

Book Review

Oxford New Concise World Atlas, 2Ed. February 2007; 288 pages, hardcover; Oxford University Press, New York. ISBN: 0-19-532015-8. ISBN-13: 978-0-19-532015-2. \$35.00

A good atlas is much more than a bound collection of maps. A good atlas informs, enlightens, and often challenges. The *Oxford New Concise World Atlas* is a good atlas.

For those seeking information, you will find physical and political maps of all the countries of the world; demographic, physical, and climate statistics; and three different index sections. These sections allow you to quickly locate maps of a country, region, or individual place. Places are located using a rectangular grid, and each map contains a graticule of latitude and longitude. All maps are annotated with their projection and scale. Unfortunately, the range of elevations associated with the color scale is not consistent across all the maps, a small annoyance in an otherwise flawless presentation.

The enlightening factor of this atlas is the twenty-three profusely illustrated essays which constitute the “Earth in Space” section. Starting with the place of the Earth within the Universe, the essays proceed down scale and examine the Earth’s human and natural processes. These essays closely track the National Geography Standards Essential Elements of Places and Regions, Physical Systems, Human Systems, and Environment and Society. Teachers or students needing a quick review or examples of these Essential Elements will find them here in a mix of text, charts, and evocative photos.

So how does this atlas challenge the reader? One would be hard-pressed to view the maps of the extent of Arctic Ice, Aral Sea, or Lake Chad without contemplating our anthropogenic impacts on these areas. Or to view the “Regions in the News” maps of the Near East, Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, or Kashmir and not acknowledge the human suffering and misery concentrated in such a small portion of the total land area of the Earth. Every page of this atlas can be used to pose similar challenging questions.

The reasonable price and variety of information in the *Oxford New Concise Atlas* makes it an excellent choice for students, educators, and all who appreciate maps. It has become my new desk atlas.

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