

Douglas Elmendorf, former Commerce Secretary Peter Peterson, and Defense Secretary Leon Panetta. **VERDICT** Wessel's unbiased, levelheaded approach will appeal to serious readers who understand that the federal budget cannot be managed like a family budget. He offers ideas for solving the crisis, but these would require the support of elected officials and a focus on working toward a responsible fiscal future. Highly recommended for all politics wonks and university libraries supporting political science and economics curricula.—Dale Farris, Groves, TX

EDUCATION

Cummings, Quinn. *The Year of Learning Dangerously: Adventures in Homeschooling.* Perigree: Penguin. Aug. 2012. c.224p. ISBN 9780399537608. \$23.95. ED

Cummings (*Notes from the Underwire: Adventures from My Awkward and Lovely Life*) and her partner, Daniel, were frustrated when their daughter Alice had difficulties in public school. After much thought and debate, they decided to homeschool her. Most of the burden fell on Cummings, whose insecurities often had her second-guessing their decision. Cummings discovered various homeschooling methods—online charter schools, Radical Unschooling, the Fundamentalists, Gothardites. She enrolled Alice in an online course, only to abandon it six weeks later, and went to conferences to check out other homeschooling groups. In the end, they stuck with Cummings's original curriculum, and Alice flourished both personally and academically in the process. **VERDICT** Professional educators may dismiss this as fluff. But along with her wit, Cummings offers concrete proposals for the future of education. Her book should have wide appeal and is likely to give readers a more positive view of homeschooling.—Terry A. Christner, Hutchinson P.L., KS

Falk, Beverly & Megan Blumenreich. *Teaching Matters: Stories from Inside City Schools.* New Pr., dist. by Perseus. Aug. 2012. c.208p. illus. ISBN 9781595584908. pap. \$19.95. ED
Like Marcus A. Winters's similarly titled *Teachers Matter*, this book is about the importance and value of good teachers. Falk (early childhood education, City Coll. of New York; *Teaching the Way Children Learn*) and Blumenreich (childhood education, Sch. of Education, City Coll. of New York; *The Power of Questions*) feature the stories of teachers who have succeeded in challenging environments. Each of the 15 chapters is based on a single teacher's study of his or her own classroom or school environment with the aim of better understand an issue he or she was facing and to propose solutions. These studies were done as part of a project

that Falk and Blumenreich assign in their teacher-preparation course each year. The chapters are organized into four broad categories that mirror the focus of the teachers' inquiries: culturally responsive teaching, school/family partnerships, differentiated teaching, and constraints of urban teaching. **VERDICT** This informative look at the process as well as the practical results of action research in the classroom will be of interest to practicing teachers and those pursuing (or thinking about) a career in education.—Sara Holder, McGill Univ. Lib., Montreal, Quebec

HISTORY

Achebe, Chinua. *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra.* Penguin. Oct. 2012. c.352p. index. ISBN 9781594204821. \$27.95. HIST

Shortly after gaining independence from Britain in 1960, Nigeria was subject to a military coup and countercoup that resulted in the massacre of thousands of Igbo citizens. Fleeing to the east, the Igbo proclaimed the eastern region of the country the independent Republic of Biafra. The ensuing civil war ended in 1970 with Biafra's defeat. Achebe (*Things Fall Apart*) lends his voice to this bloody period in Nigeria's history through a blend of insightful political analysis, history, and memoir, interspersed with his poetry. Because of his prominence as an author and intellectual, Achebe was an integral part of the Biafran government, serving as a cultural ambassador. Yet he was also an Igbo trying to make sense of the brutality and keep his family safe. Achebe's personal stake in the Biafran war makes his account more than just a standard historical retelling. His writing reveals his love and sorrow for his people and his hope for Nigeria's future. **VERDICT** Achebe's book will appeal to scholars of Africa, but its reach will extend to all readers interested in learning more about the author's life and the life of his country.—Veronica Arellano Douglas, St. Mary's Coll. of Maryland Lib., St. Mary's City

Brown, Craig. *Hello Goodbye Hello: A Circle of 101 Remarkable Meetings.* S & S. Aug. 2012. c.368p. bibliog. ISBN 9781451683608. \$26.95. HIST

British satirist Brown (*The Tony Years*) here recounts the real-life meetings of various pairs of (mostly) famous people throughout the 20th century. Each of the 101 meetings is covered by Brown in exactly 1001 words. The pieces form a daisy chain: one of the participants in the first encounter carries over to the next encounter, meeting someone new, and so on. Some meetings are pointed: H.G. Wells's report on time spent with Stalin captured the self-deluding nature of leftist enthusiasm for the USSR

in the 1930s as well as Wells's smugness in his own judgments. Some are poignant: Princess Grace advises the younger Princess Diana on living in the spotlight. President Richard Nixon gives a drug-addled Elvis a Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs special agent badge. You won't find Grand History in this volume, but it has much to say about the perils of celebrity and the oddly sociable animals we humans are. A prefatory "Note to the U.S. Edition" offers biographical notes on a dozen of the men and women who may be less well known to American readers. **VERDICT** This book is likely to be vastly popular. Once most readers pick it up, they won't be able to put it down.—David Keymer, Modesto, CA

Craughwell, Thomas J. *Thomas Jefferson's Crème Brûlée: How a Founding Father and His Slave James Hemings Introduced French Cuisine to America.* Quirk.

Sept. 2012. c.258p. bibliog. index. ISBN 9781594745782. \$24.95. HIST

Drawing from the wealth of works available by or on Thomas Jefferson, Craughwell (*Stealing Lincoln's Body*) offers a nice introduction to the Founding Father's gastronomic pursuits during his time as U.S. Minister to France. Jefferson traveled to Paris in 1784, along with his daughter Martha and his slave James Hemings, to begin the five-year diplomatic post. A lover of good food and wine, Jefferson had a plan for Hemings: to master French cooking. Hemings mastered not only the cooking but the language as well. Upon his return to the States, Hemings brought French cuisine to the American upper class. His new ability earned him his liberty, as Jefferson had promised to free him if Hemings would first train a new cook (he trained his brother Peter). Four appendixes cover wine, vegetables, African meals at Monticello, and 12 of Heming's recipes. **VERDICT** Craughwell capably sets the scene and places his story in historical context, with a focus on Jefferson's time in France and the gastronomic angle. The book succeeds more as an overview of Jefferson's experiences than of Hemings's. Not for specialists, whether foodies or Founding Father scholars, but some lay readers will enjoy it.—Lisa A. Ennis, Univ. of Alabama at Birmingham Lib.

★ **Masur, Louis P.** *Lincoln's Hundred Days: The Emancipation Proclamation and the War for the Union.* Belknap: Harvard Univ. Sept. 2012. c.364p. illus. index. ISBN 9780674066908. \$29.95. HIST

There have been many recent fine books on the Emancipation Proclamation and its role in recasting the character of the country. Masur (*American studies & history*, Rut-

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