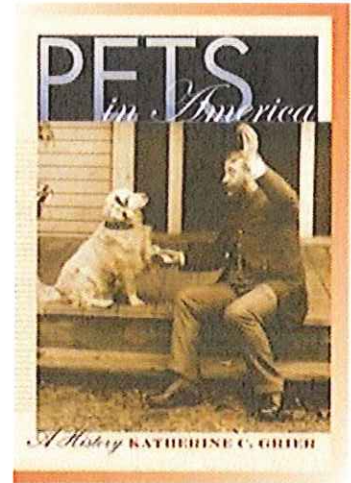


Reading Guide:

Pets in America: A History

Katherine C. Grier (2006)



Thought Questions:

1. Did this book change your perspective on pet-keeping, either contemporary or historical? How?
2. Professor Grier begins and ends the book by discussing her own experiences as a pet-owner. Do you think her perspective as a pet-owner affects her arguments in the book? How might the book have been different if written by a non-pet-owner?
3. What is the most important or memorable thing you will take away from having read this book? Which chapter was of most interest to you?
4. Professor Grier is a material culture specialist, as opposed to an author from a different field looking at material life. Did you see her background reflected in the book? How?
5. Were you glad you read this book? To whom would you recommend it? What other aspects of the topic are you interested in exploring?
6. *Founding Gardeners*, the April selection, focused on people and their relationship to plants. This month, we look at people and their relationship to animals. Did you see any connections or parallels between *Founding Gardeners* and *Pets in America*?
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

Katherine C. Grier is a Professor of History, as well as Director of the Ph. D. Program in American Civilization, and Director of the Museum Studies program at the University of Delaware. Grier's research and writing interests lie in the history of everyday life in America. She has said that she uses her own personal history as inspiration for her research. In conjunction with her book, *Pets in America*, Grier guest curated an exhibition of the same name that traveled around the U.S. from 2005 to 2009. Grier has worked at the Strong Museum and the McKissick Museum, and is an active volunteer and consultant for small museums and historic houses. Grier is also the author of *Culture and Comfort: Parlor Making and Middle-Class Identity, 1850-1930* and several other books on cultural history.

If you liked *Pets in America: A History*, you may enjoy these other books (descriptions courtesy of Google.com and Amazon.com):

Also by Katherine C. Grier:

***Culture and Comfort: Parlor Making and Middle-Class Identity, 1850-1930*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2010.**—Tracing the fortunes of the parlor from its early incarnations in "palace" hotels and steamships through its heyday in the mid-nineteenth century to its metamorphosis into the modern living room, Katherine C. Grier shows how the parlor's appointments reflected the self-image of the Victorian middle class.

Related Books:

Anderson, Virginia DeJohn. *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.—In this brilliantly original account of colonists in New England, Virginia DeJohn Anderson reveals how livestock played a vitally important role in the settling of the New World. Livestock, Anderson writes, were a central factor in the cultural clash between colonists and Indians as well as a driving force in the expansion west.

Brunner, Bernd. *The Ocean at Home: An Illustrated History of the Aquarium*. London: Reaktion Books, 2011.—In *The Ocean at Home*, Bernd Brunner traces the development of the aquarium from the Victorian era to the present day. Brunner provides insight into the cultural and social circumstances that accompanied the aquarium's swift rise in popularity.

MacDonough, Katherine. *Reigning Cats and Dogs: A History of Pets at Court since the Renaissance*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999.—A history of royal families of the world from the perception of their pets, including the Empress Josephine's love of dogs which went so far as to provide her pugs with a maid and to spend an estimated 568 francs on their daily running costs.

Ritvo, Harriet. *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.—Harriet Ritvo provides a picture of how animals figured in English thinking during the 19th century and, by extension, how they served as metaphors for human psychological needs and sociopolitical aspirations.

Rothfels, Nigel. *Savages and Beasts: The Birth of the Modern Zoo*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008.—In *Savages and Beasts*, Nigel Rothfels traces the origins of the modern zoo to the efforts of the German animal entrepreneur Carl Hagenbeck. *Savages and Beasts* demonstrates how seemingly enlightened ideas about the role of zoos and the nature of animal captivity developed within the essentially tawdry business of placing exotic creatures on public display.