Lincoln Library of Shapers of Society: 
101 Men and Women Who Shaped Our World

This set offers multipage biographies of 101 individuals who, in the opinion of the editors, have exerted profound influence on contemporary society. Coverage spans antiquity (Homer, Alexander the Great) through the modern day (Steve Jobs, Linux inventor Linus Torvalds).

Subjects represent an array of interests: activists; artists, writers, and performers; inventors and scientists; and social, political, and military leaders. With the exception of Mohandas Gandhi, Ts’ai Lon (the inventor of paper), and major religious figures (Buddha, Confucius, Jesus, Moses, and Muhammad), the majority of articles address icons of Western civilization. More than 30 entries consider figures from U.S. history or society (examples include Tecumseh, Walt Disney, and five presidents: Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Eisenhower).

The editors utilize a number of user-friendly ploys to entice young researchers. Each entry begins with a brief summary covering basic biographical facts and outlining personal accomplishments. Black-and-white full-page portraits, illustrated time lines, reproductions of primary sources, maps, archival photographs, and cartoonlike drawings complement the text, which appears in a comfortably large font and is divided into manageable subtopics.

Each illustration is accompanied by a detailed caption. Articles, which average eight pages in length, are arranged in alphabetical order, and subject, area of endeavor, and era indexes offer additional access. Lists of age-appropriate books and Web sites offer suggestions for further reading.

Overall, each entry entails a satisfying amount of information delivered in a variety of visual formats. The selected subjects represent both individuals who are standard language-arts and social-studies research assignments (Booker T. Washington, Galileo, Cyrus McCormick, etc.) as well as individuals who may not be as well documented but are representative of current curriculum topics (e.g., Mario Jose Molina, the scientist who raised the first warnings about the ozone layer, or R. Buckminster Fuller, environmentalist and creator of the geodesic dome).

Like previous offerings, such as The Lincoln Library of Greek and Roman Mythology (2006) and The Lincoln Library of Sports Champions (8th ed., 2007), this set should prove popular with student researchers in upper-elementary, middle, and high school (especially struggling readers or English-language learners). Recommended for school and public library collections.

Kathleen McBroom, Booklist
Lincoln Library of Shapers of Society: 101 Men and Women Who Shaped Our World

Gr 5 Up—From the familiar names of Elizabeth I and George Washington to lesser-known individuals such as jazz pioneer Buddy Bolden and designer Coco Chanel, this set presents biographies of a wide range of historical figures.

Women and minorities are fairly well represented, as are many nationalities, though North American and European subjects feature heavily. Most articles range from 6 to 10 pages, allowing room for some depth. “Alexander the Great,” for instance, includes a quite detailed look at the siege of Tyre.

The clear and accessible writing includes sufficient historical context without straying too far from the subject. Quotes appear within the articles only occasionally, but a notable statement by the subject is highlighted at the head of one of the pages. Brief sections of text stand out in larger, bold font. These selected passages are not always significant: some serve as captions to illustrations, while others seem to be chosen randomly. Plentiful black-and-white illustrations, including many graphic-novel-style renderings as well as photographs and maps, and an attractive layout make this set less intimidating than some reference works.

Each article starts with a large-print overview opposite a full-page photograph or other illustration and includes a time line. Indexes by field of endeavor and era offer useful access points. With its variety of subjects and a generally attractive look and style, this set will serve well for assignments.

Steven Engelfried, School Library Journal

“This compendium of 101 alphabetically arranged biographies is chockfull of useful information for students or anyone wishing to learn about the men and women identified by the editors as having influenced the world.

The majority of historical figures represent Western culture (U.S. and Europe), although other nationalities are also covered. Entries range from two pages (Ts’ai Lun) to twenty-two pages (Eisenhower) but average eight. Each entry begins with a large font summary of the subject’s life and importance, followed by more in-depth information. Most have accompanying photographs or illustrations, quotes, maps and a time line highlighting milestones in their lives. See references are used for other biographies mentioned.

Snippets from primary sources further enhance this set for student use. From ancient times to the present (Aristotle and Homer to Neil Armstrong and Nelson Mandela), expected names and some not so well-known are here. Most readers know of Thomas Edison and Pablo Picasso, but they will also learn that Buddy Bolden is considered the father of jazz and Leo Hendrik Baekeland invented Bakelite and a photographic paper that could be developed in artificial light.

