

history wars the enola gay and other battles for the american past

****History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past****

history wars the enola gay and other battles for the american past have long captured the imagination of historians, politicians, and the public alike. These conflicts are not fought on battlefields but in museums, classrooms, and public discourse, where differing narratives about America's historical events compete for prominence. Among the most emblematic of these disputes is the controversy surrounding the Enola Gay—the B-29 bomber that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima in 1945. This singular episode encapsulates broader debates about memory, morality, and national identity in the United States.

What Are the History Wars?

The term "history wars" refers to the contentious debates over how history should be interpreted, remembered, and taught. In the American context, these debates often revolve around sensitive topics such as slavery, the Civil War, the treatment of Native Americans, and America's role in global conflicts. At the heart of these disputes lies a fundamental question: whose story gets told, and how?

The Enola Gay controversy is a prime example. It highlights the clash between different generations and ideological groups over how to confront difficult aspects of the past. These history wars are more than academic squabbles; they influence educational curricula, museum exhibits, public monuments, and even political rhetoric.

The Enola Gay Controversy: A Case Study in History Wars

Background of the Enola Gay

The Enola Gay was the aircraft that dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, effectively ending World War II in the Pacific. For decades, the Enola Gay was celebrated as a symbol of American military prowess and a necessary action to save lives by hastening Japan's surrender.

However, as public consciousness evolved, so did the perspectives on this event. The immense devastation and civilian casualties caused by the bomb raised moral questions that challenged the earlier narrative of unmitigated heroism.

The Smithsonian Exhibition Debate

In 1995, the Smithsonian Institution planned an exhibition marking the 50th anniversary of the atomic bombings, prominently featuring the Enola Gay. The proposed exhibit aimed to present a balanced view, including the horrors experienced by Japanese civilians.

This approach sparked fierce backlash from veterans, conservative politicians, and certain segments of the public who felt the exhibit dishonored American troops and undermined the justification for the bombings. Critics accused the Smithsonian of revisionism and political correctness gone awry.

Ultimately, the controversy led to a watered-down exhibition that downplayed the human cost of the bombings and emphasized American heroism. This episode became a defining moment in the history wars, illustrating how public history can become a battleground for competing values and memories.

Broader Battles for the American Past

The Enola Gay controversy is one among many history wars that have shaped modern American identity. Let's explore other significant battles where interpretations of history have sparked debate.

The Civil War and Its Legacies

The American Civil War remains one of the most contested events in U.S. history. Disagreements over how to interpret causes, consequences, and symbols of the war continue to provoke strong emotions.

- **Confederate Monuments:** The presence of Confederate statues in public spaces has been a flashpoint. Supporters argue these monuments honor heritage, while opponents see them as glorifications of slavery and racism.
- **Textbook Debates:** School curricula often wrestle with how to present slavery and Reconstruction, reflecting broader societal struggles over race and memory.

These battles reveal how history wars extend into education and public spaces, shaping national discourse on race relations and justice.

Native American History and Representation

Another critical front in the history wars involves the portrayal of Native American experiences. For centuries, mainstream narratives often marginalized or misrepresented Indigenous peoples.

In recent decades, efforts to correct these omissions and celebrate Native histories have gained momentum. However, debates persist over:

- The use of Native American mascots in sports teams.
- The portrayal of colonization and its impacts.
- The inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in textbooks and museums.

These discussions are vital for fostering a more inclusive and accurate understanding of America's past.

The Vietnam War and Public Memory

The Vietnam War also triggered intense history wars, especially as public opinion shifted dramatically during and after the conflict. Veterans' experiences, anti-war protests, and government policies have all been contested in the public eye.

Memorials like the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., became sites of negotiation—between honoring sacrifice and confronting the war's controversies. The war's portrayal in media and education continues to evolve, reflecting ongoing debates about patriotism, dissent, and national purpose.

Why Do History Wars Matter?

