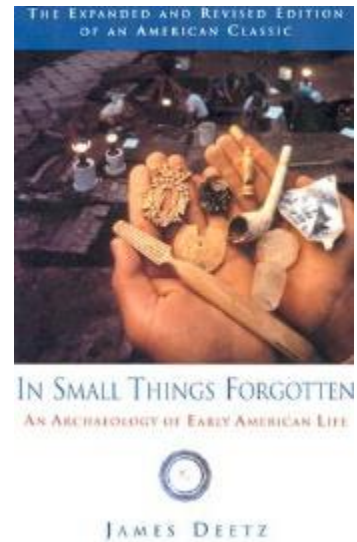


Reading Guide:

***In Small Things Forgotten:
An Archaeology of Early American Life***

James Deetz



Thought Questions:

1. What is the most important or memorable thing you will take away from having read this book? What surprised you most?
2. According to the description on the back of the book, this is “simultaneously a study of American life and an explanation of how American life is studied.” Did you feel that one of these themes was better expressed in the book? Why?
3. This book is arranged around a series of widely varying case studies. Which did you find most thought-provoking or interesting? Least? Why?
4. Did you learn more about the field of historical archaeology from this book? Where might you apply your new perspectives?
5. How do you think James Deetz’s background as a historical archaeologist affected his view of American history? Do you see differences between his perspective and that of other authors we have read?
6. Would you recommend this book to others? Who do you think would enjoy it?
7. Are there related books, museum exhibitions, websites, or other resources that you would like to share with fellow readers of this book?

Author Biography (adapted from Los Angeles Times obituary)

James Deetz (1930-2000) was one of the nation's foremost experts on North American colonists and a developer of historical archeology. Born in Cumberland, Md., and educated in anthropology at Harvard, Deetz became attracted to the study of colonists during his doctoral research on their interaction with Native Americans of the Plains, and during his excavations at Plimoth Plantation. In 1967 he became assistant director of Plimoth Plantation. Deetz spent 1978 to 1994 based at UC Berkeley, where he taught anthropology and directed the Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum of Anthropology. His textbooks, "Invitation to Archeology" (1967), and "In Small Things Forgotten: The Archeology of Early American Life" (1977), are still in use. He published his final book, "The Times of Their Lives: Life, Love and Death in Plymouth Colony," written with his second wife, Patricia Scott Deetz, a month before his death.

If you liked In Small Things Forgotten, you may enjoy the following books:

The Times of their Lives: Life, Love and Death in Plymouth Colony by James Deetz and Patricia Scott Deetz (2000)

Rejecting both the sacred myth of the Pilgrim fathers and the revisionist view of the rigidly repressed Puritans, the Deetzes present a radically different picture of the settlers who populated Plymouth Colony. To humanize their subjects within their historical context, the authors scrutinized a variety of primary sources, including court records, probate inventories, wills, archaeological artifacts, and first-person chronicles of life in the early settlement.

Uncommon Ground: Archaeology and Early African America, 1650-1800 by Leland Ferguson

Uncommon Ground takes a unique archaeological approach to examining early African American life during the pre-Revolutionary period. The discussion of archeological findings at times this reads like a detective story, with one tantalizing clue leading the author to yet another.

A Guide to the Artifacts of Colonial America by Ivor Noel Hume (2001)

This book was first published more than thirty years ago, but continues to be the most useful and accurate reference on the identification of artifacts recovered from Anglo-American colonial sites.

X Marks the Spot: The Archaeology of Piracy by Russell K. Skowronek

This collection piques the imagination with historical evidence about the actual exploits of pirates as revealed in the archaeological record.