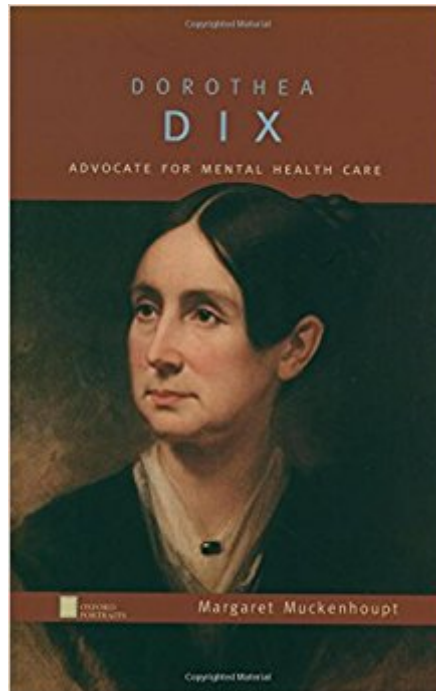


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Dorothea Dix: Advocate For Mental Health Care (Oxford Portraits)



Synopsis

By exposing the sickening conditions people with mental illness endured in jails, almshouses, and basement cells, Dorothea Dix (1802-1887) single-handedly transformed the U.S. system of mental health care in the 19th century. Dix traveled from state to state, describing the hideous suffering people who were both poor and mentally ill endured at the hands of their captors. Her tireless research and personal lobbying of legislators led to construction of asylums for the mentally ill in state after state. Oxford Portraits are informative and insightful biographies of people whose lives shaped their times and continue to influence ours. Based on the most recent scholarship, they draw heavily on primary sources, including writings by and about their subjects. Each book is illustrated with a wealth of photographs, documents, memorabilia, framing the personality and achievements of its subject against the backdrop of history.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 - 17 years

Grade Level: 7 - 12

Customer Reviews

Grade 9 Up
Although Muckenhaupt references several personal situations from Dix's life, the focus is clearly on her crusade to document atrocities in the care of the mentally ill, present the information to legislators, and lobby for change. In Dix's mind there were not two sides to this issue—she believed that God would enable her to do this most important work. The numerous black-and-white illustrations and primary sources enhance the clear, dry text. As Dix's

history has not been neglected, this title is an additional purchase. Æœ Joanne K. Cecere, Monroe-Woodbury High School, Central Valley, NY Copyright Æ © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"Although Muckenhaupt references several personal situations from Dix's life, the focus is clearly on her crusade to document atrocities in the care of the mentally ill, present the information to legislators, and lobby for change. In Dix's mind there were not two sides to this issue-she believed that God would enable her to do this most important work. The numerous black-and-white illustrations and primary sources enhance the clear text." -- School Library Journal

This is one of the Oxford Portraits series that brags that their books are "based on the most recent scholarship [and] they draw heavily on primary sources." Unfortunately, Oxford does not see fit to include footnotes or a bibliography, at least not in this example. Yes, it is a small book aimed a high school level, but the absence of sources is nonetheless inexcusable and would add few additional pages. Dorothea Dix was an extraordinary woman in some regards but a strange one in others. She certainly was a living contradiction in moral attitudes. She fought tenaciously for the mentally ill yet despised the Irish and was at best indifferent to slavery. Muckenhaupt's portrait of Dix is a bit more positive than reality requires. Dix was a difficult person to like and had difficulty working within a system. Give the book to your high schooler, though. It's worth their reading, although I doubt the writing style will excite them. Then get a more extensive biography.

I found the book to be fairly revealing, giving a good background to Dix's motivations as well as an excellent overview of her accomplishments.

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