

The Good Book Guide

IMPERIAL GERMANY 1850-1918 by Edgar Feuchtwanger. Routledge, 2001. xiv + 228 pp. Index. £14.99 pbk

Feuchtwanger's *Imperial Germany* is a textbook of the traditional variety - with the attendant merits and drawbacks. Its chief strength is its comprehensive coverage of a period notable for its complexity and momentous developments. Feuchtwanger devotes as much attention to the years after Bismarck's fall as to the more familiar events that preceded it, and a range of topics - cultural and social as well as political - are discussed in depth. Issues such as the impact of the Austro-Prussian war, the Kulturkampf, Volkisch nationalism, and Germany's 1914 war aims, are all handled with skill, combining sound judgement with the real texture of history as embodied in events and personalities.

However, this comprehensiveness is also the book's main limitation. Its dense written style means that it is not really suitable for use as a basic A-Level text: there is too much detail and the analysis, though present, is embedded within the narrative. The themes and factors beloved of examiners are hard to discern. As such, the book will be most useful to teachers and for students pursuing extended essays. The pupil will be better off with a less rigorous and more readable book - Feuchtwanger's own *Bismarck* for example.

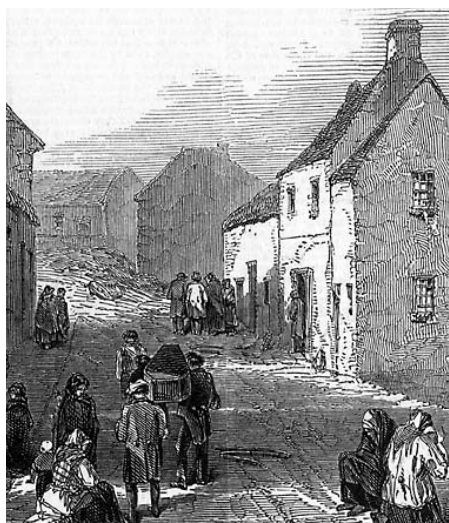
Ian St John

ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS 1798-1922 by Nick Pelling. Routledge - Questions and Analysis series, 2003. x + 129 pp. Index. £6.99 pbk.

Ireland from the Act of Union in 1800 to its dissolution in 1922 is a contained unit for study. Examination Boards, consequently, have favoured the period both for the synoptic unit and for document studies, such as Gladstone, Parnell and Ireland and the period appeals to students interested in nationalism and the roots of the modern 'Irish problem'. The publication of this book is, therefore, well timed.

There are six chapters of equal length. Each gives a brief narrative outline containing the essential information. The best chapter, which clearly supersedes its rivals, is on 'Cultural nationalism and Unionism 1890-1914'. The material in each chapter is then used as a focus for analysis for specific questions such as 'Why was Ireland partitioned?' The essay-style questions are very well answered and demonstrate high-grade essay technique.

The second strength of the book is



Irish potato famine, 1847: a scene of misery

the provision of a comprehensive range of succinct sources for each of the addressed issues and this arrangement is different from the Longman - Seminar Studies series with their sources appended at the end of the book. Exam-style document questions, some with worked examples, are presented, a feature not provided by other Irish study titles. The bibliography is impressive and up to date although Alvin Jackson's readable *Ireland 1798-1998. Politics and War* is a surprising omission.

The editors' claim that the series combines *all* the skills needed by History students. Readers will have to judge for themselves. My preference is still the Hodder - Access series title for the synoptic unit though Nick Pelling's book is clearly superior if readers are looking for a book that focuses on the skills to answer the documents paper.

Peter Wiser

FRANCE AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR. OCCUPATION, COLLABORATION AND RESISTANCE by Peter Davies. Routledge - Introductions to History series, 2001, xii + 145 pp. Index. £10.99 pbk.

This Routledge series is committed to producing 'short, clear, self-contained and incisive guides'. Peter Davies has certainly done that. The reference sections, which account for one-fifth of a short book, are a testimony to the extensive and careful research. The comprehensive Bibliography has many national studies concentrating on Paris and Vichy, which means there is little space, understandably, for the many newer regional works now appearing in France. The well-ordered chapters are divided into sensible and clearly sub-titled shorter sections. The reader is carefully directed through them as key ideas and issues are elaborated. The 'Legacy' chapter

relates all this to modern-day France. Extensive references to the works of other historians provide good indications as to where to find further reading.

Davies has, though, one problem in the sheer scale of his undertaking. There is the inevitable feeling that the sixth-form reader, as perhaps opposed to the undergraduate, for whom this book and series are designed, would need some help. None the less, he embraces his work with impressive energy and discipline accomplishing an extremely difficult task. The pity is most sixth-formers, with very limited opportunities to study any French history in the new AS/A2 world, will have to wait until they get to university to make the most of this book.

Malcolm Pearce

MARTIN LUTHER KING JNR, by Peter Ling. Routledge Historical Biographies, 2002. xv + 356 pp. Index. £9.99

This new volume sets out to reassess the role played by Martin Luther King in the Civil Rights Movement in the USA in the 1950s and 1960s. After being catapulted to national (and international) fame by his role in the Montgomery Bus Boycott, was King able to unite African-Americans in their fight for justice, or did he pay too much attention to White opinion and the Federal Government? Has our view of King been coloured by his Nobel Peace Prize, or by his assassination in 1968, or, as is argued in this book, was King already losing his influence in the Civil Rights Movement? And had his philosophy of Christian non-violence been supplanted by the more urgent demands of Black Power?

Peter Ling has written an incredibly detailed yet absorbing account of King's life, set firmly in the context of the growing Civil Rights Movement. Drawing heavily on recent research, yet presenting his ideas in an accessible way, the highs and lows of King's life are laid bare, and the areas of debate among historians are clearly explored. It is not a revisionist attempt to downplay King's role, but an honest attempt to explore the part he played. In many respects, as this book makes clear, King was in an impossible position, caught between the Segregationist Whites and the more militant members of the Civil Rights Movement. Perhaps King's greatest achievement was in steering a middle way between the two. Teachers, certainly, will find this text useful, as will sixth form students although they might use specific chapters rather than read the whole book. Highly recommended.

Alf Wilkinson