Understanding the history wars, including the dispute over the Enola Gay, is crucial because they reveal how history is not just about the past—it's about power, identity, and values in the present.

Influence on Education and Policy

These debates influence what is taught in schools, shaping generations' understanding of their country. Decisions about curriculum content impact civic knowledge and social cohesion.

Shaping National Identity

How a nation remembers its past affects how it sees itself and its place in the world. The stories chosen for commemoration or omission reflect collective values and priorities.

Encouraging Critical Engagement

History wars encourage citizens to critically engage with history, questioning simplistic narratives and seeking complexity. This process can foster empathy and deeper understanding.

Navigating History Wars: Tips for Engaging with

Contested Pasts

Engaging with history wars requires sensitivity and openness. Here are some tips for navigating these complex debates:

1. **Seek Multiple Perspectives:** Explore diverse sources, including marginalized voices, to gain a fuller picture.
2. **Understand Context:** Consider the historical circumstances and motivations behind actions and interpretations.
3. **Recognize Emotional Stakes:** Acknowledge that history touches identities and can evoke strong feelings.
4. **Promote Dialogue:** Encourage respectful conversations that allow for differing viewpoints.
5. **Stay Informed:** Keep up with ongoing scholarship and public debates to understand evolving interpretations.

The Role of Museums and Memorials in History Wars

Museums and memorials are often at the center of history wars, serving as physical spaces where narratives are constructed and contested.

- **Interpretive Choices:** Curators decide which stories to highlight and how to present them, balancing education, commemoration, and politics.
- **Public Engagement:** Exhibits can invite visitors to reflect on difficult histories, promoting awareness and empathy.
- **Controversy and Change:** Public pushback can lead to revisions or removals of exhibits, showing how history is continually renegotiated.

The Enola Gay exhibition controversy exemplifies these dynamics, underscoring museums' roles as arenas for public memory battles.

Looking Forward: The Future of History Wars in America

As America continues to confront its complex past, history wars will likely persist. New issues—such as debates over immigration history, LGBTQ+ rights, and climate change—will add layers to the ongoing conversation about national memory.

Technology and social media also transform how history is shared and debated, amplifying diverse voices but sometimes deepening divisions.

Ultimately, embracing the challenges of history wars can lead to a richer, more nuanced understanding of the American past—one that acknowledges triumphs and tragedies alike.

In exploring history wars the Enola Gay and other battles for the American past, we come to appreciate that history is never static. It is a living dialogue that shapes who we are and who we aspire to be. By engaging thoughtfully with these debates, we not only honor the complexity of history but also contribute to a more informed and compassionate society.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is 'History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past' about?

It is a book by Edward T. Linenthal that explores the controversies and debates surrounding the display of the Enola Gay, the airplane that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, and how these debates reflect broader conflicts over American history and memory.

Why was the Enola Gay exhibit controversial?

The exhibit was controversial because it presented different perspectives on the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, including the human suffering caused, which some veterans and politicians felt was unpatriotic and critical of the United States' actions during World War II.

What are the 'history wars' referred to in the book's title?

The 'history wars' refer to the conflicts over how American history should be interpreted and presented, particularly in public spaces like museums and textbooks, often involving debates over patriotism, memory, and historical accountability.

How did the controversy over the Enola Gay exhibit impact museum practices?

The controversy led to increased sensitivity and debate among museums about how to present difficult historical events, balancing multiple perspectives while addressing public and political pressures.

Who is Edward T. Linenthal, the author of the book?

Edward T. Linenthal is a historian and expert on public memory and commemoration, known for his work on the cultural history of war and the politics of historical memory in the United States.

Additional Resources

History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past

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encapsulate an ongoing cultural and political struggle over how the United States interprets, commemorates, and teaches its own history. This phenomenon has manifested in numerous controversies, museum exhibits, public monuments, and educational curricula, reflecting deep tensions about national identity, memory, and the moral complexities of America's past actions. Among the most emblematic episodes in these history wars is the debate surrounding the Enola Gay, the B-29 bomber that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima in 1945. This incident, and others like it, reveal how history is not merely recorded but actively contested terrain.

