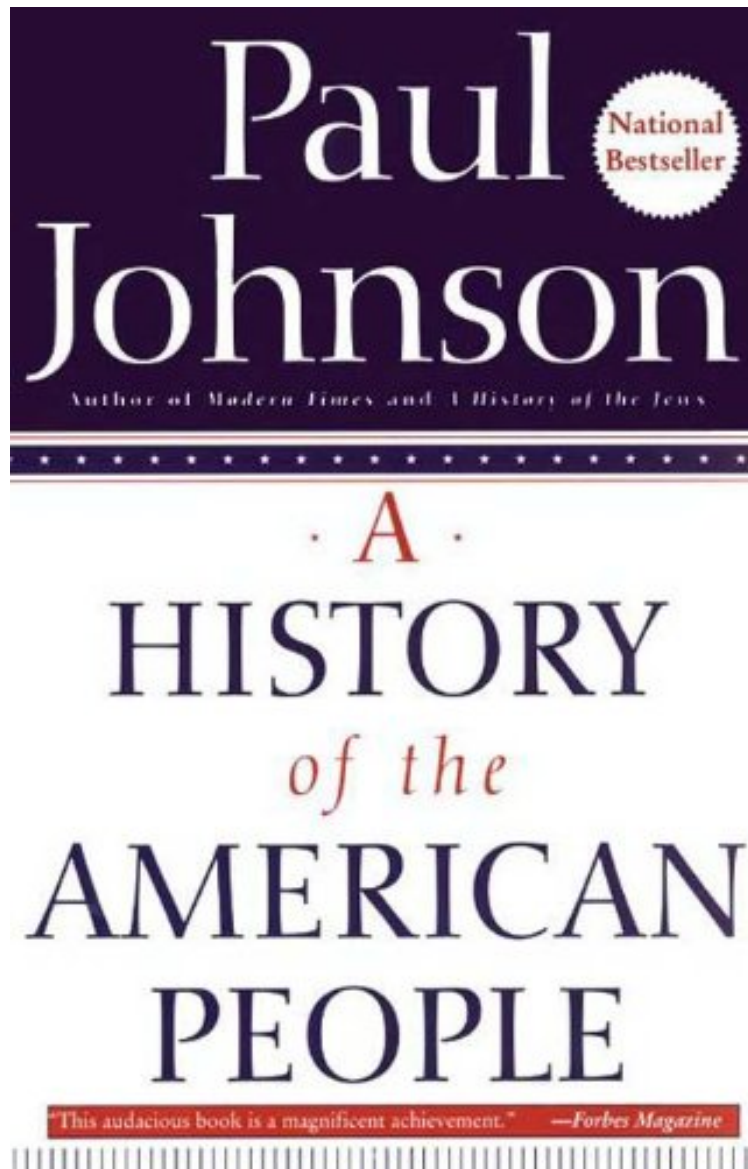


(Read download) A History of the American People

## A History of the American People

Von Paul Johnson

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**Von Paul Johnson : A History of the American People** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A History of the American People:

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. a misdirected masterpieceVon Ein KundeIn "A History of the American People", Paul Johnson provides a well-researched, thought out an narrow minded view of American history. His large book is full of facts and amusing anecdotes that were painstakingly researched and cataloged. He draws on a variety of sources,and and integrates them

a into well-written sections on American history. While they are written well, I find them inadequate. Paul Johnson spends the majority of his time focusing on the great men of history in what he calls the greatest adventure in the history of mankind. Throughout his work, his adoration for the United States seems to overshadow his responsibility to be an objective reporter of history. He is so set in his opinion that America and its formation are heroic, virtuous happenings that he refuses to acknowledge the oppressed and destroyed masses of people that paid the price for the formation and sustenance of this country. For example, women, Native Americans, and African-Americans receive very little acknowledgment in this book. Nor does he acknowledge the lower classes. In fact he conjures up statistics denying their existence. Instead of focusing on these people, and the major social movements of the time, Johnson instead goes into great detail describing the great men he seems to believe were almost singularly responsible for shaping history. He does an excellent job of it, though. Who knew George Washington had a dog named Drunkard? Who knew Andrew Jackson had been shot twice? While these are interesting facts, they do not qualify the title "A History of the American People." Rather, it would seem, Paul Johnson wrote an all-encompassing, sweeping epic called "A History of American Leaders."

