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## The fires of Vesuvius: Pompeii lost and found, by Mary Beard (book review)

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**Lewis, Michael. *Panic: The Story of Modern Financial Insanity*. Norton. Dec. 2008. c.352p. ISBN 978-0-393-06514-5. \$27.95. BUS**

Lewis (*Liar's Poker*) has compiled an anthology of articles related to five major financial crises in recent decades: the 1987 stock market crash, the Russian default, the Asian currency crisis, the Internet bubble and, most recently, the subprime mortgage collapse (the final article included is from January 2008). For each crisis, Lewis offers articles from journals, books, transcripts, and newspapers, all written immediately before, during, or after the event. He provides an introduction to each group of articles on a specific crisis and analyzes the crisis in hindsight. Articles included are from such estimable writers as Paul Krugman, Tim Metz, Joseph Stiglitz, Robert Shiller, Lester C. Thurow, and Gregory Zuckerman, with Lewis's own articles appearing as well. He also provides biographies of the contributors and a glossary of terms. Timely and highly readable, this work includes in one accessible source two decades' worth of some of the best writing on the various crises and panics. Highly recommended for public and academic libraries. [See Prepub Alert, *LJ* 8/08.]—**Lucy Heckman, St. John's Univ. Lib., Jamaica, NY**

**Miller, Matt. *The Tyranny of Dead Ideas: Letting Go of the Old Ways of Thinking To Unleash a New Prosperity*. Times Bks: Holt. Jan. 2009. c.272p. index. ISBN 978-0-8050-8787-1. \$25. ECON**

Miller (senior fellow, Ctr. for American Progress; *The Two Percent Solution: Fixing America's Problems in Ways Liberals and Conservatives Can Love*) has written an energetic polemic. A political progressive, he highlights what he terms "dead ideas" that hamper American life through our failure to let go of them. He isolates six such examples of enduring conventional wisdom in America. In the first part of his book, he deconstructs these ideas, explaining their detrimental effects upon American economic progress. Not surprisingly, given his academic background, he writes well and authoritatively on economic issues. In the second part of his book, he identifies and explores what he terms "destined ideas." According to the author, embracing these ideas will make America economically and emotionally healthy as well as internationally competitive. The problem here is the assumption that all Americans hold these old ideas, let alone agree that they are dead; readers who don't follow the author's line of thinking will feel disconnected from the text. The writing style and layout are extremely informal; there are no endnotes, bibliography, or suggested further readings. Ultimately, this is an optional purchase for public libraries

catering to readers interested in current economic and political topics.—**Melissa Johnson, Fairfax, VA**

## EDUCATION

**Averitt, Angela Vaughn. *The Middle School Classroom: RX for Success*. BayWest. 2008. c.184p. ISBN 978-0-98177-670-5. pap. \$19.95. ED**

Middle school is the Rodney Dangerfield of the education system—it gets no respect. We've all heard disparaging comments about it; in fact, we've all lived through it, and most of us would probably never choose to go back to that point in time. But some people actually choose to teach middle schoolers, while others are assigned that level when they enter the profession. Now there's a manual to help middle-school teachers, especially those just beginning their careers. First-time author Averitt writes from experience—she's been an educator since 1997—here offering a step-by-step guide that deals with all areas of teaching, from organizing the classroom to establishing order to gaining students' respect. Perhaps too basic for some in the profession, this work could be a godsend to others. Recommended for both academic and public libraries.—**Terry Christner, Hutchinson P.L., KS**

**Those Who Dared: Five Visionary Educators Who Changed American Education**. Teachers Coll. Pr., Columbia Univ. 2008. c.168p. ed. by Carl Glickman. photogs. ISBN 978-0-8077-4917-3. \$44; pap. ISBN 978-0-8077-4916-6. \$17.95. ED

In this work, editor Glickman (president, Inst. for Schools, Education, and Democracy, Univ. of Georgia) brings together essays from five educational leaders—Deborah Meier, who has been instrumental in the small schools movement; Henry M. Levin, William H Kilpatrick Professor of Economics & Education at Teachers College; James P. Comer, Maurice Falk Professor of Child Psychiatry at the Yale University School of Medicine's Child Study Center; John I. Goodland, president, Institute for Educational Inquiry; Theodore R.Sizer, founding director of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform; and George Wood, executive director, Forum for Education and Democracy. Each describes with the utmost humility his or her career, achievements, and views about American education. Though evidently a series of scholarly essays, this book is more autobiographical, with the authors reflecting on their past careers and research devoted to improving American education. Meant to record their personal stories, these pieces foster a deep respect for those involved in the process of educating. A fascinating look into the careers of some of

the greatest educational leaders of our time; recommended for academic libraries.—**Jenny Emanuel, Univ. of Illinois, Urbana**

## HISTORY

**Beard, Mary. *The Fires of Vesuvius: Pompeii Lost and Found*. Harvard Univ. Dec. 2008. c.368p. illus. bibliog. index. ISBN 978-0-674-02976-7. \$26.95. HIST**

The ruins of Pompeii, remarkably preserved after the violent eruption of Vesuvius in 79 C.E., have long been used as a basis for theories concerning life throughout the Roman Empire as a whole. In this vivid historical examination, however, Beard (classics, Univ. of Cambridge; *The Roman Triumph*) is more interested in digging into the world of Pompeii itself. While centering each chapter on general topics such as architecture, religion, and commerce, she sifts through archaeological observations in order to provide reconstructions of such everyday details as the flow of cart traffic through a particular street or what sort of plants grew in a house's kitchen garden. It's an entertaining study that demonstrates just how much we can learn from the city's remains—and how much information is still absent, for Beard is always careful to point out gaps in the evidence and casts a critical eye on several conjectural ideas about Pompeii and Roman life in general. Included are an extensive bibliography of sources for further reading and a short chapter of suggestions for those who wish to visit Pompeii themselves. Recommended for academic and public libraries, especially those with sections on Roman or Classical history.—**Kathleen McCallister, Univ. of South Carolina, Columbia**

☆ **Cohen, Adam. *Nothing To Fear: FDR's Inner Circle and the Hundred Days That Created Modern America*. Penguin. Jan. 2009. c.355p. index. ISBN 978-1-59420-196-7. \$29.95. HIST**

This year marks the 75th anniversary of "The Hundred Days" in 1933 that signified the beginning of Franklin D. Roosevelt's assumption of the presidency. Cohen (assistant editorial page editor, *New York Times*; *American Pharaoh: Mayor Richard J. Daley*) displays his strong prose style and research skills in this story of the precedent set by FDR against which later Presidents are judged: the so-called honeymoon period after inauguration and before the media and the opposition inevitably begin to critique and attack. Cohen wisely tells the New Deal story through the biographies of five of its most important players: Raymond Moley and Lewis Douglas (director, bureau of the budget)—both of whom broke with FDR rather early on—and the more liberal Henry Wallace (secretary of agriculture), Frances

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