



## The School as a Safe Haven

*Rollin J. Watson, Robert S. Watson*

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## **The School as a Safe Haven** Rollin J. Watson, Robert S. Watson

The authors set out to see if the American school has always been safe. Unfortunately, they found that it has not, that it is confronted in each new generation with a whole new set of threats and dangers. This is a unique book that examines American schools and their safety from the point of view of historical incursions and threats rather than from anecdotal and sometimes questionable information. Through the examination of thousands of documents and incidents, the authors show that the American school has always been subjected to threats from many different sources. Student violence is only a small part of this danger; in fact, the authors show that schools are confronted with many threats besides those presented sporadically by lone violent killers. The authors, at the same time, believe there has been an overreaction to violence that may in itself not be salubrious for the academic programs and moral climates of our schools.

After the crisis at Columbine High School, many well-known commentators said that this was the worst crisis ever to take place in an American school. The authors decided to look at the whole topic of school safety in America from the period right after World War II to the present. This unique book is the first to place school safety at the heart of the educational endeavor in America, the first to treat the subject of threats to the school in a broader, historical context, and the first to treat the subject as part of intellectual history. By documenting thousands of instances during the period after World War II through the end of the century, the authors have concluded that the myth of the school as a safe haven has been a comforting, but not always accurate, metaphor. The approach to the subject is from a myriad of perspectives. First, the state of school buildings after the War is discussed. Next, the authors look at juvenile delinquency in the 1950s. Then they put school fires in context, followed by a chapter on school bus accidents and other devastating events from nature. In *Civil Rights, Uncivil Schools* they discuss the deleterious impact of the century's most important social movement on schools. In the creative chapter, *The Demise of Discipline*, they demonstrate, through research, ways in which discipline in the schools has been eroded. In *A Decadent Counterculture* they assess the threats to schools by sex, drugs, and gangs. In *Terror Comes to School* they show that many violent intrusions began in the 1970s and earlier, well before the 1990s. The concluding chapter, *The Paradox of the Clinton Era* brings the history to the end of the century. The Postscript discusses new ways of looking at threats to school safety.

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