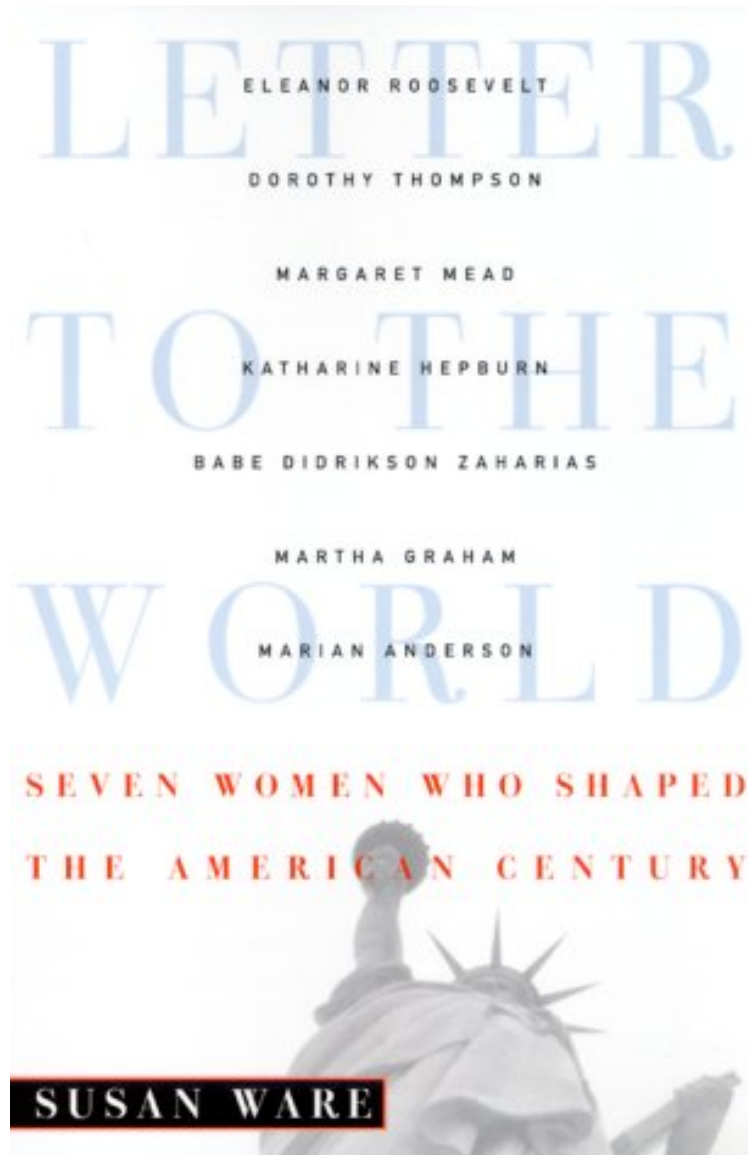


# Letter to the World: Seven Women Who Shaped the American Century

*Susan Ware*

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**Susan Ware : Letter to the World: Seven Women Who Shaped the American Century** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Letter to the World: Seven Women Who Shaped the American Century:

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Great book on significant womenBy FrankThis is a great book on

seven significant women of the 20th Century. The author has become thoroughly familiar with each of her subjects, and in writing on her subjects, beautifully blends details of her subjects' lives, with thoughtful insights on her subjects' impact on their world, in a very readable fashion. I picked up the book from the library for its chapter on Marian Anderson. On Ms. Anderson, the author writes that "when an elegant, beautiful black woman like Marian Anderson became a success, and did so with dignity and class, this message undermined the basis for racism in the first place, by revealing a black woman who in every way but her skin color matched the most successful whites." I then continued on to read the portrayals of the other seven women. Even if you've read multiple biographies on the women portrayed in this book -- Eleanor Roosevelt, Dorothy Thompson, Margaret Mead, Katharine Hepburn, Babe Didrikson Zaharias, and Martha Graham -- you will pick up something new and interesting in the chapters of this book. If some of these women are new to you, you will get to know them as new and interesting friends. I did lean more toward the chapters on the women I was more familiar with -- Eleanor Roosevelt, Margaret Mead, Katharine Hepburn, and Marian Anderson.

