



# Snake Pits, Talking Cures and Magic Bullets

*By Deborah Kent*

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Looks at how the mentally ill have been treated throughout history, focusing on advances made in the 19th and 20th centuries regarding mental hospitals, medications, and social acceptance.

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## Snake Pits, Talking Cures and Magic Bullets By Deborah Kent Bibliography

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## **Editorial Review**

From School Library Journal

Grade 6-9-An excellent history peppered with fascinating accounts of the bizarre ideas, contraptions, and methods used to treat mentally ill people throughout the centuries. Kent begins her coverage with Babylonian and Egyptian societies. She discusses the 1656 founding of the notorious Hospital General in Paris and institutions that caged and chained their patients. She relates stories about "madhouses" that put their patients on display for a fascinated public for a penny and accounts of reformers who tried to humanize treatments. Her discussions about modern-day issues include a profile of John Forbes Nash Jr., the scientist portrayed in *A Beautiful Mind*; the widespread use of Prozac; and consciousness-raising efforts among the mentally ill. Black-and-white archival photographs and reproductions appear throughout. With a thorough bibliography and glossary, this is a fine treatment of a topic not heavily covered for this audience.

*Linda Beck, Indian Valley Public Library, Telford, PA*

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From [Booklist](#)

Gr. 6-12. In a thoroughly researched, well-paced history, Kent focuses on the major advances and bizarre setbacks in the diagnosis and treatment of the mentally ill, beginning with the role of the ancient Native American shamans and continuing through current trends and medical discoveries. The large-size book, with clear type, photos, and prints, is spaciouly designed for browsing as well as in-depth reading. Lots of eye-catching sidebars break up the chronological history with particular cases, both obscure and famous (or, more often, infamous). In the course of the history, readers will learn once-hidden facts about well-known figures from Joan of Arc and King George III to Rosemary Kennedy. There are descriptions of barbaric treatments in the past as well as compelling positive discussions of current drug treatments and debates about psychoanalysis and other psychotherapy. Useful for psychology, sociology, and history classes, this will also interest readers with personal or family experience of mental illness and its continuing social stigma.

Includes chapter notes, a bibliography (fiction, nonfiction, and online sources), and a chronology. *Roger Leslie*

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**From reader reviews:**

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**Kari Hughes:**

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