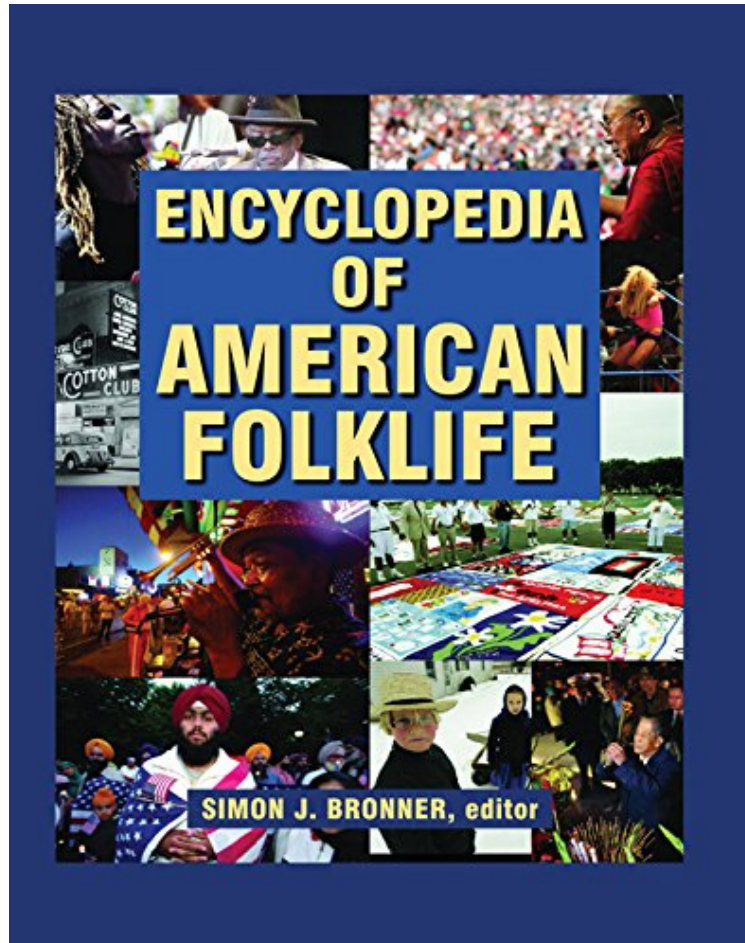


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Encyclopedia of American Folklife

Simon J Bronner

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Simon J Bronner : Encyclopedia of American Folklife before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Encyclopedia of American Folklife:

American folklife is steeped in world cultures, or invented as new culture, always evolving, yet often practiced as it was created many years or even centuries ago. This fascinating encyclopedia explores the rich and varied cultural traditions of folklife in America - from barn raisings to the Internet, tattoos, and Zydeco - through expressions that include ritual, custom, crafts, architecture, food, clothing, and art. Featuring more than 350 A-Z entries, "Encyclopedia of American Folklife" is wide-ranging and inclusive. Entries cover major cities and urban centers; new and established immigrant groups as well as native Americans; American territories, such as Guam and Samoa; major issues, such as education and intellectual property; and expressions of material culture, such as homes, dress, food, and crafts. This encyclopedia covers notable folklife areas as well as general regional categories. It addresses religious groups (reflecting diversity within groups such as the Amish and the Jews), age groups (both old age and youth gangs), and

contemporary folk groups (skateboarders and psychobillies) - placing all of them in the vivid tapestry of folklife in America. In addition, this resource offers useful insights on folklife concepts through entries such as "community and group" and "tradition and culture." The set also features complete indexes in each volume, as well as a bibliography for further research.

From School Library Journal Grade 9 Up mdash; The central theme of this overview is that "Americans participate simultaneously in many forms of folklife at the national and local levels." The editor provides two definitions of folklife--the social: "tradition-centered communities, locations, or groups" and the cultural: "the skills, symbols, identities, and customs that characterize such groups." The set's more than 350 alphabetically arranged entries defy easy classification, but include surveys of the unique cultures and traditions of urban areas, geographic regions, and a wide variety of ethnic groups; topics are as widely diverse as the Amish, Wiccans, bluegrass music, and punk. Other entries cover methods of self-expression such as music, art, crafts, and hobbies; holiday traditions; religious beliefs and traditions; and topics such as quilting and oral folk history. Average-quality photos add little to the text. The entries are well written and objective, but reading levels are quite high. Each article has good cross-referencing and a bibliography, and the final volume boasts a 78-page general bibliography. All volumes contain general, cultural-group, and geographical indexes for the entire set. This encyclopedia captures much of what is unique, diverse, and occasionally quirky about American culture. It provides a wealth of information that is not easily found in other sources. mdash; Mary Mueller, Rolla Junior High School, MO Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist * Starred * Although it overlaps somewhat with publications such as *American Folklore: An Encyclopedia* (Garland, 1996), this work differs from other reference books in its emphasis on folklife rather than folklore, which is primarily concerned with oral or written literary traditions--the songs and stories that convey and give expression to a community's identity. Here, entries discuss "the material and social genres of architecture, craft, food, ritual, belief, and festival as evidence of cultural practice" throughout the continental U.S and its territories. Editor Bronner (Pennsylvania State University) draws from his own experience as former director of the Archive of New York State Folklife and the expertise of nearly 200 contributors to bring together in one source the "broad range of materials coming in under the rubric of folklife." With a focus on the diverse living traditions of daily and ritual experiences in contemporary America, approximately 325 entries delve into the oral (Dialect, Proverbs and sayings, Storytelling); material (Automobiles, Games and toys, aper arts); and social (Parades; Reunions; Showers, wedding and baby) genres in addition to a wide range of groups and communities. Students and researchers seeking information on the folkways of Amish or Cajun communities, or enclaves such as Gay Fire Island or Irish Boston, or cities such as Los Angeles and Miami, or occupational groups such as nurses or professional wrestlers, as well as religious groups such as Catholics and Jews, will find in the pages of the encyclopedia plenty of material and reading lists for further study. The publication contributes to folklife scholarship by including modern groups (Bikers; Fans, automobile racing; Skateboarders) and topics (Hip-hop, Internet, Funk) in addition to topics that are associated with older traditions, such as otlatch and Quilting. Finally, ample treatment is given to the methods and theories of folklife studies. Entries average between 3 and 4 pages in length and include lists of sources as well as ample see also references. Volume 4 contains a bibliography of almost 80 pages. The detailed general index, "Cultural Group Index," and "Geographical Index" are repeated in each volume, as are alphabetical and topical lists of entries. Although the set is not lavishly illustrated, it includes a sampling of captioned black-and-white photos that have been carefully chosen to reflect the diversity of folklife in America today. Reference collections in academic and large public libraries will benefit from the addition of the *Encyclopedia of American Folklife*, which complements such works as the *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* (Univ. of North Carolina, 1989) and *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of World Folklore and Folklife* (2005). Highly recommended. Diana Kirby Copyright copy; American Library Association. All rights reserved