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Review of The Potawatomi

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Clifton’s The Potawatomi is one of a series of books in American Indian history designed for “young adults.” Not-so-young adults will find the book of little use and would be better served by referring to Clifton’s article on the Potawatomi in the Handbook of North American Indians.

Despite its having been written for a different audience than Great Plains Quarterly’s usual readership, or perhaps because of it, The Potawatomi raised interesting questions about the state of Indian history. In general, I sympathize with the problems Clifton must have faced in trying to simplify the Potawatomis’ complex history into a narrative accessible to teenagers, but I was disturbed by his tendency to place the Potawatomi in the backseat of their own history. This is particularly the case in a chapter called “Coping With Americans,” in which we read about the battle of Fallen Timbers from the perspective of “Mad Anthony” Wayne. Also in this chapter Clifton claims that Indian lead-