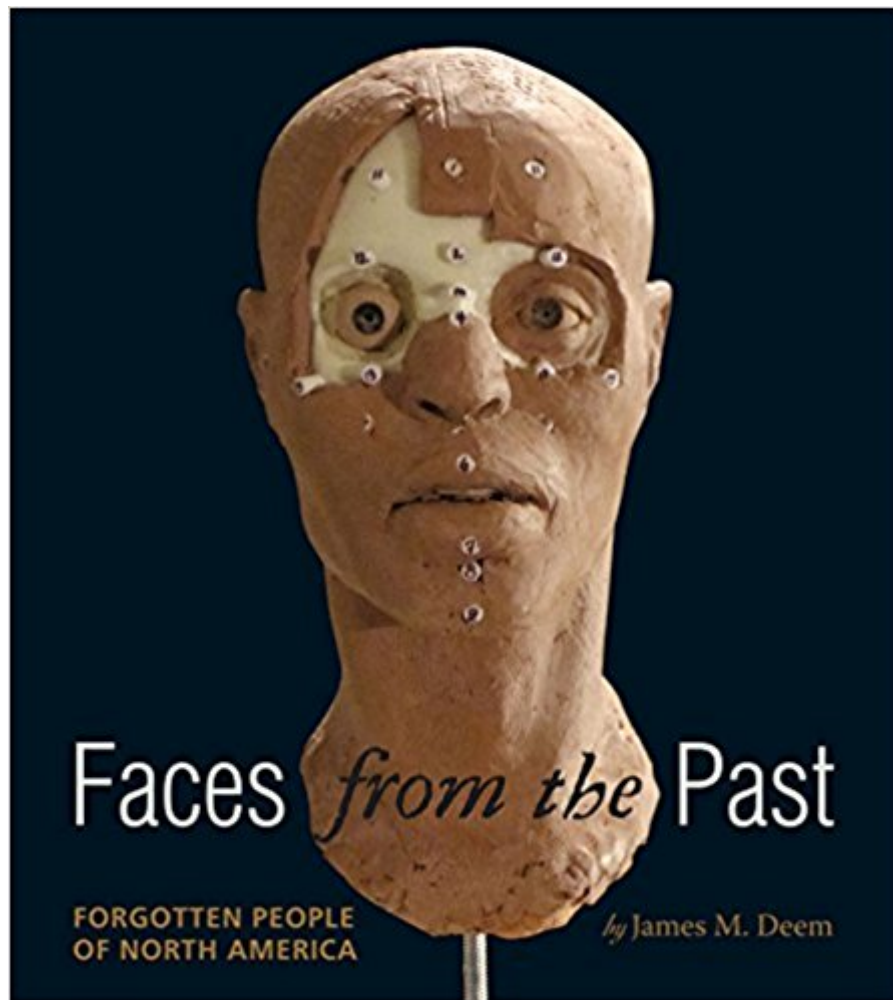




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Faces From The Past: Forgotten People Of North America



Synopsis

Once, no humans lived on the continent of North America; then they began to journey, the first migrants arriving perhaps 15,000 to 20,000 years ago. When a skeleton from long-ago centuries is discovered, scientists want to study it for information about the person's life and death, about her or his time and place in history. Sometimes artists are asked to reconstruct faces from the past using copies of their skulls. Then these nameless, unknown people can be "brought back to life"--remembered, and honored. Now, when their skeletons are discovered, their stories can be told.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 19 customer reviews

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Age Range: 12 - 15 years

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Gr 5 Up--Beginning with the startling photograph of a partially reconstructed face on the cover, this book effectively brings to life the people of North America forgotten by the history books. Beginning with the oldest existing mummified human remains--a man discovered in Spirit Cave, Nevada, dated to approximately 10,500 years ago--Deem moves forward chronologically to burials belonging to the Monacan tribe of Virginia (1000-1400), a French sailor traveling with La Salle (1686), the forgotten burial of a woman in colonial New York (1742), a rediscovered slave burial ground (1750-1790), and a Mexican soldier killed shortly after the Alamo (1836). He discusses the poor buried in an Almshouse Cemetery (1826-1926), a Buffalo Soldier (1865), and, finally, Chinese Miners in

