Overview: Authors John Harriman and John Louis Lucaites provide a detailed survey of iconic images within the past hundred years, from the Depression era "Migrant Worker" picture, to the image of the fire fighters erecting the American Flag at Ground Zero after the September 11th World Trade Center attacks. The book's primary purpose is to show how these iconic photos reflect signs of the times society was facing when the actual image was constructed, and the different uses and messages of these same images in modern day.

The book starts off a little slow in the first few chapters, where they make the main point on the significance of photographs in American Popular Culture. The second chapter specifically fleshed out major points from chapter one. The second chapter also conveyed major themes from Susan Sontag's work, which is mentioned in the introduction, making it a stronger base point to start off the book. The book picks up with very interesting claims about iconic photographs throughout the twentieth century. The “Migrant Mother,” in one chapter, shows how the mother's appearance reflected the emotional anxiety during the Great Depression, and the need of protecting her children. Hariman and Lucaites expand on this image on how it represents the American working class, as it was used in a Wal-Mart advertisement. The “Times Square Kiss,” and “Soldier Going off to War” were featured in another chapter that showed elements of the American Dream. Most of the figures in the images convey a sense to protect and defend what is theirs. The
soldier is protecting his girlfriend while he goes off to war. The authors highlight the female’s clothing in the photo as a marker for her affluent social status, and that the couple’s heavy clothing shows that the weather was cold (despite that it was April) when this picture was taken. Other pictures included in their analysis were the fire fighters erecting the American Flag after September 11th as a sign of valor and duty, and the Napalm picture from the Vietnam War that complexly illustrates war and destruction waged on innocent people.

*How this work can be applied to American Studies:* One goal in American Studies is to analyze how images are used in American Popular Culture are used, and how they affect, influence, and challenge their audiences. This book precisely shows how these, and other images do that. I think that this book is an essential necessity for American students and scholars alike to develop—and further expand their comprehension on image and representation in American society. I can see this book assigned at any level of American Studies courses, but I think that it would be most beneficial at the intro level of American Studies. American Studies courses, along with others tend to cover topics that are media related. Students raise issues on how representations of people and events are created, used, and retold. They analyze the ethics and implications these images assume and project, and whether or not these points are valid.