

Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 10:39 PM (230 words)

“Battle Cry of Freedom” by James McPherson looks like a very interesting book to read. I remember in high school I learned a little bit about the Civil War, but not that much. The stuff that I did learn I don’t remember much, so I would like to refresh my memory when I read this book. I am very glad that I am taking this class because I am interested in the Civil War. When I first looked at the book, I thought it was pretty big and there will be a lot to learn, but I am excited for it.

The way that the reviews were told makes it seems like this book is quite descriptive with a lot of detail about the events that have happened in the Civil War. In the first review that I read, he gives a lot of input on how great the book is and how he thinks it is one of the best ways to put the Civil War all told in one book. The second review is interesting how he tells about the book. He gives some details that makes me start wanting to read more and more of the book.

I am looking forward to reading and taking this class. I think I will learned a lot that is needed to know about the history of the United States.

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Last edited: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 09:35 PM (363 words)

After completing the 3 articles and review of the book I have come to a few different conclusions about this book. It was interesting to see the contrast of all of the different arguments. The first review from the New York Times was very supportive of the book as a whole. With the exception of not agreeing with the vocabulary used in the titles of chapters eight and nine, they were very pro McPherson. At one point in the review he said, "He knows how to use precise details to bring the past, even the overfamiliar past, to vivid life again." That statement expresses a lot about the writing style of McPherson. Later it also says that other accounts of the Civil War "usually sacrifice either detail (often important detail) to narrative flow, or narrative flow to detail" but in *Battle Cry of Freedom* McPherson does a good job of not having to sacrifice anything.

On the flip side of this argument in the shorter review of this book it says, "*Battle Cry of Freedom* is primarily a military history concerned with the tactics and strategy of the war, with a secondary but significant emphasis on the political maneuvering and events of the era." After reading this it really shows me really shows me opinion is everything. One review may really like the way McPherson portrays the civil war and what they see as importance and the next may think "it is possible he takes it too far." But it gives me a little more hope in the book, when at the end of the second review it says that it is still fair to the Civil War and also informative.

After reading those two reviews this book seems like the information portrayed is going to help me learn a lot about the Civil War. Whether it be focused on military history, or that it doesn't sacrifice any information, I feel that the accuracy will not be compromised. The only hesitation I had was when reading the Amazon reviews. Most of the low reviews had a common factor. That is was hard to read. One even said that it was a chore.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM
Last edited: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 09:56 AM (307 words)

McCallum Billijo

1-9-11

After reading the reviews about this book, they have left me wanting to read it in its entirety to be able to form my own opinion on it. I may not be in a position academically to critique it from a professional point of view, but would like to see for myself.

The arguments to me both had valid points and to be able to even tell us about the civil war that happened so long ago could not be an easy task. There have been so many different documented account of what occurred during the civil war I believe it would be difficult to not write with some sort of a personal opinion on it all.

I will be approaching this book with an open mind and willing to hear what he has to tell me, I am and always have been extremely interested in history and love learning all I can about it.

I have a good level of confidence about this book and its information although some say he has left out some critical detail's, and denied the fact based evidence of black confederate soldiers , there must be a reason why our educators have chosen this book to help in their educating us, so I am putting my trust in them and am hoping I will learn things I did not know prior to reading it.

The only thing that actually worries me about the reviews are the statements about the book being a hard read I hope that is not true. I am also worried about the information they said about him being in support of slavery. This worries me because I am afraid of becoming bias towards him and his views. As I said before I am going to read this book with an open mind.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 05:23 PM (0 words)

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM
Last edited: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:02 PM (175 words)

Cori Perryman

01/09/2011

McPherson Assignment

In reading the reviews of the ***Battle Cry of Freedom***, I am most **definitely excited to read the book**. There seems to be some **differing of opinions of the reviews**. However, all seem certain that the book is well written and informative.

In another review coming from Oxford University states that the Battle Cry of Freedom is, "the best one-volume treatment of its subject." Although I feel that these are bold statements made regarding the book, it certainly makes me very curious and excited to read such a book.

The only worry I have is becoming very wrapped up into too much emotion. I have always been extremely interested in the Civil War, but have very strong feelings regarding it.