The Enola Gay Controversy: A Case Study in Historical Memory

In 1995, the Smithsonian Institution planned an exhibit to mark the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, featuring the Enola Gay. The exhibit aimed to provide a comprehensive view of the event, including the devastation wrought by the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as well as the broader context of the war. However, the proposed presentation ignited fierce backlash from veterans' groups, politicians, and conservative commentators who accused the Smithsonian of "revisionism" and of portraying the United States in a negative light.

This controversy highlighted several key issues central to the history wars the Enola Gay controversy represents. Critics argued that emphasizing Japanese civilian suffering risked overshadowing the role of the bomb in hastening the end of World War II and saving American lives. Defenders of the exhibit, meanwhile, stressed the importance of confronting the full moral complexity of the event, including the human cost. The Smithsonian ultimately revised the exhibit to present a more traditional celebratory narrative, illustrating how public history can be shaped by political pressures and cultural sensitivities.

Historical Interpretation and National Identity

The debate around the Enola Gay exhibit reflects broader questions about how Americans construct their national identity through history. History wars often revolve around the tension between patriotic narratives that emphasize heroism, sacrifice, and triumph, and critical perspectives that highlight injustice, oppression, or moral ambiguity. In the case of the atomic bomb, the dominant narrative for decades framed the bombing as a necessary and justified action to end the war. However, shifting attitudes and increased

historical scholarship have complicated this view.

These conflicting interpretations influence not only museum exhibits but also textbooks, public monuments, and political discourse. For example, the way textbooks describe the bombing varies significantly across states, influenced by local politics and educational standards. Similarly, debates over Confederate monuments and the portrayal of slavery and civil rights history demonstrate how history wars extend well beyond World War II narratives.

Other Battles in the American History Wars

The Enola Gay controversy is just one episode in a series of cultural conflicts over the American past. Other significant flashpoints include the debates over the legacy of the Civil War, the Vietnam War, and more recently, issues surrounding immigration history and indigenous peoples.

The Civil War and Confederate Monuments

One of the most visible and contentious arenas of the history wars involves the legacy of the Civil War and Confederate symbols. For decades, many Southern states erected monuments celebrating Confederate leaders and soldiers, often during periods of racial tension and civil rights struggles. Critics argue these monuments glorify a racist past and perpetuate systemic inequality, while supporters claim they honor heritage and regional pride.

The removal or preservation of these statues has sparked protests, legal battles, and political debates, reflecting deeper disagreements over how to reconcile America's history of slavery and segregation with its ideals of equality and justice. This battle is emblematic of the broader challenge of balancing remembrance with accountability.

Vietnam War Memory and Historical Reassessment

The Vietnam War remains another site of intense historical contestation. Initially framed by the government as a necessary stand against communism, public sentiment shifted dramatically as the war dragged on, leading to widespread protests and a reevaluation of American foreign policy. The history wars surrounding Vietnam involve not only debates about the war's justification but also the treatment of veterans and the war's cultural representation in film, literature, and education.

Vietnam's contested memory contrasts with the more unanimous national pride often associated with World War II, underscoring how historical consensus fluctuates over time and depends on political and social contexts.

Indigenous History and Reconciliation Efforts

Another crucial dimension of the history wars relates to the history and rights of Native American peoples. For much of American history, indigenous narratives were marginalized or erased in mainstream historical accounts. Contemporary disputes focus on issues such as the portrayal of indigenous peoples in textbooks, the recognition of treaties, and the restitution of cultural artifacts.

These battles often involve efforts to correct historical injustices and promote a more inclusive understanding of the American past. The inclusion of indigenous perspectives challenges traditional narratives and calls for a reexamination of foundational events such as colonization and westward expansion.

