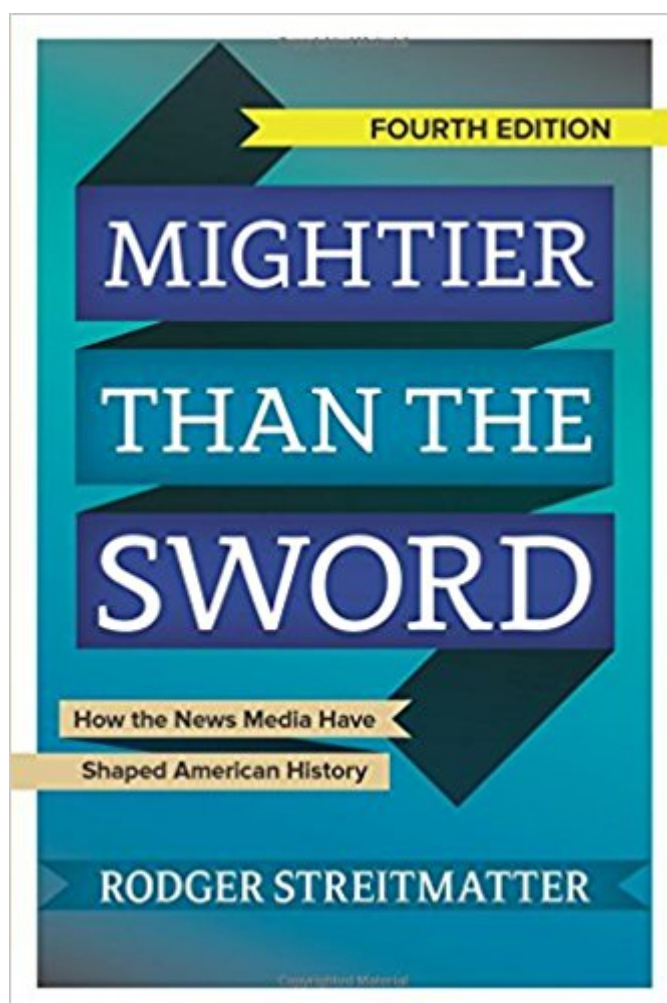


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# Mightier Than The Sword: How The News Media Have Shaped American History



## Synopsis

In this engaging examination of the media's influence on US history and politics, Rodger Streitmatter visits sixteen landmark episodes, from the American Revolution to the present-day fight for gay and lesbian marriage equality. In each of these cases, Streitmatter succinctly illustrates the enormous role that journalism has played in not merely recording this nation's history but also in actively shaping it. Mightier than the Sword offers students and professors a highly readable and accessible alternative to journalism history textbooks. Instead of trying to document every detail in the development of US media through dry, dull lists of names, dates, and headlines, this book focuses on sixteen discrete episodes that illustrate a point that is much larger than the sum of their parts: media have played and continue to play an enormous role in shaping this nation. The fourth edition features an entirely new chapter on the way US media have championed various gay and lesbian rights initiatives, from the 2003 Lawrence vs. Texas sodomy case through the June 2013 Supreme Court decision striking down DOMA (the Defense of Marriage Act). Balancing criticism and celebration of news media and exploring both print and electronic platforms, Mightier than the Sword provides students with a sense of the power and responsibility inherent in the institution of journalism.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“In succinct, engrossing prose, Streitmatter shows how courageous, effective communicators have accepted their own and their media's limitations to shape the outcome of events from

abolitionism to anti-Semitism, women's rights to civil rights, the Ku Klux Klan to Vietnam.

Booklist; An easy-to-digest . . . overview of the media's influence on American history and politics. . . . A fine introductory textbook for a journalism class.

Kirkus Reviews; A novel approach to journalism history, presenting key episodes in an engaging style bound to appeal to students and the general public alike.

Streitmatter's lucid prose draws on study of both primary and secondary source material to provide a provocative synthesis and serves as a basis for thoughtful examination of the role of the news media in American society.