1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. A Seriously Flawed Version of US History

Von Mark Wylie Paul Johnson is a British journalist who also is an amateur historian. In this book he sets out to write a comprehensive history of the US; however, his book is marred by serious shortcomings. The most obvious failing of this book is its abundance of factual errors. Previous reviewers have noted whoppers like Johnson's conflation of Civil War Generals Joseph and Albert Sidney Johnston. Such errors abound throughout. Opening at random to the description of the Constitutional Convention, I quickly found Johnson erroneously describing Alexander Hamilton as "leading the federalists" during the convention; in fact Hamilton was absent from much of the convention and had little influence on its outcome. In the same account Gouverneur Morris of Pennsylvania is misidentified as a delegate from New York. It is true that in a book of such length and scope, even a professional historian could make errors, but the number of Johnson's mistakes and the ease with which many of them could have been avoided suggests that he did much of his writing and research sloppily. While the factual errors are the most apparent flaw in *A History of the American People*, other shortcomings are more serious. Johnson repeatedly displays poor judgement in choosing which events to emphasize. He discusses minor issues and events at great length while giving short shrift to much more important topics. For example, writing about the Civil War, Johnson gives much attention to the actions of Col. John Mosby, an irregular cavalry leader who had little effect on the course of the war, while giving much less space to Grant's campaigns in the West from Fort Henry to Vicksburg, which were extremely important, and in some historians' view decisive. Turning to the post-WW2 era, Johnson repeatedly trivializes major social movements, while magnifying trivial issues. The environmental movement gets a mere two paragraphs, and these merely to lament that it "added to [America's] problems of competing in the world." The environmental degradation which gave rise to the movement is barely noted. But Johnson has time to run on for pages about the "political correctness" issue, a teapot tempest manufactured by right-wing pundits. The civil rights movement fares a bit better--the entire period from the Montgomery bus boycott to Martin Luther King's murder gets a whopping two pages. Even so, the focus is almost entirely on King; Malcolm X, for example, an important and complex figure, is summarily, and inaccurately, dismissed as a "black racist." People like Fannie Lou Hamer are non-persons in Johnson's account. But he has space for a rhapsody of several pages on the "power" of Ronald Reagan's humor (humor that was in most cases, like the "there you go again" quip made much of by Johnson, scripted by the Gipper's aides). A third weakness is the incompleteness of Johnson's research. On many subjects, his notes reveal a failure to consult major, standard works on the topic. For example, no serious treatment of the rise of giant corporations can ignore the books of Alfred Chandler. No one could fairly criticize the foreign policy of FDR, as Johnson does, without at least consulting the standard works on that topic by Dallek and Divine. And any treatment of the Cold War worthy of serious attention must at least take into account the arguments of revisionist historians like Williams, Kolko, Gardner and Alperovitz. Yet Johnson appears never to have read any of their work. Of all *A History of the American People*'s faults, the most glaring are Johnson's dubious interpretations and judgements. Events are frequently viewed through an ideological filter, leading Johnson to conclusions that are almost impossible to justify rationally. The Great Depression, for example, would have ended, according to Johnson, by the end of 1930, had the government not interfered with the "self-adjusting" abilities of the economy (self-adjusting abilities which even conservative economists like Milton Friedman now admit do not exist). Prior to the civil rights movement, Johnson tells us, "blacks had failed to participate fully in American political life," as if blacks were not voting by choice, not because a mix of law and terror prevented them. Johnson's most warped judgements, which border on hysteria, concern President Nixon and his crimes--crimes which in Johnson's view were, as he says of the "plumbers" illegal acts, "activities of an entirely justified nature." Watergate is portrayed as an effort by evil liberal "witchhunters" to drive a good man from office; Nixon's central impeachable offense, that of obstruction of justice, goes entirely unmentioned. Also absent is the famous "smoking gun tape," which proved that Nixon was complicit in the Watergate coverup from the start, and by providing such proof, caused most Senate Republicans to turn against Nixon, and caused Nixon to resign in the face of certain conviction and removal from office. Johnson simply pretends that this sequence of events never happened, and misrepresents Nixon as resigning "in the national interest" even though, as Johnson distorts it, he would not have been convicted. This book's shrill,

tendentious nature make it entirely unsuited as an introduction to US history, and to anyone with knowledge of the subject, as I have, it is often genuinely painful to read. Doubtless many conservatives will find it congenial reading, since it tells them things they want to hear (the previous reviewer who acknowledged how glad he was to see a book that trashed FDR was tacitly admitting this). But a historian's job is not to comfort his readers in their prejudices, but to respect the truth and present the truth as best he can. Paul Johnson fails completely at this task. 1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Reader Beware: Paul Johnson is No Historian Von Louay Jabry If there is any book that is going to make me question every history book I will read from now is A History of The American People by Paul Johnson. I have to admit that when I enthusiastically picked up this book from my local bookstore, I had no idea who Paul Johnson was. If I did, I probably would have put it right back on the shelf. A warning from the publisher alerting us to the personal and reinterpretive nature of this book would have been nice. Better still a less misleading title like 'Gratifying reinterpretation of U.S. History for the staunchly conservative' would have been welcome. Totally unprejudiced against this author since I didn't know who he was, I read on, stumbling on one inaccuracy after the other until I put down the book and asked myself what the hell I was reading. (The first inaccuracy I caught was Cotton Mather encouraging vaccination against smallpox 100 years before it was discovered (!) in 1796 by Edward Jenner, a compatriot of no less than Mr. Johnson!) Although well written and entertaining, Mr. Johnson's brand of staunch conservatism permeates and severely clouds every historical fact he presents. His frequent references to 'contrary to what is popularly believed' and 'according to classified files' renders his book a monumental exercise in wasteful and unsubstantiated prose. Even though I had my doubts about Mr. Johnson's political leanings all throughout his book, it wasn't until I hit his blistering attacks on FDR and Kennedy as well as his interpretation of the Vietnam war that I put the book down and looked up Mr. Johnson on the Internet. And then it all became clear. I had been duped into reading this book thinking all along that it was a respectable 'partisan-free' history book. Still, I blame myself. The caption underneath the Reagans stating that they were one of the most formidable couples to hold court at the White House should have tipped it off. No sane semi-intelligent person would have had the nerve to make such a statement expect for the right-wing impaired. Excuse me for being old-fashioned but I have always believed that history books are written by qualified scholars and not by highly-politicized former military personnel who have an axe to grind with the 'liberal' media. Reader beware!