Implications for Public Memory and Education

The history wars the Enola Gay episode exemplifies have far-reaching implications for how history is taught and remembered in the United States. Museums, schools, and public commemorations serve as battlegrounds where competing versions of history vie for legitimacy. This dynamic shapes public consciousness and influences how future generations understand their country's past.

Challenges in Historical Representation

Presenting complex historical events like the atomic bombings or the Civil War inevitably involves difficult choices about emphasis, language, and interpretation. Balancing patriotism with critical reflection can be contentious. Overemphasizing one perspective risks oversimplification, whereas too much focus on controversy can alienate certain audiences.

Professional historians and curators must navigate these challenges carefully, ensuring that history remains accessible, accurate, and thought-provoking. This requires openness to multiple viewpoints and a commitment to contextualizing events within broader social, political, and ethical frameworks.

The Role of Politics and Media

Politics and media play a significant role in intensifying or diffusing history wars. Politicians may leverage historical narratives to advance ideological agendas, while media coverage can amplify controversies or promote dialogue. Social media platforms have further complicated these

dynamics by enabling rapid dissemination of competing historical interpretations, sometimes fostering polarization.

Understanding the interplay between history, politics, and media is essential for appreciating why battles over the American past remain so persistent and emotionally charged.

Looking Ahead: Navigating America's Historical Divides

The history wars surrounding the Enola Gay and other pivotal moments in American history reveal the ongoing struggle to define what it means to remember and honor the past. As the nation grapples with issues of race, identity, and justice, historical narratives will continue to evolve, reflecting changing values and new scholarship.

Engaging with these debates thoughtfully can foster greater historical literacy and empathy, encouraging Americans to confront uncomfortable truths while celebrating shared achievements. The challenge lies not in erasing conflict but in embracing a nuanced and inclusive approach to history that acknowledges complexity without losing sight of enduring principles.

History Wars The Enola Gay And Other Battles For The American Past

history wars the enola gay and other battles for the american past: History Wars Edward T. Linenthal, Tom Engelhardt, 1996-08-15 From the taming of the West to the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, the portrayal of the past has become a battleground at the heart of American politics. What kind of history Americans should read, see, or fund is no longer merely a matter of professional interest to teachers, historians, and museum curators. Everywhere now, history is increasingly being held hostage, but to what end and why? In *History Wars*, eight prominent historians consider the angry swirl of emotions that now surrounds public memory. Included are trenchant essays by Paul Boyer, John W. Dower, Tom Engelhardt, Richard H. Kohn, Edward Linenthal, Micahel S. Sherry, Marilyn B. Young, and Mike Wallace.

history wars the enola gay and other battles for the american past: History Wars Doug Munro, 2021-10-21 'In 1993, Manning Clark came under severe (posthumous) attack in the pages of *Quadrant* by none other than Peter Ryan, who had published five of the six volumes of Clark's epic *A History of Australia*. In applying what he called "an overdue axe to a tall poppy", Ryan lambasted the *History* as "an imposition on Australian credulity" and declared its author a fraud, both as a historian and a person. This unprecedented public assault by a publisher on his best-selling author was a sensation at the time and remains lodged in the public memory. In *History Wars*, Doug Munro forensically examines the right and wrongs of Ryan's allegations, concluding that Clark was more sinned against than sinning and that Ryan repeatedly misrepresented the situation. More than just telling a story, Munro places the Ryan-Clark controversy within the context of Australia's *History Wars*. This book is an illuminating saga of that ongoing contest.' — James Curran, University of

