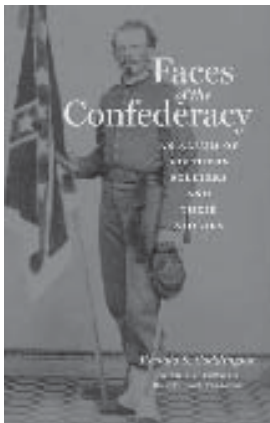


A Basket of Leaves: 99 Books That Capture the Spirit of Africa, by Geoff Wisner (289 pages, April 2008), consists of reviews and brief excerpts from books, both fiction and non-fiction, that encapsulate the best writing about each country in Africa. The authors are African (Chinua Achebe), Caribbean (V. S. Naipaul), American (Maya Angelou), and European (Lawrence Durrell); some are white, others black; the original languages include English, French, German, Portuguese, Polish, and Arabic; 28 were written or coauthored by women; and some will be difficult to locate. All are enticingly described and should inspire some budding Africanists to engage in some fascinating reading. An appendix lists Wisner's suggestions for further study—novels, poetry, plays, history, academic works, and photography—all arranged by country. \$25.95. Jacana Media. 978-1-77009-206-8.

Faces of the Confederacy: An Album of Southern Soldiers and Their Stories, by Ronald S. Coddington (320 pages, December 2008), brings to



life the fragmented backgrounds of 82 Confederate soldiers pictured on *cartes de visite* of the 1860s. Coddington has hit upon a unique and fascinating niche in the seemingly endless march of Civil War books. This one is a sequel to his

Faces of the Civil War (2004), which matched the images of ordinary Union privates, sergeants, lieutenants, and captains with brief memoirs of their war experiences. With Southern veterans the documentary trail is much harder to pick up, making the author's

biographical vignettes all the more extraordinary. The earnestness, dejection, and desperation on the faces of these men resonates with a modern audience, once their stories are known. \$29.95. Johns Hopkins University. 978-0-8018-9019-2.

Introduction to Fire in California, by David Carle (195 pages, August 2008), serves as a field guide to the physics, ecology, history, deterrence, and management of wildfires in California. Carle, who has already written similar guides to the state's water and air, examines the types of vegetation that are conducive to fire, firefighting tactics and weapons, and how best to become a fire-adapted resident. Online resources, references, and a glossary are provided. \$18.95. University of California. 978-0-520-25577-7.

The Marco Polo Odyssey, by Harry Rutstein (270 pages + DVD, September 2008), tells the story of three separate expeditions (1975, 1981, and 1985) in which the author became the first person, according to the Royal Geographic Society, to successfully follow the same eastward route to China as the 13th-century Venetian traveler Marco Polo. Rutstein intersperses the narrative of his own adventures with comparable passages from Marco Polo's *Description of the World* and numerous color photos. The DVD contains the 1981 documentary *On the Roof of the World with Marco Polo* that chronicles his second expedition over the rugged Hindu Kush and Karakoram mountains of northern Pakistan. \$27.95. Marco Polo Foundation/Bennett & Hastings. 978-0-9802076-0-6.

For those who want to know more about Marco Polo, the book to get is Laurence Bergreen's *Marco Polo: From Venice to Xanadu* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2007); a useful index makes up somewhat for its lack of maps. If you enjoy modern epic voyages, you might want to try *Who Needs a Road?* by Harold Stephens and Albert Podell (1968, reprinted in 1999 by Wolfenden), who traveled around the world in 1965 driving a

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