Kurzbeschreibung The prize winning classic work on the post Civil War period which wrenched American society, now with a new introduction by the author. "The creation of the United States of America is the greatest of all human adventures," begins Paul Johnson's remarkable new American history. "No other national story holds such tremendous lessons, for the American people themselves and for the rest of mankind." Johnson's history is a reinterpretation of American history from the first settlements to the Clinton administration. It covers every aspect of U.S. history: politics; business and economics; art, literature and science; society and customs; complex traditions and religious beliefs. The story is told in terms of the men and women who shaped and led the nation and the ordinary people who collectively created its unique character. Wherever possible, letters, diaries, and recorded conversations are used to ensure a sense of actuality. "The book has new and often trenchant things to say about every aspect and period of America's past," says Johnson, "and I do not seek, as some historians do, to conceal my opinions." This is an in-depth portrait of a great people, from their fragile origins through their struggles for independence and nationhood, their heroic efforts and sacrifices to deal with the 'organic sin of slavery and the preservation of the Union to its explosive economic growth and emergence as a world power and its sole superpower. Johnson discusses such contemporary topics as the politics of racism, education, Vietnam, the power of the press, political correctness, the growth of litigation, and the rising influence of women. He sees Americans as a problem-solving people and the story of America as "essentially one of difficulties being overcome by intelligence and skill, by faith and strength of purpose, by courage and persistence... Looking back on its past, and forward to its future, the auguries are that it will not disappoint humanity." This challenging narrative and interpretation of American history by the author of many distinguished historical works is sometimes controversial and always provocative. Johnson's views of individuals, events, themes, and issues are original, critical, and admiring, for he is, above all, a strong believer in the history and the destiny of the American people. dePaul Johnson, whose previous works include the distinguished *Modern Times* and *A History of the Jews*, has produced an epic that spans the history of the American people over the past 400 years. The prolific narrative covers every aspect of U.S. history, from science, customs, religion, and politics to the individual men and women who have helped shape the nation. His detailed, provocative examinations of political and social icons, from Lyndon Johnson to Norman Rockwell, are especially strong. Johnson's text is intelligent and rich with detail, and yet extremely accessible for anyone interested in a reinterpretive analysis of America's past. What makes this book unique is Johnson's approach to this self-professed Herculean task. The prevalent tone throughout is optimism. Whether he's discussing race relations, industrialization, the history of women, immigrants, Vietnam, or political correctness, Johnson--a staunch conservative who was born, bred, and educated in England--is openly enamored with America's

past, particularly the hardships and tribulations that the nation has had to overcome. He sees this story as a series of important lessons, not just for Americans but for the whole of mankind as well. At a time when other contemporary scholars find it easier to bemoan the past, Johnson offers the reader "a compelling antidote to those who regard the future with pessimism." "Pressestimmen" "A masterly survey--readable, intelligent and, depending on your point of view, either annoyingly or endearingly cranky." -- "Newsweek" "Challenges the present consensus...Monstrously energetic, greatly imaginative, large-minded and generous-hearted, occasionally grotesquely unfair, but almost always pointing in the right direction." -- "American Spectator" "Arresting contentions and pieces of fascinating oddball information...The book also offers a rare opportunity to witness someone trying to make sense of all 400 years of American history and to discover what 'tremendous lessons' it holds for Americans and 'the rest of mankind.'" -- "New York Times Book Review" "Paul Johnson's 'The History of the American People' is as majestic in its scope as the country it celebrates. His theme is the men and women, prominent and unknown, whose energy, vision, courage and confidence shaped a great nation. It is a compelling antidote to those who regard the future with pessimism." -- Henry A. Kissinger "This is vivid and memorable writing...Proves that history can still be literature." -- "National Review" "A fresh, readable and provocative survey. He is full of opinions...And Johnson can be very wise." -- "Los Angeles Times" "His zesty, irreverent narratives teach more history to more people than all the post-modernist theorists, highbrow critics and dons put together." -- "Times Literary Supplement"