Sydney 'The Ryan-Clark controversy ... speaks to the place of Manning Clark in Australia's national imagination. Had Ryan taken his axe to another historian, it's unlikely that we would be still talking about it 30 years later. But Clark was the author and keeper of Australia's national story, however imperfect his scholarship and however blinkered that story. Few, if any, historians in the Anglo-American world have occupied the space that Clark occupied by dint of will, force of personality, and felicity of pen.' — Donald Wright, University of New Brunswick

history wars the enola gay and other battles for the american past: Geschichte der USA Volker Depkat, 2016-03-02 The United States of America are the only remaining superpower in an increasingly confusing world at the start of the twenty-first century. This volume discusses the stages of the country's rise to the status of world power and analyses the USA's fascinating and complex history on the basis of several fundamental subjects. The survey starts with the experiment of establishing a democracy, which was initiated through revolution and is unfinished even today. The USA's development to become a superpower enjoying world hegemony was equally uneven - a rise that has also acquired missionary aspects under the banner of the 'empire of liberty'. Another focus in the account is the way in which new, decidedly American values and a modern, consumption-oriented, technology-saturated lifestyle - the 'American way of life' - emerged from contact in North America between the widest possible variety of cultures and ethnic groups. This lifestyle by no means levelled out the existing ethnic and cultural pluralism of American society. With topics revolving around politics, society, business and culture, the book reveals the lines of historical development in the USA that have been and continue to be signposts for the modern world.

history wars the enola gay and other battles for the american past: Krieg und Militär im Film des 20. Jahrhunderts Bernhard Chiari, Matthias Rogg, Wolfgang Schmidt, 2009-12-16 Kaum ein anderes Medium hat die Erinnerung und Wahrnehmung von organisierter Gewalt und Krieg im 20. Jahrhundert mehr geformt als der Film. In international vergleichender Perspektive beleuchtet dieses Buch das Spannungsverhältnis von Film als einem Medium der Unterhaltung und politischer Meinungsbildung. Zur Sprache kommen neben methodischen Fragen die Rezeption im Ersten Weltkrieg und in der Weimarer Republik, die Affinität von Militär und Film im Nationalsozialismus sowie die Funktion von Militär- und Kriegsfilmen im Kalten Krieg. Das Spektrum reicht so von militärspezifischen Inhalten über Fragen der narrativen Konstruktion, der cineastischen Form bis zu den Mechanismen politischer Instrumentalisierung und gesellschaftlicher Wirkung von Filmen.

history wars the enola gay and other battles for the american past: Geschichtskultur und Konflikt Dietrich Seybold, 2005 Wenn ganze Gesellschaften mit sich im Streite liegen, ist es offenkundig: Geschichte ist ein Politikum. Die Diskussionen um die Vergangenheit wühlen auf, spalten die Parteien und beeinflussen das öffentliche Klima in einem Land. Was aber sind Erinnerungskonflikte, genauer: was sind historisch-politische Kontroversen? Was sind ihre Ursachen, welche Folgen haben sie? Inwieweit betreffen sie die Geschichtswissenschaft, die den Streit bald irritiert verfolgt, bald darin verwickelt wird? Diese Arbeit befasst sich mit den Geschichtsdebatten der 1990er Jahre und gibt einen Überblick über deren Verlauf in verschiedenen Ländern. Sie diskutiert Methoden der Analyse historisch-politischer Kontroversen und stellt eigene Methoden vor, die an einem Fallbeispiel erprobt werden: der US-amerikanischen Debatte über die Symbolfigur 'Kolumbus' in den Jahren 1991/92, anlässlich der Fünfhundertjahrfeier der Landung des Kolumbus in der Neuen Welt.

history wars the enola gay and other battles for the american past: Geschichte der USA Manfred Berg, 2013-10-18 Das Buch informiert konzise und kompetent über die Geschichte der USA von der Kolonialzeit bis zur Gegenwart sowie über die prägenden Entwicklungen der neueren US-Geschichtswissenschaft. Im Mittelpunkt dieser Einführung stehen die „klassischen“ Themen der amerikanischen Geschichte: der Kulturkontakt und Konflikt mit den Ureinwohnern, die Westexpansion, die Sklaverei, Rassenbeziehungen und ethnische Vielfalt, die Einwanderung, der religiöse Pluralismus, die Gründung und Entwicklung der föderalen Republik, die Ausbildung der Demokratie, die Entwicklung der modernen Industrie- und Konsumgesellschaft sowie der Aufstieg

der USA zur globalen Supermacht.