Dave Thomers review seems to be more critical in nature but there is still a sense that **Thomer** thinks that the book is worth reading. **Thomer** says it is, "well worth the investment of time for anyone who seeks to understand this turning point in American history."

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Last edited: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 03:16 PM (261 words)

Reading through the reviews of "Battle Cry of Freedom" by James McPherson I am enticed by the reviews concerning everyday life and other non-military sections of the book. While I decided to take this class to learn more about the Civil War I am also interested in the daily lifestyle of the people who weren't involved, the women left to 'keep the home fires burning', students and business owners who continued everyday life while their neighbors left home to fight; how did the war change these peoples life? Other classes I have taken on the war only concerned themselves with military issues and strategy. Little was discussed about daily life which always felt like a missing part of the war. I look forward to learning more about this subject from McPherson's viewpoint.

The negative reviews all seem based on McPherson's siding with the North, with only a few commenting on incorrect information. This appears to be a common for history biographies: everyone develops their own viewpoint about the situation and tends to feel that if a book doesn't agree with their beliefs then it is biased against them. I believe it would be difficult to write a non-biased account of an issue as divided as the Civil War, slavery, and the black vs white issues that remain to this day. With the information provided from the negative reviews I will keep a more open mind concerning McPherson's opinion of the South and take any negative attitudes he might display with a grain of salt.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM
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From just simply reading the reviews, I feel like this is a bias, and inaccurate book. The titles of the reviews seem somewhat childish: "Does This Pulitzer Make Me Look Fat?" How am I supposed to take this review seriously, when I didn't even want to read it? First impressions are the most important impression, and this holds extremely true in writing. But beyond that, throughout this review the writer never sites where he is getting his information. Now, myself, not being a Civil War buff, I cannot make any assumptions until I get some facts, and this reviewer gave me no cited facts.

This review does not, in any way, deter me from this book at.

On the other hand, the first review that I read gave me a positive feeling about *Battle Cry of Freedom*, as being a well written book that reveals the intricacies of the Civil War, that were the part of the bloodiest war in our history. I also get that there is a sense of reality in the book that is meant to transplant you into the Civil War era.

"Lincoln's sudden disappearance from the book gives us something of the

shock that his contemporaries felt when he died [. . .]” (“The Bloodiest of

Wars”). The way that the reviewer puts these words on paper, promises

reality. Just like life, a moment comes and goes, and once it happens you

have absolutely no control over the past, you just have to cope with it and

look to the future, which this great nation did.

I have great confidence in this book because the reviews promise a sense

of reality. A century and a half has gone by since the war ended, so having an

aspect of reality will make the war more relevant.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM
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Deonte Johnson

1/9/2011

Professor Escobar

Battle Cry

I will be approaching this book in a scholarly way. It has gotten great reviews on amazon.com as well as other websites that rate books. The issues that worries me the most about any book is the background of the author. Depending on the authors personality or how they were raised and taught, will have an impact on how they would present the material in this book. I have a great level of confidence in this book. It has received great reviews, I'm sure it may have a few errors in it, but nothing is perfect.

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Last edited: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 02:45 PM (329 words)

For question one, I found the articles very interesting, as well as the Amazon book opinions. It seems McPherson received more positive feedback than negative. The general opinion seemed to agree that he was well documented in footnotes and in the bibliography. A point that I feel is important. The negative statements, to me, seemed to be primarily politically oriented. In the second article the writers' point of view differed from McPhersons in "that the course of the war was not determined by one particular advantage that the North held over the South", vs. the articles opinion, "the North had a tremendous advantage in the industrial capacity that allowed it to turn out guns, uniforms , and other military supplies." From what I have read so far I feel comfortable with the book. I realized that no one can cover everything perfectly. Everyone will have their own political point of view. The point being is to take the best material or author you can find as a base and build on that.

For questing two the issues of history that worry me the most is personal opinion or political bias, though I am not entirely sure that can be eliminated. McPherson has written many history books and is well researched. I will approach this book with keen interest and the awareness that the author is not perfect. That will not affect my interest. I like that fact that he has many resources and footnotes in this book that shows the research that was done as stated in article two as well as other commentary. That makes me feel more confident in his approach.

