

**Reading Guide:*****American Eden: David Hosack, Botany, and Medicine in the Garden of the Early Republic (2018) by Victoria Johnson***

1. What do you think Dr. David Hosack's most important legacy was? What makes you say that?
2. Victoria Johnson tells a story deeply rooted in a specific place—New York City and the Hudson Valley. Did the book evoke memories of visits, or inspire you to do or see something related to this book? If so, what?
3. *American Eden* is crammed full of appearances from well-known and accomplished Americans and visitors to America in the late 1700s and early 1800s. Who was the most memorable to you and why?
4. Victoria Johnson specifically focuses on Dr. Hosack's botanical garden among his many projects. Do you think that the focus works? Why or why not?
5. Along with the tale of David Hosack's garden, *American Eden* tells the story of a young New York City, before it became the metropolis of today. Is this a new view of New York for you? What questions or areas of curiosity does it inspire?
6. What is the most important information or perspective you will take away from this book? Do you think it matches the author's intentions?
7. Would you recommend this book to others? Who do you think the ideal reader for this book would be?

Author Biography

Victoria Johnson is a professor of urban policy and planning at Hunter College in New York City, where she teaches on the history of philanthropy, nonprofits, and New York City. She holds a doctorate in sociology from Columbia University and an undergraduate degree in philosophy from Yale. As a Guggenheim Fellow in 2021–22, she is working on a biography of the painter, landscape architect, and environmentalist Frederic Edwin Church (1826–1900).

Related Books (descriptions courtesy of Amazon.com)

The Invention of Nature: Alexander von Humboldt's New World by Andrea Wulf (2015)

Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859) was an intrepid explorer and the most famous scientist of his age. Among Humboldt's most revolutionary ideas was a radical vision of nature, that it is a complex and interconnected global force that does not exist for the use of humankind alone. Andrea Wulf brings the man and his achievements back into focus: his daring expeditions and investigation of wild environments around the world and his discoveries of similarities between climate and vegetation zones on different continents. She also discusses his prediction of human-induced climate change, his remarkable ability to fashion poetic narrative out of scientific observation, and his relationships with iconic figures such as Simón Bolívar and Thomas Jefferson.

The Social Transformation of American Medicine: The Rise of a Sovereign Profession and the Making of a Vast Industry by Paul Starr (2017)

Winner of the 1983 Pulitzer Prize and the Bancroft Prize in American History, this is a landmark history of how the entire American health care system of doctors, hospitals, health plans, and government programs has evolved over the last two centuries.

African-American Gardens and Yards in the Rural South by Richard Westmacott (1992)

This book is the first extensive survey of African-American gardening traditions in the rural South. Richard Westmacott has recovered valuable data for those interested in African-American material culture and the history of vernacular gardens by creating measured drawings and physical inventories of African-American gardens in three geographic areas: the low country of South Carolina, the southern piedmont of Georgia, and the black belt of Alabama. The descriptions are enhanced by the author's personal interviews with the gardeners, in which the aesthetic qualities, designs, and purposes of their yards and gardens are documented. Westmacott traces the principal functions of African-American yards and gardens over the last two hundred years.

The Garden Diary of Martha Turnbull, Mistress of Rosedown Plantation by Martha Turnbull, et al. (2012)

Martha Turnbull's garden diary offers the most extensive surviving first-hand account of nineteenth-century plantation life and gardening in the Deep South. Landscape architecture professor and preservationist Suzanne Turner spent fifteen years transcribing and annotating the original manuscript. The resulting dialogue between Turnbull's diary entries and Turner's notes demonstrates the pivotal role that kitchen and pleasure gardens held in Southern landscapes. In addition, the diary documents the relationship between Martha Turnbull and the enslaved people whose labor made her vast gardens possible.

Bayou Bend/Rienzi Book Club

Join us for the next Bayou Bend/Rienzi Book Club featuring *The Age of Wood: Our Most Useful Material and the Construction of Civilization* by Roland Ennos on Wednesday, July 13, 2022, at 1:30 p.m. hosted by Rienzi.

For more information, visit mfah.org/historybookclub.

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