history wars the enola gay and other battles for the american past: A Concise History of History Daniel Woolf, 2019-01-17 An incisive account of the entire history of historical writing worldwide by one of the leading intellectuals in the field.

history wars the enola gay and other battles for the american past: A Companion to American Foreign Relations Robert Schulzinger, 2008-04-15 This is an authoritative volume of historiographical essays that survey the state of U.S. diplomatic history. The essays cover the entire range of the history of American foreign relations from the colonial period to the present. They discuss the major sources and analyze the most influential books and articles in the field. Includes discussions of new methodological approaches in diplomatic history.

history wars the enola gay and other battles for the american past: *Encyclopedia of War and American Society* Peter Karsten, 2006 Publisher description.

history wars the enola gay and other battles for the american past: Aufklärung, Bildung, "Histotainment"? Michele Barricelli, Julia Hornig, 2008 Der Sammelband präsentiert die Beiträge der gleichnamigen Tagung im März 2007, auf der sich Fachwissenschaftler und Praktiker aus den Bereichen Geschichtsdidaktik, Politische Bildung und zeithistorische Forschung zu einem interdisziplinären Dialog trafen. Was vermögen diese Arbeitsbereiche zu Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts im Hinblick auf ein zukunftsfähiges historisch-politisches Bewusstsein in unserer Gesellschaft zu leisten? Zu dem Problem des lernenden Umgangs mit zeitgeschichtlichen Themen werden aktuelle akademische Positionen bestimmt, empirische Erkundungen diskutiert und Ansätze aus relevanten Praxisfeldern vorgestellt. Im Mittelpunkt der Betrachtung stehen sowohl Heranwachsende als Lernsubjekte in Schulen, Jugendbegegnungsstätten und Museen als auch die weitreichenden Bildungseffekte massenmedialer Angebote in der Gesellschaft.

history wars the enola gay and other battles for the american past: *Performing Flight* Scott Magelssen, 2020-01-01 Performing Flight sheds new light on moments in the history of US aviation and spaceflight through the lens of performance studies. From pioneering aviator Bessie Coleman to the emerging industry of space tourism, performance has consistently shaped public perception of the enterprise of flight and has guaranteed its success as a mode of entertainment, travel, research, and warfare. The book reveals fundamental connections between performance and human aviation and space travel over the past 100 years, beginning with the early aerial entertainers known as barnstormers (named after itinerant 19th century theater troupes) to the performative history of the Enola Gay and its pilot Paul Tibbets, who dropped the bomb on Hiroshima, thus ushering in the atomic age. The book also explores the phenomenon of "the pilot voice"; the creation of the American Astronaut, on whose performative success the Cold War, the Space Race, and funding of the US Space Program all depended; and the performative strategies employed to cement notions of space tourism as both manifest destiny and an escape route from a failed planet. A final chapter addresses the four hijacked flights of 9/11 and their representations in discourse and in memorials. Performing Flight effectively and imaginatively demonstrates the ways in which performance and flight in the United States have been inextricably linked for more than a century.

history wars the enola gay and other battles for the american past: *Das gespaltene Haus* Manfred Berg, 2024-06-15 Wie die amerikanische Demokratie zum Krisenfall wurde Manfred Berg, einer der besten Kenner der USA, erzählt die lange Geschichte einer fortschreitenden Spaltung, die das Land an den Rand eines neuen Bürgerkriegs geführt hat. Sein glänzend geschriebenes Buch bietet eine umfassende Darstellung und Analyse der politischen, wirtschaftlichen, sozialen und kulturellen Konflikte, die Donald Trumps Aufstieg ermöglicht haben, aber nicht verschwinden werden, wenn er von der politischen Bühne abtritt. In den 1950er Jahren galten die USA als Vorbild einer stabilen Demokratie, in der ein breiter Konsens über die gesellschaftliche und politische Ordnung herrschte. In den 1960er Jahren jedoch zerbrach dieser Konsens in den Auseinandersetzungen über den Vietnamkrieg, den Rassenkonflikt und die Kulturrevolution der Radical Sixties. In den folgenden Jahrzehnten veränderten Globalisierung, Einwanderung,