Many fields of endeavor are represented other than the expected scientists and inventors, including political and religious leaders, notables from the arts, civil rights activists, and more. Three indexes by endeavor, era and subject are useful finding tools. Entries end with books and Web sites for further study. The only disconcerting, although minor, note for this reviewer was the bolded text that appears every so often throughout an entry, meant to “encourage browsing and to draw the reader through the entry.” It was distracting and did not always highlight a germane fact. Biographies are often assigned school work, and this set, with its engaging writing, will be popular with middle school through junior high school students and even those beyond.”

Jane Van Wiemokly, VOYA
Lincoln Library of Shapers of Society: 101 Men and Women Who Shaped Our World

Students will surely check out this new reference set from Lincoln Library Press when they are asked to write a biography of a famous person from around the world. In 99 articles averaging eight pages in length, the lives of 101 men and women are carefully retold. (Flight pioneers Wilbur and Orville Wright are combined in the “Wright Brothers” account; DNA discoverers Francis Crick and James Watson are both included in the “Crick and Watson” write up. This there are just 99 articles.)

When the large number of qualifying world leaders “whose work, actions, or character influenced the development of civilization” over a period of three thousand years, was painstakingly narrowed down to 101, the editors included such figures as Moses and Charlemagne, George Washington and Mother Theresa. However, they placed emphasis on those from the western world and especially from American History.

Choosing just 101 persons must have been a monumental task. One can’t help but wonder how such notables as Jane Adams, Charles Dickens, Placido Domingo, John XXIII, Mozart, and Desmond Tutu were overlooked. The articles for those personages selected, however, are well-researched and presented in a user friendly manner. A large, bold typeface makes browsing easy. Black and white photos and maps accompany the accounts, along with a few instances of sepia images for emphasis or clarification. Also, a high percentage of “graphic novel-style illustrations” are used to help capture student’s interest.

A timeline illustrating milestones in the famous person’s life is included in every article. Also, there is a “Further Study” section, and a mere handful of books listed have copyright dates preceding 1995. All recommended websites have been accessed after April 2007, so they, also, should be current.

A comprehensive contents page covering all seven volumes appears in Volume One. Volume Seven includes not only an extensive subject index, but also an Index by Endeavor and an Index by Era.

Despite a few personal reservations and objections, this reviewer would recommend that all libraries serving upper elementary, middle and high school students purchase this reference set. It is not only a good value, but the volumes serve as credible, non-internet sources.

Jean Elvekrog, Catholic Library World

“...This visually attractive seven-volume reference source offers clearly written biographies of persons who have made significant contributions to the world. Each entry opens with an abstract followed by a detailed biography (format mimics The Lincoln Library of Sports Champions) and include timelines, notable quotations, photos, primary source documents, and print and online resources for further study. Some entries include kid-friendly graphic novel-type illustrations. Subjects include a wide range of individuals: the inclusion of Aristotle and Abraham Lincoln is no surprise; less well-known contributors such as Jan Ernst Matzeliger and Carlos Finlay add welcome interest. An appealing mix to browse with plenty of substance for research. Recommended.”

Ro Becker, The PSLA Media and Review Committee
Lincoln Library of Greek and Roman Mythology

“Five briskly written volumes cover everything that the classical mythology homework assignment is likely to require and more. The Greek and Roman variations of gods and heroes are covered well. Nearly 500 alphabetically arranged articles range from a short paragraph to several pages in length. A major article, such as the one on Demeter, has a pronunciation guide for the name, a quick summary of the character (gender, attributes, etc.); the subject’s story; ways the character appears in art and literature (often with excerpts); how the name has become part of English usage; references to source material; and a “True or False?” quiz.

A separate entry covers Ceres, Demeter’s Roman equivalent. There are also entries for places (Delphi, Hades) and other topics (Golden apple, Golden fleece) related to the myths. Six entries, among them Ariadne and Pandora, are accompanied by short plays adapted for classroom use. The volumes are liberally illustrated with reproductions of paintings; photographs of sculpture, architecture, and plants; line drawings; and maps.

The frank sexuality of the deities and heroes is glossed over to some extent, but not completely evaded. Although readers are referred to the names of many classical works, there is no bibliography, so it is difficult to discover which sources the editorial team used. Annotations of sources with notes on their suitability to different reading levels would have been useful. In each volume, entries are preceded by a page containing a list of gods and heroes with their Greek and Roman names, the Greek alphabet, and a small map showing the extent of the ancient Greek and Roman world. Volume 5 includes a “Table of Associations” linking gods and heroes to particular character traits, a “Table of Word Origins,” and a subject index.