Maurine H. Beasley, University of Maryland at College Park; A nice, tight package of meaningful topics; quite readable; balanced a fine work short but substantive; innovative in form and content accessible and insightful dynamic range of topics. A great supplemental text in a mass media survey or media and history course.

Charles Lewis, Minnesota State University; Accurate, engaging, and succinct. Provides ample starting point for further discussions and exploration; Very readable; the author has a sure hand on his history and makes it accessible to the reader; extensive bibliography is a real plus.

Joe Zubrick, University of Maine, Fort Kent; Streitmatter's book stands alone as the best thematic approach to history available. Students respond to the storytelling tone; the narratives connect the dates and people for them.

Susan English, Gonzaga University; Impressive. Many texts are chock-full of facts and figures that put students to sleep, not so with Streitmatter's accessible story-telling approach. The evolution of news, from the American revolution to journalism's current condition, is outlined in manageable chapters that capture the imagination.

Selene Phillips, University of Louisville; Exciting, easy to read, and something students will find different from that 15-lb. boring historical tome. It gives snippets of history but still leaves the reader with an understanding of the importance of the media in U.S. History. I highly recommend it.

Susan J. De Bonis, Georgia Southern University

Impressive. Many texts are chock-full of facts and figures that put students to sleep; not so with Streitmatter's accessible story-telling approach. The evolution of news, from the American Revolution to journalism's current condition, is outlined in manageable chapters that capture the imagination.

Selene Phillips, University of Louisville In this engaging examination of the news media's influence on US history and politics, Rodger Streitmatter visits sixteen landmark episodes, from the American Revolution to the Civil Rights Movement to the present-day Barack Obama administration. In each of these case studies, Streitmatter illustrates the enormous role that

journalism has played in not merely recording this nation's history but also in actively shaping it. Balancing criticism and celebration of news media and exploring print, broadcast, and digital platforms, "Mightier than the Sword" provides students with a sense of the power and responsibility inherent in the institution of journalism. Instead of trying to document every detail in the development of the US news media through dry, dull lists of names, dates, and headlines, this book focuses on sixteen discrete episodes that illuminate a point that is much larger than the sum of their parts: journalism has played and continues to play an enormous role in shaping this nation. The fourth edition features an entirely new chapter on the way the US news media have championed various gay and lesbian rights initiatives, including the Lawrence vs. Texas sodomy case and the Supreme Court decision striking down the Defense of Marriage Act. Also notable is Streitmatter's commitment, when writing about recent events, to documenting the role influential online venues such as "Slate, Politico, " and the "Daily Beast" play in shaping the nation's evolution. Rodger Streitmatter is professor of journalism at American University. A journalist and historian, he is the author of several books and has contributed to numerous popular and scholarly periodicals, including the "Washington Post, American Journalism, the Huffington Post, " and "Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly.""

This really is one of the best books I ever read !ok back to the review- the book was in amazing condition, great price , and delivered in a timely manner, I am happy with the purchase, I am a satisfied customer!

Item as described, fast shipping. Thank you.

I loved this book. It was great for my History of American Journalism class. It's not a comprehensive history book, but it goes in depth into a handful of incidents. Loved it :)

Tried to read the first chapter but I bought it used and it was completely annotated. I can't really read something that's highlighted and underlined to that degree so I sorta gave up.

