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Lynn Hudson Parsons. *John Quincy Adams.* Madison, Wis.: Madison House, 1997. 272 pp. $29.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-945612-54-4.

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If one is searching for a book of new insights and different perspectives into John Quincy Adams, this is not the book for you. That is: diplomatic historians will find that the book covers Adams' formidable career in summary fashion; political historians will find that the book's treatment of Adams' political life is somewhat sketchy; social and cultural historians will look in vain for a substantial treatment of Adams as a representative of his time and culture; presidential historians, such as myself, will look for more on a presidency which has been too lightly treated; and if you are interested in how family and friends influenced John Quincy Adams–certainly this book will fall short of your expectations.

But: since Lynn Parsons manifestly set out to write a book which is a solid overview of John Quincy Adams' long life and long career, the book must be judged on its own grounds and on those grounds there is much to praise and much to recommend. If one considers that Adams lived into his eighties and that his public life stretched from the age of ten on, with very few breaks, a book which is "only" 271 pages long is forced to be either a narrow monograph or a broad overview. Since Parsons book gives almost equal weight to the different parts of John Quincy Adams's life, the challenge had to be in writing a tome which neither slogged ponderously nor skipped facilely from place to place.

And on those grounds, Parsons has written not only well, but wisely. While the specialist may find this work lacking from place to place and time to time, the person who is first experiencing the multifaceted life of J. Q. Adams will find the work clearly-written and the subject absorbing. I recommend this to teachers and professors for inclusion in any class covering the Adams years or for any class on the presidents. I believe it would be especially appropriate for those teaching advanced placement high-school classes or for those teaching at the undergraduate college level. It may be a bit too general for a graduate-level class, though certainly the sections on Adams' early years have much to recommend them to graduate students. Similarly, Parson's writing, always clear, obtains a sudden intensity in the discussion of the Amistad case; graduate students would do well to use this section as an exemplar of how to write with restrained intensity.

It would also be an excellent book for general circulation in any library and I would recommend it highly for purchase by those small colleges or those colleges which need to get the most from their library dollars. It should have a very long shelf life as a basic resource for John Quincy Adams–particularly as it is free from both ideological and verbal jargon.

Beyond its obvious merits as a potential undergraduate text and library resource, however, it mostly qualifies as a passable and pleasant book suitable for the general laity.

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