I feel that this book is going to being very interesting and very informative. I have confidence for the above stated reasons of writing experience, and research. I have no problem with this book as our text. My confidence level is high. I expect to learn a great deal and gain useful insight from this text.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 07:56 PM (264 words)

I figured McPherson's text on the Civil War would take an unabashedly pro-Union stance. After all, history is written by the winners and when it comes to a conflict that is best known as the United States' final obstacle in ridding the country of slavery, the good vs. evil narrative practically writes itself.

I don't usually take much stock in reviews. What I'd like to know most about the text is whether or not it's enjoyable to read, and the New York Times review provides that for me. As for the quality of the content, it's difficult to create an all-inclusive account of any given subject — as I had noted in the Ken Burns forum — and the omissions many of the Amazon reviewers referred to I took with a grain of salt. It's also incredibly tough for me to take anyone criticizing a literal work seriously when their own writing contains enormous errors in grammar and punctuation, even on the Internet.

After reading the reviews and flipping through a few pages of the book, I can tell I'm going to enjoy McPherson's prose and flow. The sources for his information are well-documented in the footnotes, so I'm sure that I won't contend with any of his facts. However, I'll finish this class with just as many questions as answers about the era. I guess that's why there are hundreds of Civil War books out there. If journalism has taught me anything, it's the importance of having multiple sources.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM
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After reading the various reviews about the McPherson book I've come to an early decision that I can trust most the material within the book. While some information within the book has been shown to be erroneous I am fairly confident that through reading the book I will be able to get an accurate grasp of the history of the Civil War.

Through reading the reviews the one thing that worries me the most is that several of the Amazon.com reviewers said that the information was biased as if the author was presenting his only the facts that supported his opinions. While this remains a concern of mine I am quite sure of my own ability to separate the facts from the fodder. It is very hard for any writer to not to include there own personal bias but with history it is absolutely imperative not to be one-sided.

Overall I feel that the book will give an accurate portrayal of the events of the Civil War with giving a special emphasis on the events leading up the war. I am however, disappointed that several reviewers said that there was not a lot written about the days leading to the end of the war. Oh well, I guess I'll just have to read it for myself and see if I need to seek further sources in my quest for knowledge about the Civil War.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM
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Gary Norton

At first I thought that the newspaper book reviewer would be the person that I would pay most attention to but he sounded very biased. Even though he did criticize the use of the word revolution in the titles of chapters 7 and 8 he opened up by saying Battle Cry of Freedom may be the best single book ever published about the Civil War. He continued to talk about James McPherson's many merits as a historian and his great literary skill. This to me does not sound like someone who has an open mind, it sounds like someone who would give the author good reviews regardless of how the book was. As far as the blogger goes I have no idea who it is so I do not believe him doing an online review of the book is any different than me doing an online review of the book so I am left with the many people that bought the book to read because they were interested in the subject. Which is generally how I know whether I want to buy a book.

Overall it sounds like James McPherson did an excellent job of setting the stage at the time of the book and leading into the Civil War. The problem I would have with it is that it is not long enough to cover such a monumental event. I have never read a single book that is on any war. He is criticized for some inaccurate details which are important to me but I am sure through the course of the term they will be sorted out.

Despite inaccuracies and length which are the same problems you would have to deal with any book on the Civil War I believe it will teach me a lot.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 05:22 PM (310 words)

You should never judge a book or a movie by what others think. What one person may find boring, you may find intriguing. What others may rave about, may leave you feeling as if you missed something or wondering why others rated it so highly.

The first review, A New York Times book review spoke highly of the book however stated that it was not without its flaws. I am not a huge history buff, but after reading this review I was excited about reading a book that could vividly bring the details of history to life for me.

The next set of reviews, an online blogger again speaks highly about the content and the accuracy of the book. While the third set of reviews, readers just like you and me and various critiques, both for and against the book and its content. Based on the reviews that I read, I can not come to an early decision about how I will be approaching the book, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*.

Based on the reviews, the only issues related to historical accuracy worry me the most is in the accounting of the events that occurred during the Lincoln era and the other battles that took place before the Civil War. I'm afraid the accounts forgotten or not included may be important when considering the roots of the cause, the turning point or the end results gained by the end of the war. I understand that not actions or events can be accounted for; however, I am fairly confident that the book portrays an accurate account of events that happened before and during the Civil War.