Wertewandel und Medienrevolution die amerikanische Gesellschaft dramatisch, führten aber gleichzeitig zu unerbittlichen Kulturkämpfen und einem lange unterschätzten Polarisierungs- und Radikalisierungsschub, der insbesondere das konservative Milieu erfasste. Heute stehen sich rote und blaue Staaten, Republikaner und Demokraten, Konservative und Liberale als unversöhnliche Feinde gegenüber. Die amerikanische Demokratie ist zum Krisenfall geworden. Wer die Krise der amerikanischen Demokratie und ihre jüngere Geschichte verstehen will, dem bietet dies Buch umfassende historische Orientierung.

history wars the enola gay and other battles for the american past: Strategic Bombing by the United States in World War II Stewart Halsey Ross, 2015-10-03 The United States relied heavily on bombing to defeat the Germans and the Japanese in World War II, and air raids were touted as precision bombing in American propaganda. But was precision possible over cloud-covered Europe or a darkened Japanese countryside? Could the vaunted Norden optical bombsight in fact drop bombs into pickle barrels as advertised? Were the American aircrews well trained and well protected? How good were their airplanes? What were the results of the costly raids? This work sets suppositions against facts surrounding the United States' use of strategic bombing in World War II. Chapters cover the events leading up to World War II; the start of the war; the seers and the planners; the airplanes, bombs, bombsights, and aircrews; the planes Germany used to defend itself against American planes; the five cities (Hamburg, Dresden, Tokyo, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki) that experienced the most destruction; and the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey of the damage done by aerial bombing. The book also probes the government's myth-building statements that supported America's view of itself as a uniquely humanitarian nation, and analyzes the role played by interservice rivalry--battleship admirals against bomber generals.

history wars the enola gay and other battles for the american past: D-Day Remembered Michael Dolski, 2016-04-15 D-Day, the Allied invasion of northwestern France in June 1944, has remained in the forefront of American memories of the Second World War to this day. Depictions in books, news stories, documentaries, museums, monuments, memorial celebrations, speeches, games, and Hollywood spectacles have overwhelmingly romanticized the assault as an event in which citizen-soldiers—the everyday heroes of democracy—engaged evil foes in a decisive clash fought for liberty, national redemption, and world salvation. In D-Day Remembered, Michael R. Dolski explores the evolution of American D-Day tales over the course of the past seven decades. He shows the ways in which that particular episode came to overshadow so many others in portraying the twentieth century's most devastating cataclysm as "the Good War." With depth and insight, he analyzes how depictions in various media, such as the popular histories of Stephen Ambrose and films like *The Longest Day* and *Saving Private Ryan*, have time and again reaffirmed cherished American notions of democracy, fair play, moral order, and the militant, yet non-militaristic, use of power for divinely sanctioned purposes. Only during the Vietnam era, when Americans had to confront an especially stark challenge to their pietistic sense of nationhood, did memories of D-Day momentarily fade. They soon reemerged, however, as the country sought to move beyond the lamentable conflict in Southeast Asia. Even as portrayals of D-Day have gone from sanitized early versions to more realistic acknowledgments of tactical mistakes and the horrific costs of the battle, the overarching story continues to be, for many, a powerful reminder of moral rectitude, military skill, and world mission. While the time to historicize this morality tale more fully and honestly has long since come, Dolski observes, the lingering positive connotations of D-Day indicate that the story is not yet finished.

