

# The Good Book Guide

THE EXTENSION OF THE FRANCHISE by Bob Whitfield. Heinemann - Advanced History series, 2001. vi + 282 pp. Index. £9.75 pbk.

Bob Whitfield's textbook comfortably meets the high standards now expected of this series. The 175x245mm format sits well in the hand, the cover is simple, clear and attractive and the binding allows the book to be flat without risk of fracture. There is a comprehensive index with entry sub-divisions, and the bibliography is divided between those books useful for AS and A2 Levels. It contains some very recent literature as well as some classics.

The text handles complex issues with a lightness of touch. The first half provides for the AS Level candidate, exploring Parliamentary Reform 1815-1850 and then Votes for Women 1867-1928, both with an eye to 'narrative' as well as 'explanation'; and the second half examines Representation and Democracy 1830-1931, helping candidates with 'analysis' and 'interpretation'. The content is appropriate to AS and A2, and for those with academic ambition the text offers a more subtle appreciation from time to time (how refreshing to find a clear exploration of Virtual Representation). Throughout, there are welcome references to examination questions, and considerable help is given in 'Assessment' sections where issues are explored with examination preparation directly in mind. There are also highlighted Key Terms, Key People, Key Quotes and so on - tactical help for the big day.

This is a workmanlike text that should serve candidates well.

Richard Miller

IMPERIAL RUSSIA 1801-1905 by Tim Chapman. Routledge, 2001. x + 149 pp. Index. £12.99 pbk.

This book could prove invaluable to those teachers and students struggling with the synoptic element of the new A2 specifications. Tim Chapman makes it clear that his work is not based on primary research, but he does a thorough job of synthesising the work of other historians, drawing out the themes of nineteenth-century Russian history in an accessible way, and giving due account to foreign policy and Poland as well as looking at the limits of autocracy. He says that the 'Russian system of absolutism was tempered by assassination' to make clear the need for the support of the nobility, which held back progress in many ways. The phrase 'Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationality'

devised by Uvarov in the early 1830s is borrowed to clarify the basis of the regime and its support by the Church, the Army and the Bureaucracy.

Students will be left in no doubt as to why the small class of intellectuals, centred on the six universities, made little headway during this period, and might be surprised to learn that not only did university students have to wear a uniform, they even had to conform to having the same haircut.

Barbara Hibbert

THE RISE OF DEMOCRACY IN BRITAIN 1830-1918 by Ian Machin. Macmillan - British Studies series, 2001. ix + 182 pp. Index. £17.99 pbk.

This text takes a detailed look at progress in Britain towards a system of full parliamentary democracy. Starting with the Great Reform Act of 1832 - or the 'maintaining of the present system with a few minor alterations' Act - the author looks in detail at moves making the system gradually more democratic, and the myriad of reasons behind such changes. Changes in both national and local government are considered, with lots of useful supporting detail. The Second Reform Crisis, the Secret Ballot, Women's Suffrage, all figure prominently, as do changes in party organisation both within and without Parliament.

This is a detailed and thorough examination of the gradual expansion of democracy in Britain. The author writes with assurance and knowledge; effortlessly synthesising the state of current historical research and debate on the issues involved. It is very detailed, perhaps suitable for A2 students, but more likely to be used by teachers to update their knowledge and understanding of the topic. There is an extensive and detailed bibliography that will be especially useful. If your new specification includes modules on British political history in the period covered by this text then this is well worth a close look. I don't think my Lower Sixth would be able to handle the detail and density of the text though!

Alf Wilkinson

CONFLICT, COMMUNISM AND FASCISM: EUROPE 1890-1945 by Frank McDonough. Cambridge University Press - Perspectives in History series, 2001. iv + 132 pp. Index. £10.95 pbk.

The content of this new book from Cambridge covers familiar topics - Russia 1890-1917; The Origins of the First World

War; The First World War and its Consequences; The Paris Peace Settlement and its Aftermath; Italy 1919-1945; Germany 1918-1945; and The Origins of the Second World War. There is a concluding chapter containing half a dozen document studies centred on Nazi Germany 1933-1945. There is a reading list (rather dated, considering all the books published on these core twentieth-century topics recently) to take students further.

Each chapter starts with a list of Focus questions that the text is structured around - for example, in the Russia chapter they are: What circumstances led to revolutionary unrest in Russia? How and why was Nicholas II able to survive the 1905 revolution? How far had the Tsarist government solved Russia's internal problems before 1917? Why were there two revolutions in Russia in 1917?

There is also a list of significant dates; difficult terms or key ideas are emboldened and explained in the margins, where there are also potted biographies of key characters. In fact, everything has been done to make the text easy to use. It is written in a straightforward and accessible, yet thought-provoking, style - suited for AS and the transition from GCSE to post-16 study. Each chapter also contains useful sections of historical interpretation, where the key areas of agreement, and more often disagreement, among historians are carefully explored.

The main weakness of the book lies in the questions. The Summary questions at the end of each chapter are rather repetitive, and not very challenging. There is no guidance on how to answer these questions, or even how to make effective notes. These are clearly left to the teacher, and probably rightly so. The same applies to the questions in the document study. There are interesting and useful collections of documents yet the questions mostly focus on the reliability/usefulness, etc, of single documents; rarely are readers asked to compare documents, or draw conclusions from several documents together. Good teachers will easily overcome this, by developing their own questions to go with the selections of documents.

Having said that, I would still recommend this book as a good starting point for AS students. The text is accessible, clearly and carefully written, not at all intimidating, and makes a good starting point for studying these core topics at AS Level. Teachers are advised to take a close look.

Alf Wilkinson