I'm looking forward to reading the book, watching the videos and reading and responding to the blogs and making my own judgments and assumptions along the way.

By: Heather Peckham

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 08:06 PM (250 words)

My first assumption about McPherson's "Battle Cry of Freedom" is that it must be a great resource to have won a Pulitzer and secondly, that it must be an accurate account to be selected as the class text for this course. Plus, McPherson is a professor at Princeton, a very prestigious college.

That being said, after reading many of the reviews offered, I am now seriously dreading this book. The majority of the Amazon readers really picked it apart for being so dry and boring, in addition to being consistently inaccurate. The second review also paints a pretty grim picture of bias writing.

The NY Times review takes a different approach entirely. Although some opinion-based flaws are pointed out, for the most part, this review sings McPherson's praises. While this review does carry some weight with me as it is coming from the New York Times, it is still hard to believe that this critic was so flattering and had few actual critiques.

In comparison, I thought "Why would I care what other readers thought about this book. They are nobody's on Amazon" but after reading some of the more detailed reviews, especially those which cited quotes and gave counter information and sources, I began to feel the dread of reading this book rising again. Over all, I will try to keep an open mind to Battle Cry, but I am not nearly as excited to read it after reading these reviews.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM
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Holly Henderson

January 11, 2011

History 209

American Civil War

The source of this review is very good one because New York Times is very well known news company. I read this review and thought that it pointed out good points. This review was another great point view from reader and critic.

I want to start first with the arguments in support. The review states how this book rates next to all the other civil books written and sold. I think so far this is one of the top books, I have read. The facts and stories go into great details. One example is in chapter 9 the book describes a battle on July 11, 2011. The goes into deep details and it pointed out that the first general to die was Garnett. I did not know this. Chapter 9 gives a descriptive details on white population in the border states that very good to learn. The more I read the I learn and I really learning more. The arguments in support are good points too. The backgrounds of maps need to be to colored a different shade besides gray. If I would choose the shade, I would choose white. This shade would make easier to see where the southern forces fought and traveled.

I think, this book will be enjoyed by me and class. I plan to read this book slowly to get all the information. The stories have been well written. My passion is studying the American Civil War and I love gaining more knowledge in this book. When I got this book, I already looking forward to reading it.

There are two negative issues with this book so far. First all maps

need to have a different background color in order to read and understand them better. I also would like full names to be easily found. In chapter 9, I can not find Garnett's first name. I really wanted to to know his first name to research him. That is only complaints about this book everything else is good so far.

I feel this book will be almost perfect for this class. It will be great book to teach the class. So far the book following along with lesson pretty well. This book is written well to teach students.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM

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After considering arguments in support and against "Battle Cry of Freedom", I have decided that I do have much confidence in learning about The Civil War from this book.

The article "The Bloodiest of Wars" stated, "It may actually be the best ever published", and "It is compellingly readable". I am glad to hear this about such a thick history book. I have never read a college history book that I would say "is compellingly readable". I have also never read a History Book that won a Pulitzer Prize. I am excited!

Is this book accurate? My research has led me to believe that it is. Most reviews that I've read seem to lean toward it being a very accurate book. My only concern after reading the two articles and the Amazon reviews is: Is McPherson pro-north in writing this book? Many people say he is somewhat pro-north but that he still states the facts. I hoping that even if McPherson is bias, he will try to show it as little as possible in this book.

The notnews.org blog by David Thomer states "It's hard to use a word like balanced to describe a book that depicts pro-slavery southerners as the aggressors and hails Lincoln as a great leader". This concerns me somewhat because I do want this book to be balanced. The next sentence states "However, McPherson does offer praise for many confederates and criticism for many in the union." So it is somewhat balanced? My expectations are that this book will lean a little north, but I think we will at least get a full view of the South.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM
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Jason Carlstrom

HST 209

McPherson Assignment

To get a feel for Battle Cry of Freedom I mostly read Amazon reviews to get a general idea of the book by people who read it. 174 people gave it a 5 star rating, while only 4 submitted the book with a worthless 1 star. Comparing the reviews I'm getting an understanding that the book is very detailed; touching points on politics, economy, voting, and the battles. With all this information packed into the 800 pages it sounds like an intimidating read to prepare for.