history wars the enola gay and other battles for the american past: The Oxford Companion to American Military History ,

history wars the enola gay and other battles for the american past: Teaching History for the Common Good Keith C. Barton, Linda S. Levstik, 2004-07-13 In *Teaching History for the Common Good*, Barton and Levstik present a clear overview of competing ideas among educators, historians, politicians, and the public about the nature and purpose of teaching history, and they evaluate these debates in light of current research on students' historical thinking. In many cases,

disagreements about what should be taught to the nation's children and how it should be presented reflect fundamental differences that will not easily be resolved. A central premise of this book, though, is that systematic theory and research can play an important role in such debates by providing evidence of how students think, how their ideas interact with the information they encounter both in school and out, and how these ideas differ across contexts. Such evidence is needed as an alternative to the untested assumptions that plague so many discussions of history education. The authors review research on students' historical thinking and set it in the theoretical context of mediated action--an approach that calls attention to the concrete actions that people undertake, the human agents responsible for such actions, the cultural tools that aid and constrain them, their purposes, and their social contexts. They explain how this theory allows educators to address the breadth of practices, settings, purposes, and tools that influence students' developing understanding of the past, as well as how it provides an alternative to the academic discipline of history as a way of making decisions about teaching and learning the subject in schools. Beyond simply describing the factors that influence students' thinking, Barton and Levstik evaluate their implications for historical understanding and civic engagement. They base these evaluations not on the disciplinary study of history, but on the purpose of social education--preparing students for participation in a pluralist democracy. Their ultimate concern is how history can help citizens engage in collaboration toward the common good. In *Teaching History for the Common Good*, Barton and Levstik: *discuss the contribution of theory and research, explain the theory of mediated action and how it guides their analysis, and describe research on children's (and adults') knowledge of and interest in history; *lay out a vision of pluralist, participatory democracy and its relationship to the humanistic study of history as a basis for evaluating the perspectives on the past that influence students' learning; *explore four principal stances toward history (identification, analysis, moral response, and exhibition), review research on the extent to which children and adolescents understand and accept each of these, and examine how the stances might contribute to--or detract from--participation in a pluralist democracy; *address six of the principal tools of history (narrative structure, stories of individual achievement and motivation, national narratives, inquiry, empathy as perspective-taking, and empathy as caring); and *review research and conventional wisdom on teachers' knowledge and practice, and argue that for teachers to embrace investigative, multi-perspectival approaches to history they need more than knowledge of content and pedagogy, they need a guiding purpose that can be fulfilled only by these approaches--and preparation for participatory democracy provides such purpose. *Teaching History for the Common Good* is essential reading for history and social studies professionals, researchers, teacher educators, and students, as well as for policymakers, parents, and members of the general public who are interested in history education or in students' thinking and learning about the subject.

history wars the enola gay and other battles for the american past: Instrumentalizing the Past Jan Rydel, Stefan Troebst, 2022-09-20 In today's world, we can point to many international disputes and interstate conflicts fueled by past events. Historical resentments or memories of past suffering or fame are often used to justify political, economic and even territorial demands. Inter-state disputes and historical conflicts should be understood as evidence of political and social tensions related to active, serious differences in the assessment of the common past. The book explains the role of such conflicts in international relations and suggests ways of classifying them. It presents examples of the internationally relevant instrumentalisation of history from different regions of the world and outlines ways of overcoming them.

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Jennifer Wellington, 2017-09-21 What does it mean to display war? Examining a range of different exhibitions in Britain, Canada and Australia, Jennifer Wellington reveals complex imperial dynamics in the ways these countries developed diverging understandings of the First World War, despite their cultural, political and institutional similarities. While in Britain a popular narrative developed of the conflict as a tragic rupture with the past, Australia and Canada came to see it as engendering national birth through violence. Narratives of the war's meaning were deliberately constructed by individuals and groups pursuing specific agendas: to win the war and immortalise it at the same time. Drawing on a range of documentary and visual material, this book analyses how narratives of mass violence changed over time. Emphasising the contingent development of national and imperial war museums, it illuminates the way they acted as spaces in which official, academic and popular representations of this violent past intersect.

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