Wyoming (1881). Each chapter highlights the hardships endured by these early Americans as documented by the bones they left behind and interpreted by anthropologists. A thorough explanation of the archaeological techniques used to exhume these forgotten remains is combined with the known history of each period to create a clear picture of the difficult lives the people uncovered in these forgotten burials faced. Further humanizing these forgotten people are the careful facial reconstructions painstakingly rendered by sculptors whose careful, scientific process is outlined in fascinating detail. Deem tactfully addresses the issue of excavating and displaying human remains and gives an emotional resonance to the lives of these early Americans through the inclusion of poems exploring some of the painful aspects of American history. Clear prose, pleasing layout, and crisp photographs combined with subject matter rarely explored in history books make this book an excellent choice for most collections.-Caroline Tesauro, Radford Public Library, VA (c) Copyright 2011. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Starred Review People live and people die, but once in a while they get to come back to shed light on their origins and societies. Deem, author of the Sibert Honor Book *Bodies from the Ice* (2008), introduces some of those people, from as far back as 10,000 years ago, buried and rediscovered. Now, their bodies and burial materials are making both historical and scientific contributions, thanks to the archaeologists, anthropologists, and forensic artists examining them. Beginning with the discovery of Spirit Cave Man, who was thought to be a thousand years old and turned out to be 10 times older, and ending with an African American Civil War soldier whose body was nabbed by grave robbers, this describes how the bodies were found, the stories surrounding them, and the science that elucidated them. In fact, this is as much a book about scientific techniques—especially that of facial reconstruction—as it is about history. Whether he is describing how a French sailor under the command of La Salle died in a shipwreck or the way twentieth-century inmates of an almshouse were treated, Deem's writing is riveting and his research deep. Illustrated with copious photographs and historical artifacts, the design's only small bump is the way the sidebars sometimes interrupt the flow of the text. Otherwise, a top-notch effort with solid back matter, too. Grades 6-10. --Ilene Cooper

I'm not certain I would have read this book if it hadn't been written by my friend Jim Deem. But now that I have read it, I am in awe of people like Jim and all the people who helped with his research (read the acknowledgments!) and their passion for learning about the history of our world and how to

make sense of it. Apart from the science of facial reconstruction, students in grades 5th & up can't help but learn about the various groups and periods of history depicted in the book. To read & wonder about how people lived and died in times gone by makes this a gem of a book. And then to motivate young people to think of careers in all the science related fields it takes to study something like facial reconstruction! What saddens me most is that school libraries continue to cut their book budgets and replace professionally trained librarians who would work hard to find books like this to add to library collections with "keepers of the books". Thanks to the National Science Teacher's Association for naming *FACES FROM THE PAST* to their 2013 list of outstanding science trade books. Perhaps that alone will help get this book into the hands of curious young people.

I bought this book to guide me while sculpting the underlying structure for faces and it's great for that. As an added bonus, the stories behind the skulls that they reconstruct are fascinating.

This is a very interesting and informational book filled with amazing photographs of the reconstruction /forensic sculptures of historic people from the past. using art and science faces are placed upon the skulls that have been excavated at archeological sites to give us a glimpse to the people in the past. great book for all ages! Barry s. Anderson

The good part: If you live in a particular region of America and are interested in some of the archaeology of graves in your area, this book can give you a regional look at what is being discovered. So, there are skeletons found in the Nevada desert, Virginia mountains, Gulf of Texas, Albany, NY (one downtown grave and one slave cemetery and one poorhouse cemetery -- LOTS of Albany!), a Mexican soldier from the battle of San Jacinto, a Buffalo Soldier in New Mexico territory, and Chinese miners from Wyoming. Each chapter of the book brings the particular historical time period details into focus, but the forensic science is very repetitive. For teachers, it would be best to assign one chapter to each group of students and let them present the historical period and discoveries about the skeletons. Reading this book straight through is frustratingly repetitive and not entertaining. However, as far as science/history for 5th and 6th graders, this book is a good choice. In small doses.

With the popularity of crime shows such as "CSI," you'd think that the art -- and it is an art -- of facial reconstruction would be thoroughly understood by now. You take a skull and, using various calibrations, build the face of a murder victim that can be shown to the public in hopes of identifying

the victim, and hopefully the killer. But "Faces From the Past: The Forgotten People of North America," a book aimed at the older child and young adult market, takes the process a step further by using facial reconstruction to show how our ancestors, some very distant, really looked and lived. There are some surprises along the way. Author James M. Deem drove many thousands of miles while compiling the information for this book, which is liberally sprinkled with photos of the facial reconstruction process. It spans a huge time period, from around 10,000 BC to 1881 AD. As skeletons are discovered, facial reconstruction artists are brought in to add "flesh" to the skull and create a lifelike replica of the person who died. The book starts with the discovery in 1940 of Spirit Cave, a small cave in southwestern Nevada where, Deem says, the descendants of the earliest people to come to North America lived about 10,000 BC. In that cave was an intact burial -- in itself a rarity because most graves were looted long ago. Eventually, a model of the skull was made and "fleshed out" to show what the dead man would have looked like in life. That turned out to be a bit of a surprise. The book goes through eight more reconstructions, including a stranded French sailor who was part of LaSalle's ill-fated expedition to what now is the Texas gulf coast, a servant in colonial times, a Mexican soldier from the battle of San Jacinto in which Texas won independence from Mexico, a "buffalo soldier" from the Civil War period and Chinese miners from Wyoming in the early 1880s. Some died violently, others not; but their graves have something to tell us about their times. This is an interesting book that explains the archaeology and reconstruction processes in a clear, not-too-technical way. It's as interesting for adults as it is for the younger crowd, and it plays off today's interest in crime scene investigative techniques.

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