a vibrant and well-organized account of this tumultuous, lesser-known period of history. Highly recommended for both students and general readers.—KM

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