Around half of the more than 300 entries in Marshall Cavendish’s 11-volume Gods, Goddesses, and Mythology (2004) cover Greek and Roman deities. Facts On File’s one-volume Greek and Roman Mythology A to Z (2003) has 500 entries but does not provide as much detail as the Lincoln Library set, which is recommended for public, elementary, and middle-school libraries. It should be very helpful for children grades 4–12 doing classical mythology assignments.”

Kathleen Stipek, Booklist
Lincoln Library of Greek and Roman Mythology

“This set lists 500 Greek and Roman gods, heroes, and places. Each entry is complete with pronunciations, family relations, and for Greek entries, the Greek spellings. The preface in Volume I explains the evolution of mythology, along with how and why it developed.

Entries are cross-referenced and a majority of them include the entity’s place in literature and art, along with true or false questions based on the articles. The encyclopedia includes a “Table of Associations,” which gives words and phrases with which each god is associated, a “Table of Word Origins,” and a subject index. In addition, each volume has an alphabetical table of contents. The 400 plus pictures that were commissioned for this publication are both stunning and educational. Finally, there are adapted plays and 5 comic book-style panels throughout. While the age range is broad, it is justified.

The language is easy to read and understand for younger students just beginning to learn about mythology and yet informative and descriptive enough for twelfth graders writing term papers. Well-organized and straightforward, this set will not only enhance the mythology collection in both school and public libraries but also can be utilized by teachers in the classroom.”

Karen M. Smith, Young Adult Librarian, Allen Park (MI) Public Library, Library Media Connection

This award winning reference tool is great for home or school and comes with a library binding for heavy use. Fun for all ages, it would serve well as a mainstay for background information on the people and places of classical Greco-Roman mythology for second through eighth graders. It states it is recommended for grades four through twelve. The feature of “in art,” “in literature,” “in science,” “in space,” etc., opens this alphabetically arranged reference set to cross-discipline applications.

Inserted fact boxes and short plays really allow older children to get into it. Articles also have names in Greek, pronunciation guides, and other quick helps immediately under the article heading. The “go to source” feature truly does extend the use of it to higher grades. The entire set has an eclectic variety of colorful illustrations and simple black master line drawings. Some illustrations are a whole page in these over-sized volumes, including photos of various famous works of art. The occasional box with a related true/false quiz within an article is an especially nice feature for reading comprehension.

The way it has been put together opens up what is primarily a dictionary for young people into a real tool that could be used in the school library or classroom in several ways pedagogically. Recommended for school and public libraries.

Darren G. Poley, Catholic Library World
Lincoln Library of Greek and Roman Mythology

Filled with more information and features than one usually finds in a specialized dictionary or encyclopedia for middle- and high-school students, this five volume work contains five hundred alphabetical entries on the gods, goddesses, heroes, places, and other important aspects of Greek and Roman mythology.

The text contains short, lively sentences and is printed using a large, clean typeface with plenty of white space. The four hundred or so illustrations—line drawings; graphic novel-type artwork; color photographs of art, maps, and “added information” boxes—generally have captions that serve to expand and enhance the text.

Each of the entries begins with the title in bold type, the word in Greek (if appropriate), and a pronunciation guide. Typically the gender, culture, and main attributes of the character or person are displayed, followed by a brief (three to five sentences) summary of important points. Longer entries, varying in length from two to seven pages, have cross-references as well as easy to find sections on family (lineage), depiction in art, appearance in literature, occurrence in space (helpful for constellations and asteroids), how the name is used in modern terms, and a section providing references to classic works. Longer entries also have a short self-check true/false test so that readers can check their comprehension.

Each volume includes a list of Greek gods and heroes and their Roman counterparts, the Greek alphabet and English equivalents and a very small map (without compass rose or scale) of the ancient world. Six short plays that can be produced or read in the classroom are presented.

The final volume contains a “Table of Associations” that links names of gods and heroes with the concepts, words and phrases with which they are associated. There is also a “Table of Word Origins” and a “subject index” to the entire work. Unfortunately, there are no guide words on the pages and the light brown or sepia tone used to highlight some of the text is difficult to read in library light.

