

"william penn" by john a. moretta essay sample

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John A. Moretta, a history teacher at the University of Houston, wrote the book *William Penn and the Quaker Legacy* which was a biography that told the tale of William Penn but reminded its readers that Penn was a legend and hero according to

<http://www.uh.edu/honors/about/faculty-staff/john-moretta.php>

According to Moretta, Penn produced a Founding Father image and to him Penn "shaped the American creed and ideal" (pg. xi). In my opinion, the reason John A. Moretta wrote the book was because he wanted the world to see Jr. William Penn as the Quaker Legend that he still is today and to show a more in-depth biography of the story of William Penn. Moretta wanted to write the book too because he wanted to talk about this historical individual who made an impact on his personal life. He was qualified to write the book because of his experience as a degreed history instructor. *William Penn and the Quaker Legacy* reminds people today who the man on the oatmeal container is and defines Quakerism. The actual definition of the term "Quakerism" according to dictionary.com is "a member of the Religious Society of Friends, a Christian sect founded by George Fox about 1650, whose central belief is the doctrine of the Inner Light. Quakers reject sacrament, ritual, and formal ministry, hold meetings at which any member may speak, and have promoted many causes for social reform."

Penn helped produce the Quaker values of equality, pacifism, and acceptance of diversity to the world which then defined the greater American creed (*William Penn and the Quaker Legacy*). The story begins with the life of William Penn Sr., and how he was brought up and became the war

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hero. It then tells the story about his son, William Penn Jr., and the many trials he went through to become a Quaker and how he overcame the oppressive Puritans. Moretta's approach of this book was to slowly draw the reader in with a little background history of the characters and then get to the main point of the story. His approach was very thorough; it almost felt like the author had been there at that time period and was watching from afar.

Moretta read many other bibliographies of the historical figure William Penn, but in his opinion, it did not tell the actual story of who William Penn is. His primary source for this bibliography was the Papers of William Penn which was a four-volume book wrote by Richard S. Dunn and Mary Maples Dunn and published by University of Pennsylvania, which contained manuscripts of Penn's life in England. His secondary source A Collection of the Works of William, of which is Prefaced a Journal of His Life with Many Letters and Papers Not Before Published - a publication by Joseph Besse's. This was based on the thirty-five biographies of Penn.

This book in my opinion was very effective, because it served the purpose by explaining the historical figure William Penn and his Quaker Legacy. Yes, it was very in-depth and a little difficult to read but I had no idea what he really stood for and why he is on the oatmeal container. Penn, as an individual, showed great courage and perseverance through the Puritans trials. He was a strong-willed individual and never gave up on the Friends/Quakers. According to Amazon. com, a review on the book by a customer named David Arndt wrote; " I am very pleased to find a book on this topic.

Although his writing sometimes seems a little more aimed at college/ history students than the general public, John Moretta does a good job of drawing a full, yet succinct, picture of the man and his times. The content and the topic make this book a very worthwhile purchase. Besides being a valuable lesson on a significant part of our nation's history, there is much to learn from reflection on Penn's life. His journey from being a child of privilege, rejecting that heritage, embracing egalitarianism and eventually returning to a preference for privilege is a good representation of the way many people travel a full circle in their lives. His desire to both profit personally while at the same time helping others with the founding of a colony ended up benefiting others but not himself. The conflict of idealism and financial pragmatism is a dilemma countless individuals with an altruistic bent must confront as well. And there are many other valuable reflections as well".

This book is very much a part of our history and culture by describing the Quaker's views and how they helped shape the American creed. Our country was founded by many different immigrants and their cultures. This story also gave respect to an underestimated historical figure. A statement from the book that I felt was important was; " In Spirit of Truth, Penn saw the history of God's interactions with humanity as the story of continuing of divine revelation, made known to all people in all ages through the work of the Light within each individual soul" (pg. 80). What this statement means to me, is that God come's into all of our lives at any age not just one, but also that you have to not just see and know that He is there but also have faith in knowing that He will always be there for you. It fits into Penn's life because he went through so much trying to find peace and equality among the Quaker and

Puritans, that of course, he needed faith and the ability to trust in God that he was going to accomplish his goals.