Kenneth Bartlett. *Florence in the Age of the Medici and Savonarola. 1464–1498. A Short History with Documents.* Indianapolis-Cambridge: Hackett, 2018. Pp. 176. ISBN 9781624666810.

This book is one in a series of volumes produced by the Hackett Publishing Company called *Passages: Key Moments in History*. The series integrates narrative overviews of determinant historical moments with key passages from primary source texts.

In this book, Bartlett offers a clear and concise overview of mainly political events in the history of Florence during the end of the fifteenth century, with a focus on the key figures and crucial episodes of the time. Pointing to the connection between past and present, in the opening paragraph of the preface, Bartlett writes, “the purpose of this book is to trace the development of one city, Florence, during a relatively brief period of its history to understand its significance not only for its own time but also for ours” (xiii). The narrative is developed over three chapters: Florence before the Medici; the Medici Hegemony (1434–1494); and Savonarola and Florence, the New Jerusalem (1494–1498). In fluid and clear prose, Bartlett describes how the rule of the Medici family shaped Florence and how it prepared the way for the rise of the Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola. The Medici—Cosimo, Piero, Lorenzo, and Piero di Lorenzo—are introduced with their merits and defects and an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses with which they influenced the political, social, and artistic life of Florence. Bartlett explains Savonarola’s popularity with a description of the precarious political stability created during the rule of the Medici, and the enthusiasm to see Florence as a shining example of a political system based on popular sovereignty. But, not surprisingly, Savonarola and his *Piagnoni* party made many powerful enemies. Among them was the pope, Alexander VI. In the spring of 1498, Savonarola was arrested; he was declared a heretic, he was hanged, and his body was burned.

Bartlett’s book traces the political problems faced by the Florentines through the turbulent fifteenth century, and his work is “an investigation of how states experiment in granting power to individuals, factions, and groups, and how ambitious individuals and groups grasp power at moments of crisis” (76). This investigation is supported by 32 excerpts from primary sources. A short paragraph comes

before each excerpt, introducing the author of the document and the reason for which it was written. These excerpts include an extract from Giovanni Villani's *New Chronicle* on the arrival of Walter of Brienne (84–85); a letter from Piero de' Medici (representing the Medici bank in Bruges) regarding the papal appointment of a Bishop (91–92); a passage from humanist Leonardo Bruni's *Praise of the City of Florence* (96–98); a letter from Lucrezia Tornabuoni to her husband Piero de' Medici describing a prospective bride for their son Lorenzo (102–103); a letter on the tumult in Florence in 1470 written by the Florentine patrician Alessandra Strozzi to her son Filippo in Naples (104–105); a poem by Giovanni di Antonio Zacchi on the sack of Volterra (107–108); an excerpt from classical scholar Angelo Poliziano's *Commentarium* on the Pazzi Conspiracy (109–112); an allegory of Lorenzo the Magnificent and Florence from the vernacular work *Driadeo* by Luca Pulci (116–118); a letter by Lorenzo de' Medici to his son Giovanni on becoming a cardinal (119–122); an excerpt of Luca Landucci's diary on the expulsion of the Medici from Florence in November 1494 (131–139); a passage from Savonarola's *Treatise on Florentine Government* (140–142); an excerpt from the *History* of Piero Parenti on the Bands of Hope and the expulsion of the Jews (152–153); and a passage from Luca Landucci's diary on the examination, execution, and burning of Savonarola and two disciples (165–166).

Though the excerpts are quite short, given the complexity of the topics and the varied cast of characters, they are very useful because they offer insight into the real people, places, and facts that built the history and political structure of fifteenth-century Florence. Moreover, the excerpts of the documents teach students, as well as general readers, how to analyze historical events through materials that provide firsthand accounts. Bartlett's narrative and his selection of documents are valuable tools for those interested in the Florentine Renaissance and those who wish to have a survey of material to begin research and analysis on the rule and politics of the Medici and the social context of fifteenth-century Florence.

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