Neither Kathleen Daly’s single volume Greek and Roman Mythology A to Z (Facts on File, 2003), which contains short entries on about 500 topics, nor David Lemming’s The Children’s Dictionary of Mythology (Franklin Watts, 1999) which has more than three hundred entries on mythology from various cultures, have the depth or added features of this work. It has found a niche somewhere between the one-volume works mentioned above and the multi-volume (and pricey) Gods, Goddesses, and Mythology (Marshall Cavendish, 2005), which is not restricted to just the Greek and Romans. In terms of both usefulness and value, The Lincoln Library of Greek and Roman Mythology is superior. Recommended for school and public libraries where patrons do reports on mythology.

Dona J. Helmer, Librarian, Anchorage School District, Anchorage, Alaska, Reference and User Services Quarterly
Lincoln Library of Greek and Roman Mythology

“The alphabetical set of entries range in length from a couple of sentences to ten pages (Achilles); major entries are usually three to four pages, and include side bar questions and answers to encourage reader engagement and close reading.

The major entries begin with vital demographics (Roman and Greek spelling, pronunciation, gender, culture, attributes) and overview, and then detail the related stories and cultural impact in art, literature, science, etc. Roman namings get separate entries, and cross-references between the two cultures’ figures facilitate research. Four hundred captioned images (at least one for every page spread) accompany the entries; they include line drawings, classical paintings and stylistic illustrations, photographs of historic artifacts and locations, and miscellaneous images. Five comic book pages accompany entries (e.g., Persephone), and six mini-plays about specific myths provide classroom activity.

A beginning chart lists Greek and Roman names of major gods and heroes, and another details the Greek alphabet. In the fifth volume a table of mythological associations links figures with associated words. A second table lists English words and phrases with Greek and Roman mythological origins.

“Writing is clear and accessible by middle schoolers and high schoolers. The layout is easy to read, and the paper quality aids high visual resolution. Binding and thin volumes support heavy use. This reference tool could be used in public libraries, school libraries and classroom collections because it can be used for targeted research and casual browsing.”

Dr. Lesley Farmer, Library Media Program Coordinator, California State University, Long Beach, California, Education Libraries

“This encyclopedia is a very thorough and user friendly A-Z listing of over 500 gods, goddesses, heroes, places and other important mythology references. Each Greek and Roman god/goddess has his/her own entry, despite similarities. Each of these entries begins with a pronunciation guide, gender, culture and the god or goddess’s attributes. Greek entries include the god/goddess name written in Greek. Each ends with a listing of the subject’s family and further reading. Cross curricular links are included where appropriate.

Six myths include short plays designed for classroom use. Illustrations include works of art, reproducible drawings, and photos. Volume 5 includes a ‘Table of Associations’ which lists the gods, goddesses and heroes by attribute, a ‘Table of Word Origins,’ and a ‘Subject Index.’”

“This 14-volume set of sports biographies first appeared more than 30 years ago. It’s easy to see why it has become an enduring standard on middle- and high-school library shelves. The slim volumes (128 pages each) feature dynamic photographs and tales of determination and inspiration. Topics cover a balanced selection of men and women, popular and obscure sports, and historic and contemporary superstars.

The 307 articles are arranged alphabetically and range between two and eight pages. Each begins with a fact-filled introductory paragraph providing basic biographical and career highlights, followed by a lengthy essay that fills in personal details. These accessible profiles, designed to engage young readers, cover motivation, role models, obstacles, setbacks, successes, and triumphs. Many include direct quotes and do not ignore controversial subjects (steroids, discrimination, etc.). More than 1,600 color and archival black-and-white photographs (many full page) help bring these icons to life. The articles conclude with a summation of each subject’s legacy along with print and Web suggestions for further reading. Indexes sort articles by sport, gender, place of birth, and decade(s) of prominence.

The set takes the broadest possible interpretation of sport. Baseball, basketball, football, and hockey standouts are represented, as are notables in chess, horseshoes, exploring, badminton, and sharpshooting. The inclusion of extreme-sport (inline skating, bicycle motocross, skateboarding, and motorcycling) personalities should appeal to the intended young adult audience. An effort was made to include individuals who were innovators, broke barriers, set records, or effected change. Athletes predominate, but other profiles address coaches and managers, a sportswriter, and a baseball commissioner.

This revision features 28 new profiles and 2 new sports (curling and lacrosse) and is current through December 2006. User-friendly features (fact boxes, record summations, trivia teasers) and enticing visual appeal will make this a popular choice for researchers and browsers alike. All public and school libraries should have this set available for their young patrons; those that own previous editions will want to update.”

