



The Taj Mahal; The Houses of Parliament

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Here are two additions to 'Great Buildings', a handsome series for secondary students which already boasts books on the Colosseum and the Great Pyramid, among others. The books are written by enthusiasts for their subjects and offer sidelights on the institutions and culture of particular times through a history of outstanding buildings. The continuous texts are lucid and the visual sources are integrated well. They are beautifully presented, especially in their choice of colour photographs, marred only by the occasional illustrations, which, particularly in the case of the Taj Mahal, can only appear inadequate beside the other visual sources used, whatever the skills of the illustrator.

The Taj Mahal is the more successful of the two titles, partly because its focus is clearer. It is impossible to write the history of British democracy in the space of a book this size, but it is a temptation that **The Houses of Parliament** cannot entirely resist. Also, Moorcroft, in **The Taj Mahal**, is able, particularly through quotations, to bring out the human dimensions of the building. It was built, after all, by Shah Jahan, a ruthless, cultured warrior Emperor, and grief stricken widower, out of love for his dead wife, Mumtaz Mahal. And it is a ravishing mausoleum. Both books have a good bibliography and an adequate index and glossary.

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