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"Conspiracy theories (and, from time to time, actual conspiracies) have played a vital role in shaping the course of American history." So states the editor of this set, which is the work of more than 123 contributors. It is intended as "a serious and comprehensive summary of all the major events, ideas, and figures of U.S. conspiracy thinking."

The set begins with "Conspiracy Theories in America: A Historical Overview" and "Making Sense of Conspiracy Theories," two excellent articles that provide background and understanding of the subject. This material is followed by more than 300 entries for both actual and imagined conspiracies. Examples of theories include the extremely well known as well as the somewhat obscure. As might be expected, the entry on the John F. Kennedy assassination is the longest, covering 15 pages. Among other entries are *AIDS*, *Cattle mutilations*, *Oklahoma City bombing*, *Pearl Harbor*, *Tobacco industry*, *UFOs*, and *whitewater*. The theories are arranged alphabetically and include *see also* references and brief bibliographies of related works. Appropriate Web sites are also listed for some.

Section 3 contains approximately 100 extracts from primary source documents, arranged chronologically from Cotton Mather's *Wonders of the Invisible World* (1692) to *Lawton et al. v. Republic of Iraq* (2003). A headnote explains the context of each.

This is a fascinating reference set that presents intriguing (albeit sometimes far-fetched) theories. Examining these theories, one can see how almost any event or idea can be viewed as a conspiracy, actual or imagined. This would be an excellent addition to academic and large public libraries. *RBB*  
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### **Review**

"The editors of this fine reference rightfully assert that 'conspiracy theories have played a vital role in shaping the course of American history.' . . . The first to cover the subject comprehensively, this work offers a dispassionate look at conspiracy theories, from the Boston Tea Party to September 11, 2001, placing each in the context of its time." - **Library Journal**

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About the Author

**Peter Knight**, PhD, is a lecturer in American studies at the University of Manchester, Manchester, England.

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