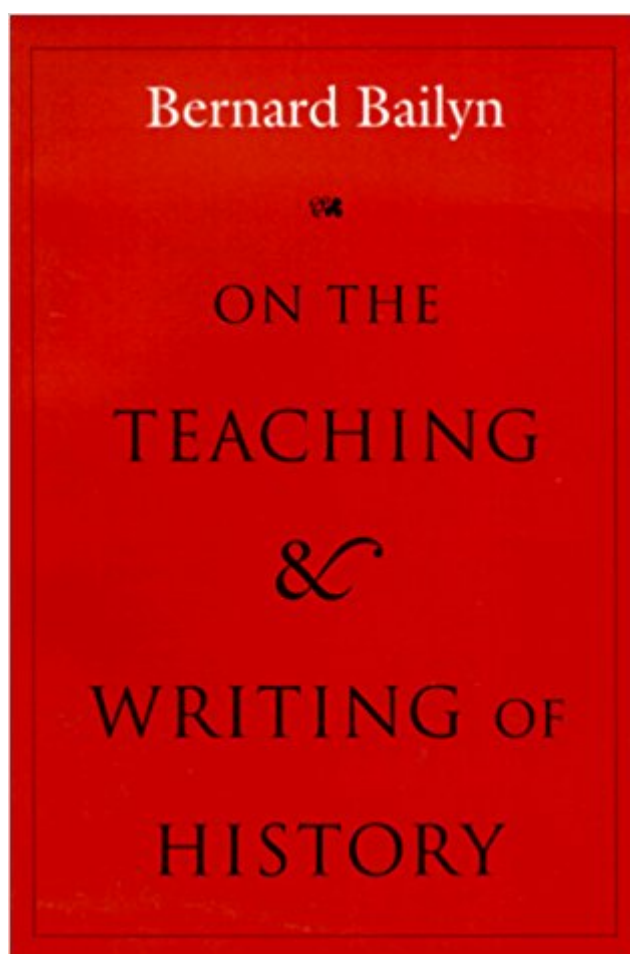


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On The Teaching And Writing Of History: Responses To A Series Of Questions



Synopsis

Bailyn, a professor at Harvard and winner of the Pulitzer Prize, writes of the impossibility of teaching history without bias, and that history itself is constantly open to new interpretations and viewpoints.

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Customer Reviews

These musings by historian Bailyn, a recipient of both a Pulitzer Prize (*Voyagers to the West*) and a National Book Award (*The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*), are based on informal discussions he held as a Montgomery Fellow at Dartmouth College. He thoughtfully remarks upon the validity of historical data that are now made available by computer technology, the creative differences among writing fiction, biography and history, and the importance of placing people and events within the contexts of their times. Bailyn also discusses the impacts of women's studies and current political ideologies on his field. His comments are informed by his passion for teaching history and by his belief that knowledge of the past is crucial to understanding the present. History Book Club alternate. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This slender volume is based on two tape-recorded interviews with the renowned Harvard historian conducted in 1991 while he was a Montgomery Fellow at Dartmouth College. This "conversation" provides a fascinating if somewhat rambling account of Bailyn's views of the nature of historical writing and teaching. Although specialists will find little that is new here, two points stand out: his

concern that testing students in history courses overemphasizes historiography at the expense of "History," and his fierce belief that written history, in spite of its lack of pure objectivity, is not just another fiction, as some postmodernists would have us believe. An interesting series of ruminations that should be required reading for all beginning history majors and teachers. Anthony O.

Edmonds, Ball State Univ., Muncie, Ind. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Historian Bernard Bailyn answers a series of questions about the field of history as well as what the title states, *ON THE TEACHING AND WRITING OF HISTORY*. He comments dwell on all gamuts from historiography to the teaching of the subject at the college and high school level, and he provides no nonsense and succinct responses. After reading the book, one can see that Bailyn has had many experiences during his years within the profession, which makes the book interesting. Three points stood out in his conversations. First, Bailyn comments on one of the basic premises to understanding history. In terms of approaching the subject with an understanding, Bailyn states as well as many historians, that in order to understand a particular period or event in history, one must look within the context of its own time without the present in mind. And furthermore, history is distant or a different world (51). For those who have already studied history, this is the standard approach when first attempting to read a document, such as a journal or letter that may have been written hundreds of years ago; one must look through their eyes and experience. Second, his approach to teaching the subject at different levels from a teacher-student perspective, be it undergraduate or graduate, makes a difference in order to effectively teach the course. And third, Bailyn's perspective on implementing all histories within the historical narrative that may not have been studied or included before; this is a hopeful thought that the study of the past is a never ending task. Overall, the book provides an insightful view to studying, teaching, and writing about history from an eminent historian. In addition, *ON THE TEACHING AND WRITING OF HISTORY* may be a good book to refer to or a reminder of what the subject of history is all about.

.I think it is time for Bailyn's work to come back into fashion. There should be a "love" button for this book. The question and answer format is a delight. Bailyn's advice is sensible, thoughtful, fatherly. His tone is refreshingly straight-forward. Yes, read this book. It is a keeper. Kim Burdick Stanton, Delaware

Just what this country needs to learn - how to approach history without manipulative distortions.

Someone had the inspired idea of having one of the greatest living historians take part in an interview on his craft and profession. The result, ably edited and presented by Edward Connery Latham, is one of the wisest and most accessible books ever written about writing history. Bailyn's work spans the range of historical scholarship, and he is perhaps the most influential historian of the second half of the twentieth century; the list of his graduate students that appeared in the 1991 collection of essays published in his honor is in turn an honor roll of the nation's most creative, able, and productive historians. I would recommend this book enthusiastically to anyone who is considering entering the historical profession or anyone who simply wants to understand what it is that historians do. The questions, by Professors Jere R. Daniell and Charles T. Wood of Dartmouth, are incisive and provocative, and Bailyn's answers are uniformly enlightening and engaging. Everyone having a role in the creation of this wonderful book is to be congratulated.--
Richard B. Bernstein, Adjunct Professor of Law, New York Law School

Bernard Bailyn, brilliant historian, answers a series of questions at Dartmouth College while in residence there on the subject of writing and teaching history. To the average reader, this guide will be not be hard to read, but probably not very necessary unless there is an intent to teach undergraduate or graduate students in a small class setting or if research is in process to complete a larger work on history. The book contains practical knowledge for all history teachers and offers some very general assumptions that must be kept in mind whether teaching or reporting on history. Well written and constructed, but intended for the serious historian.

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