Today's journalist lives at an odd moment in history. While the public expresses fear at the perceived power of the news media to corrupt American society, many editors and reporters, burdened with the stresses of daily journalism and competing with a myriad of new information/entertainment outlets, wonder if they have any influence at all. Rodger Streitmatter's "Mightier than the Sword"

points to 14 moments in American history when the news media wielded enormous power despite equally enormous odds. Some of these moments were golden - Edward R. Murrow's televised stand against Sen. Joe McCarthy, for example, or the Montgomery (Ala.) Advertiser's 1927 triumph over the Ku Klux Klan. Some, such as Father Charles E. Coughlin's anti-Semitic radio tirades of the 1930s and 1940s, were tarnished. In each case, however, the press didn't simply mirror history. "The news media," Streitmatter argues, "shaped American history. Absolutely. Boldly. Proudly. Fervently. Profoundly." Indeed, the author reminds journalists that it is still possible to affect change. Such influence comes with a price tag. To understand the costs, Streitmatter mines each of these events, from Sam Adams' call for American independence through the era of the Muckrakers to the talk-radio inspired Republican revolution in the 1990s, for commonalities and clues to how the news media worked. What he found is not terribly surprising, but it comes at an opportune moment to remind journalists of a lesson from their often colorful past. Courage begets change. In many episodes, journalists faced intense criticism, threats and financial crises. In each case they weren't afraid to take positions of leadership. Streitmatter's book is something of a "greatest hits" collection in journalism history, written in an easy-going style that allows editors to ponder press power without getting bogged down in the minutia of more in-depth studies. His work, however, is well sourced and a nice addition to the historian's collection, covering print, audio and visual journalism. However, like a "greatest hits" album, Streitmatter's study will leave readers wanting more. Analyzing 14 events in one volume simply does not allow for depth in any singular episode, as the author acknowledges. For example, he blames the mainstream press for helping to slow the women's movement of the mid-1800s by attacking leaders such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. Unfortunately, he either ignores era women's magazines or points only to their opposition to the movement. Other scholars have credited these magazines with providing women their first real voice in the marketplace of ideas. The powerhouse Godey's Lady's Book, edited by Sarah Hale in the mid-1800s, did not favor suffrage, true, but it certainly furthered women's education and employment in medicine and education. Sometimes a second look at the episodes will reveal complexities that the author did not have room to explore. With that said, however, the author does a remarkable job placing each episode in context and highlighting many of the complex arguments about press influence. He is most compelling when he examines crusades against the Klan by the New York World, The Commercial Appeal of Memphis, Tenn., and the Montgomery Advertiser, showing how the best of journalistic intentions can backfire and how dubious motives can sometimes bring about heroic results. The strength of "Mightier Than the Sword" is its focus on how the news media shaped America, for better or worse. By collecting these moments in one volume,

Streitmatter reminds editors that it is still possible to positively influence their communities, even alter the course of history. It just takes a willingness to put reputations, reporters and, yes, even money on the line if the cause is worthy enough to justify the sacrifice.

The best parts of this book are that (1) I learned a great deal from reading it, but (2) I enjoyed reading it very much. The author writes in a narrative style that makes it so easy to learn about a subject that it does not seem like learning at all--it seems like something to enjoy. I would recommend that a person read the book one chapter at a time, not the entire book straight through. Some of the topics will be familiar to readers with a general knowledge of the news, such as about the Spanish American War and McCarthyism. But other topics will be entirely new, such as about the media's role in the KKK. Even when the topic is a familiar one, the author synthesizes the material so it is very cohesive and easy to follow--this was especially true with Watergate. It is a terrific book and I highly recommend it to anyone who wants to learn the ins and outs of the power of the media.

I had to read *Mightier Than the Sword* for Professor Streitmatter's class and let me tell you, it was one of the most interesting and easiest to read books probably ever produced in academia. Beyond the fact that he is probably the best professor at AU, he really sheds light on how the media have played a huge role in shaping U.S. history. He could have put more examples in there (14 is good but there are many more to choose from). It is interesting to think if some of the events he talks about, like McCarthyism and anti-Vietnam war sentiment, would not have gathered strength if it weren't for the media. This is a must-buy for anyone interested in American history or history of the media in America.

This book is required reading every semester in my journalism class at the University of Maine at Farmington. It always receives rave reviews from my students who get caught up in the drama of the stories. They not only learn how the media have shaped American history but also the importance of their role as reporters for the student newspaper. The book also serves as a great way to teach the law and ethics of journalism through example.

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