—Booklist
Lincoln Library of Sports Champions, 8th edition

“The eighth edition of this classic set of sports biographies continues to provide the information that students want to know about their favorite or historic (from 1880) athletes in a format that is highly accessible. Each of the 307 entries begins with a larger type summary and head shot that faces a full page photo of the athlete in action. Within the balance of the 4- to 12-page entry, standard biographical information is enhanced with additional photos and a career highlights sidebar. References for further study are mostly digital, making it easy for a student to learn more.

Entries are alphabetical, but indexes also provide access to athletes by place of birth and decade of work. New to this edition are lacrosse, snowboarding and curling athletes as well as many Extreme Sports athletes. Sports fans and biography writers will use this reference set extensively. Help them stay informed with this updated edition.”

Sarah Braxton, Pennsylvania School Librarians Association (PSLA) Top 40 Reference Titles, April 2007

“This comprehensive edition contains accurate information, and each volume’s dark blue (back) cover features trivia questions that entice the reader to search for answers. The oldest athletes are from the latter half of the 1800s, including Cy Young (the man for whom the pitching award is named), sharpshooter Annie Oakley, and basketball’s inventor, James Naismith. Progressing into the twentieth century, readers learn about Joltin’ Joe (DiMaggio), Smokin’ Joe (Frazier), and Broadway Joe (Namath). Information on present-day neophytes Freddy Adu, Michelle Wie, Yao Ming, and Eldrick Woods, aka Tiger, is also included.”

The range of athletes and sports is impressively diverse, featuring Japanese baseball legend Sadaharu Oh, motorcyclist Travis Pastrana, Iditarod champion Susan Butcher, bicyclist Lance Armstrong, and bowler Earl Anthony. Marked by a clear font, the concise indexes are helpful and avoid being worthless microscopic jumbles that do more harm than good for middle school students.

Separate indexes by athletes’ names, by era, of women athletes, and by place of birth by state (a huge bonus for that random middle school assignment, “locate and athlete born in our state and report on him/her”) add to the value of the set. When weighing cost versus use, many libraries might find the price tag a bit high. This solid addition of one-stop shopping for sport biographies, however, will gain more valuable circulation as a public-access item rather than being doomed to sparse use parked on reference shelves.”

Rollie Welch, VOYA (Voices of Youth Advocates)
Lincoln Library of Sports Champions, 8th edition

Gr 5 Up—This set, first published in 1974, retains the original introduction by Jesse Owens. The 300-plus alphabetically arranged entries cover a mix of 311 historic and contemporary athletes from 31 countries, representing 49 different sports, including curling, horseshoes, and motocross. Volume one demonstrates the breadth of coverage, showcasing, among others, Muhammad Ali, Lance Armstrong, Freddy Adu, Red Auerbach, and champion horseshoe-pitcher Ted Allen. Articles include a head shot, a short discussion of the subject’s early life, and a description of his or her career, highlighting key games and events.

Entries often contain commentary by subjects on their accomplishments. Career statistics are current as of December 2006. Entries end with brief further-reading lists. Lincoln does not shy away from controversy; for example, the articles on Barry Bonds and Mark McGwire cover their alleged steroid use. Athletes’ personal lives are not discussed, except where pertinent to their professional endeavors. The final volume has several indexes. This set will be a valuable addition, both as a springboard for reports and for browsing.

Elizabeth M. Reardon, McCallie School, Chattanooga, TN, School Library Journal

“This book profiles 311 athletes from 31 countries. Represented are 49 sports, both team and individual. Sports included for the first time are lacrosse, snowboarding, and curling. 28 new profiles have been added in this edition, while profiles from previous editions have been reviewed and updated. Entries are arranged in straight A-Z order in the 14 volumes, with indexes (Athletes by Name, Athletes by Place of Birth, and Athletes by Era) included in Volume 14.

Each entry begins with a summary, in large, standout print, of the athlete’s life and career. The following narrative goes into greater detail and includes anecdotes, quotations, and achievements. The text is accompanied by an abundance of captioned photographs, many in color, showing the athlete in action. A sidebar of career highlights is a useful feature. The easy reading style, action photographs, current information, inclusion of contemporary sports and athletes, and attractive format will continue to make this reference a standout and a popular choice in both school and public libraries. Bibliography. Highly Recommended.

Dana McDougald, Librarian, Cedar Shoals H.S., Athens, Georgia, Library Media Connection