Susan Ware deftly chronicles the professional and private lives of seven notable women of our century. She shows how the creation or re-creation of their personae was an essential element in their success, whether they craved fame or chose a different lifestyle. She pays special attention to how they balanced their lives--married, single, or with partners, with or without children--to provide examples for today's women. All seven women chose to live exceptional and unconventional lives, offering other women examples of the ability to live beyond the limits imposed by society or family, to dream and strive, to be independent and fulfilled.

.com Anyone awake during the most rudimentary U.S. history lesson has at least a foggy notion about most of the seven American women biographer Susan Ware selected for *Letter to the World*. Social activist and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt is included along with globetrotting journalist Dorothy Thompson, who sent hundreds of dispatches from foreign war zones, and anthropologist Margaret Mead, most famed for the sexual Eden she painted in *Coming of Age in Samoa*. Rounding out the field are the pithy androgynous actress Katharine Hepburn, outrageously gifted athlete Babe Didrikson Zaharias, volatile modern-dance pioneer Martha Graham, and opera star Marian Anderson. Ware debunks certain widely touted conceits about her subjects: Dorothy Thompson, for example, never ran off to cover a war dressed in a shimmering evening gown; she stopped off at home to change and pack first. Ware has a zest for these women and has culled many choice quotes by and about them. When asked by reporters if there was anything she didn't play, Didrikson answered succinctly: "Yeah, dolls." Readers who find these thumbnail biographies tantalizing, but too brief to be deeply satisfying, would do well to pick up books such as *No Ordinary Time*, *Blackberry Winter*, and *My Lord, What a Morning*. --Francesca Coltrera  
From *Publishers Weekly* Ware here gives a feminist reading to the lives of seven 20th-century women, all of whom embodied feminism yet did not espouse it: First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, journalist Dorothy Thompson, anthropologist Margaret Mead, actress Katharine Hepburn, athlete Babe Didrikson Zaharias, dancer Martha Graham and contralto Marian Anderson. Among them only Roosevelt identified publicly with women's issues, whereas most of the others paid lip service to women's traditional role while giving the lie to domesticity in their own lives. Although the profiles are brief they are by no means sketchy, for Ware (*Still Missing: Amelia Earhart and the Search for Modern Feminism*) has clearly read so widely about her subjects that she projects a certain intimacy with each, giving readers that same sense as well. The portraits are flattering, even if the author finds Hepburn self-centered, Graham overly aggressive and Anderson a touch saccharine. In these well-rounded pieces, she discusses the probable bisexuality of Roosevelt, Thompson, Zaharias and Mead, which, she suggests, was a part of their autonomy. These women led lives so public and productive they became icons, fittingly so, as Ware documents, and readers will feel enriched to be reacquainted with them. Photos.  
Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Library Journal* Ware (*Still Missing: Amelia Earhart and the Search for Modern Feminism*, LJ 11/15/93) considers the lives of seven women who had an exceptional impact on 20th-century American culture and society's perception of the role of women: Eleanor Roosevelt, Dorothy Thompson, Margaret Mead, Katharine Hepburn, Babe Didrikson Zaharias, Martha Graham, and Marian Anderson. In addition to focusing on outstanding achievements in their chosen fields, Ware looks at their often unconventional private lives, the public personas they forged, and how they maintained the public's interest through the media. The lives of all seven women have been the subject of much previous research, as Ware's well-documented notes show. What is unique here is bringing them together and comparing their stands on issues such as feminism, equal rights, choosing motherhood, and aging. While one might wish the author had omitted the fanciful introduction that has the seven women "auditioning" for their parts, this book is both informative and entertaining. Recommended for biography, history, and women's studies collections. ?Joan W. Gartland, Detroit P.L. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.