Reading the negative reviews first I noticed comments like "This is the most boring book.. It is a work from a biased perspective..chapters are scattered."(Amazon 1 star reviews). Basically all the negative reviews were written by students who were assigned the book for class and were not happy about it. I understand how stressful it can be reading while doing your best to soak in every bit of detail to prepare for a test. It can ruin the learning experience and the class. Looking over the 5 star reviews everyone praised how well rounded and informational it is about the Civil War and the era for being a single volume book.

How I plan to approach Battle Cry of Freedom is to hopefully have an understanding on what to look for while reading. I want to

prepare myself for each quiz and highlight notes throughout to refer back and study over. What worries me about accuracy is how an author can be one-sided on issues and could leave out key information. Like the Morrison and May review on Ken Burns series they said "America's Civil War may as well be Ken Burns' Civil War."(Morrison&May)

Overall after reading the NYTimes, NotNews, and Amazon reviews on Battle Cry of Freedom by James M. McPherson I have confidence that I will gain a well rounded understanding of the Civil War.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM
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At first look, the book Battle Cry of Freedom seems to be one of the most complete and accurate books written about the United States Civil War. When I looked this book to buy for my online class **there was many sites that praised it**; all giving it four or five stars. When I saw that it also won the Pulitzer Prize award; I was sure that it would be one of the best books ever written about the Civil War.

Never once did it cross my mind to ask myself if it had any truth in it. **If I didn't have to write this paper about the questions about this book raises**. Questions like, how historically accurate and does it tell us both sides of the story. **Not just tell us what we want to hear**. We all know that North won the Civil War, but is this book making the South look like the devil for no good reason. History is written by the victors, not the losers.

The author James McPherson, I feel did a great job on the book. When I read the chapter 8, I found he did not take any sides. Just giving a true account of how the United States came to the verge of Civil War. I would hope that anyone that teaches American History at Princeton University should know what they are writing about.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Saturday, 8 January 2011, 03:32 PM (320 words)

Jesse Kennedy
History 209

McPhearson Acclaims and Critiques

The New York Times writer takes the most fair stance of the three reviews. McPhearson must wrestle with the same problems that all writers have which is to present as much information as possible while maintaining and generating interest. McPhearson is writing to an audience and he must maintain a compelling narrative. The Times reviewer's praise of the book illustrates this problem when he says, "It is comprehensive yet succinct, scholarly without being pedantic, eloquent but unrheterical. It is compellingly readable."

Unfortunately the limitation of keeping his book relative and selling copies leads to the greatest critiques of his book, personal bias. The second review written by a blogger is very similar to the first overall acclaim with a few critiques about McPherson's obvious biases. The most appealing aspect of this book to me is going to be the lead into the war. I am looking forward to his attempt to, "...carefully establish the political and social context of the time..."

The individuals who offered negative reviews of the book generally did so because of very focused shortfalls in the book. Most negative reviewers already had a predetermined bias that McPhearson failed to enforce. Some were upset with McPherson's general view of the events and causes, but I find it hard to critique a person's view. Unfortunately it is very hard to discount one person's account of events with another's. The more troubling aspect of the reviews are the alleged hard fact errors in the book, such as dates and poll figures.

As with all historical sources the views in this book must be taken with a grain of salt. I am however greatly anticipating learning about the Civil War and more about its causes. Ultimately I hope that McPhearson will bring a little more humanity to the causes of the darkest times in our nation.

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I have in fact made an early decision on how I will approach this book. I will approach this book with an eagerness to learn the historical facts concerning the politics leading up to the Civil War, as well as the military tactics and strategies of the battles. I am very analytical and I am fascinated by anything strategic or tactical, and based on the reviews I have read about Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era I believe it will be very insightful as to the events leading up to the war as well as the military technology, tactics, and maneuvers on the battlefield.

My only concerns with historical accuracy would be fabrication of certain locations or events as pointed out in the second paragraph first page of the article "The Bloodiest of Wars" written in The New York Times, and possibly overindulgence of vocabulary also stated in the third paragraph, on the third page of the same article. However, with that being said, I still have the utmost confidence in this textbook and James McPherson as a historian. Based on the materials I have read James M. McPherson is a renowned author and historian, I believe Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era will be deeply satisfying from a scholastic standpoint.

