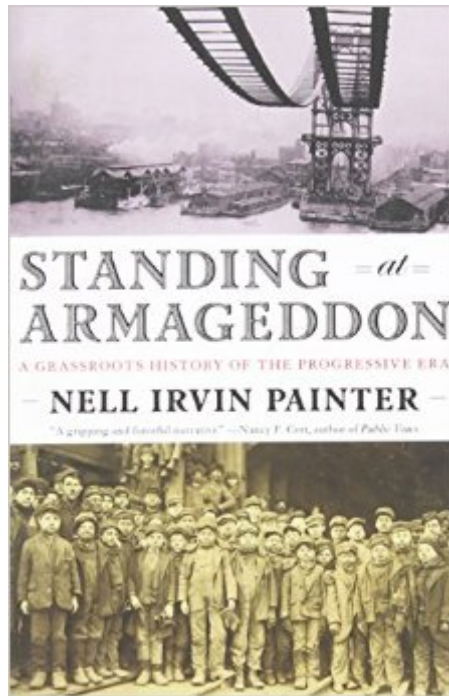


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Standing At Armageddon: A Grassroots History Of The Progressive Era



Synopsis

"A consistently engrossing, occasionally irreverent, always smoothly written history of America's painful entry into the modern age." —Kirkus Reviews
Standing at Armageddon is a comprehensive and lively historical account of America's shift from a rural and agrarian society to an urban and industrial society. Nell Irvin Painter will be featured in the PBS multipart series The Progressive Era with Bill Moyers, which coincides with the release of the updated edition of this acclaimed work.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book is a commendable look at a very contentious period in US history. At the start of this period, the nation, even so-called radical Republicans, had lost tolerance for Reconstruction, essentially turning the South over to the Redeemers, that is, the old oligarchy, which essentially restored ante-bellum race relations. The story of this period involves far more than simply the dramatic rise of large enterprises and super-rich entrepreneurs. Of concern to this author are the social divides in the nation that revolved around agrarian vs. industrial interests, economic class, political effectiveness, religion, mode of production, reform vs. standpattism, native born vs. immigrants, ethnicity, and race. Farmers, artisans, and laborers usually found themselves on the wrong side of many of those divisions; attempts at amelioration were often inadequate and fleeting. The US joined the Europeans in carving up the world through imperialistic ventures based on an ideology of Anglo-Saxon racial superiority. The US certainly emerged after WWI as the world's dominant power, but most of the cracks in the foundation of American society remained. The

author's principal focus is on the so-called "labor issue," as the elites of the times referred to it, that is, workers and their jobs and actions in the context of the larger society. The nature of work underwent vast changes in the decades after the Civil War. Much of independent artisanship was swallowed up by the de-skilled, corporate machine-tending mode of production. Easily replaced and therefore essentially powerless, workers found it extremely difficult to counter the squeezing of their wages to subsistence levels in a time of over all deflation with significant economic downturns occurring at least once a decade.

Standing at Armageddon, by Nell Irvin Painter, covers American history from Reconstruction to the end of World War I, outlining American progress many fronts. At different times, it works as pieces of social, political, and economic history. Painter's attention to detail informs the reader with razor-sharp accuracy, but also at times provides too much information, revealing Painter's personal biases. In outlining this period of American history, Painter asserts that America was performing a tight-rope walk on the brink of destruction. America's omnipresent danger of collapse is portrayed through looks at social, economic, and political history, but the three are sometimes interconnected and some are presented more than others. In the mix, reform and inequality are paramount. Painter belabours the plight of women and blacks especially, devoting a chapter to each. Using many resources, Painter explores the aspects of social reform, including comprehensive reports of the working class, and the struggle for reform, this book is easily called social history, perhaps at the expense of political and economic history. Painter discusses the plight of women with especial detail, showing all sides of suffrage and oppression. Her female subjects range from Jane Addams to Emma Goldman, displaying convictions, goals, and accomplishments of each. Her thoughtfulness in this type of integration shows she has a flair for demonstrating societal matters. As a work of political history, SAA is fine. Important acts of legislation and politicians are not left out of the mix, and are integrated well with social aspects. With regard to legislation, no important bill is left out.

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