Overview: “On September 16th, 1920, as the bells of Trinity Church chimed the noon hour, a bomb planted on a horse-drawn wagon exploded into the lunchtime crowd at Wall and Broad, shattering windows throughout the financial district, killing thirty-eight people and wounding hundreds more. Until the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, it was the worst act of terrorism in American history.” (1) This book is an interesting and intriguing work on the major anarchists and social movements that led to the bombing on Wall Street in 1920. Gage outlines the major events and players from both the U.S. government and the anarchists and social movements during a time in American History not well understood by most students. By the end you will have a clear understanding of the turmoil and uncertainty of the United States during a time when most felt capitalism was on the verge of collapsing.

The most important aspect of this book is the fact that it details a time in American history where acts of terrorism and chaos were a part of everyday life. Gage provides many examples of these acts including the trials of major figures from the anarchists and socialists groups, the Haymarket affair, the bombing of Wall Street as well as the Homestead incident. Furthermore, the book provides an interesting look at some of the first acts of the U.S. government limiting civil liberties that had come to define the United States. This affected many anarchists and socialists who fled Europe’s strict laws against them for the United States as they were soon facing limitations similar to Europe. For example, limitations on free speech and public protests were common. Government restrictions peaked with the U.S. deporting many members of the socialists and anarchists.
groups right before the bombing of Wall Street. Finally, Gage provides in depth details on the major players in Washington and the politics behind solving these acts of terrorism, as some used the acts to further their political careers and stem fear in the American public to gain support for office.

Gage provides a quick and thorough reference for a time period that is not taught in history classes minus a sentence or two in most textbooks. The book itself is broken down into 5 sections that provide a timeline following the events that occurred. All in all, the book is an excellent source for any individual interested in learning about the earliest threat of terrorism faced by the United States. You will find many similarities between the terrorist attacks in 2001 with the attacks in 1920 after reading this book. For example, the steps taken after these attacks to limit civil liberties.

*How this work can be applied to American Studies:* This book establishes that terrorism and the policies enacted because of terrorism are a big part of this country’s history and identity. *The Day Wall Street Exploded* is a key piece of literature for any American Studies class and especially this class on Globalization, as it will add a new dynamic that can be used to connect the United States with other countries, a common theme in this class, facing similar terrorist threats.