
*Overview:* The spectacle of lynching became more popular post-civil war, and Amy Louise Wood’s book allows readers to easily conceptualize this phenomenon. She dives into concepts that have been generalized throughout the past and brings forth new evidence to support her comprehension of how the act of a lynching is so important to America’s racial history because of the traditional and modern conflicts this spectacle presented. From this book, any individual interested in furthering their knowledge about the racial tensions that were taking place in the South and across the United States would be able to with the author’s references to: key events, photographs, and cinematic productions.

Several themes discussed throughout the book helped to support the overall concept of lynching being a spectacle for white Americans. The first aspect of lynching that was covered was the understanding that lynchings were not frequent occurrences and this made them that much more extraordinary. White Americans feared the possibility of becoming equals with their African American counterparts. When industrialization and urban communities started to spring up throughout the South (post-Civil War), white Americans were starting to witness that they were being brought into similar situations and living standards that their former “slaves” were also experiencing. The neighborhoods that were once only populated by whites were starting to become multiracial and low skilled jobs were being given to African Americans over whites because they could pay them less. This societal “fear” seemed to be at ease throughout the spectacle of a lynching because it reassured white Americans that they still had more power over their African American counterparts.
Amy Louise Wood does a fantastic job on how she put this book together. The book flows chronologically and thematically throughout its entirety while also providing some visual aspects. These visual aspects allow for the reader to paint a clear understanding of the main themes and concepts together with a visual aid. The structure of the book enables the reader to focus on the three key components (Spectacle, Witnessing and Bearing Witness) instead of feeling as if the concepts are jumping back and forth between one another, which the book does not do. Overall, this book is one that once you start; you are not going to want to put it down.

*How this work can be applied to American Studies:* This book would be extremely useful in American studies 225 or 227. Both of these sections cover a large amount of information about the lives of African Americans since their arrival in the United States to present day policies. I believe that *Lynching and Spectacle* would allow for more in depth understanding of how racial issues consumed Southern White Americans to the point where families were bringing a blanket and popcorn to watch the execution of another human being. These racial issues intensified with the use of media coverage/photographs and the understanding of modernity and tradition colliding need to be discussed in greater depth (especially for those individuals who are American Studies Majors with a focus on Race & Ethnicity).