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After looking at these reviews and seeing what people had to say about this book, the way I'm going to approach this book is with an open mind and without the opinions of the book buyers and their negative reviews. I feel that if I read it without thinking about the supposed "flaws" it has, I will develop my own opinion of the book and get more out of it than I would if I already had a pre-implanted opinion. The issues regarding historical accuracy that concern me are very limited because after reading the reviews by both readers and experts, I have drawn the conclusion that while the historical events talked about are accurate, the actual telling of the stories and the labels that accompany those stories are somewhat in question. However, even though I am skeptical about some of the accuracies of his storytelling and labels, I still am very confident in his abilities to tell this story and teach me more about the civil war than I knew coming into this course.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM
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After reading the two reviews on *Battle Cry of Freedom* I am more enthusiastic about reading it. I have read McPherson's work before. I was impressed then, and from what I have read thus far, I believe I will be impressed again. The two reviews were conducted by two very different outlets. The first, a review from the New York Times was very positive about the book, the reviewer's only issue appeared to be on McPherson's wording for chapter titles, but he said "disagreements on points of emphasis do not deserve much emphasis themselves. The second reviewer hails from a website called notnews.com. This review was more negative in aspects, the main issue the reviewer appeared to have been in his eyes, McPherson's lack of objectiveness.

Both reviewers pointed out the good qualities of the book, that it is a thorough history of the Civil War, but not a voluminous set, the ability McPherson has to engage his reader, and accuracy. After reading the two reviews and from personal experience with McPherson's writing I am going to approach this book with enthusiasm. The only real issue with accuracy I believe I will have is over the objectiveness mentioned by the second reviewer. Overall, I have a high level of confidence with this book, and believe I will learn many things I did not previously know about the Civil War.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM

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McPherson

Kelly Culhane

After reading the arguments from all of the sources provided, I will be approaching this book with a small amount of skepticism. Before even reading the reviews, I had already had my doubts about the accuracy of the book. I realize that with a topic as big as the Civil War, it would be hard for almost anyone to get all the facts. It would be just as hard to present them in a manner that the average person can follow and understand.

One thing that I am concerned about is the point of view from the South being portrayed as equally and accurately as the North. I do not believe, like the Amazon.com readers, that McPherson is swayed or biased towards the North. I just believe that there were probably more historical documents available from the North. Not only do I think there was probably better record keeping in the North, I also think that much of the information for the South was probably destroyed during the war.

I must say that although the praise and criticisms of the article varied, I still do have confidence in this book. I think anyone who may be reading any kind of historical book should realize that all of the facts may not be given in the book. They should also realize that when it comes to books about war, you can only get the perspectives of the people with whom you are quoting or interviewing. That person can only speak for themselves, no one else. So you are not always going to get every side to the story. So far, I have enjoyed the chapters that I have read. Do we dare imagine what life would be like in The United States if the Civil War never happened?

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Monday, 3 January 2011, 04:31 PM (304 words)

The reviews on "Battle Cry of Freedom" by James M. McPherson, seem to be

overwhelmingly positive. The first review from the New York Times even saying "It may

actually be the best ever published" while referring to other accounts the reviewer was

familiar with that have been previously written on the Civil War. This statement, and his

description of it being a narrative that is based in historical fact which paints clearly the

events that transpired sending our nation into war, and has me wondering if this indeed will

be one of the best sources available that I can study, which will help me to better understand

at least some of the most obvious, and not so obvious that sent us into the war.

There are little imperfections in the eyes of this reviewer. Although, one of imperfections the

writer referred to has my interest, "never such a place as the Kingdom of Palermo". I am not

sure what this refers to, or if it will have any weight with discrediting any of the other

information.

Then there is the review in the notnews.org forum, and Dave Thomer gave McPherson's

book a glowing review as to the detail that went into the events that lead up to the war itself,

which again as with the previous review has me excited to think I can finally have a clearer

understanding of one of the most important pieces of our history.

His disagreements he voiced, I have to say, I have been wondering about some of the same

things myself, like the North having advantages over the South with, population, and

industry. His opinion is that McPherson's book isn't quite balanced. I however still look

forward to learning more from his writings, and anticipate having a clearer picture of what

truly happened.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Wednesday, 5 January 2011, 08:23 PM (404 words)

Before even opening this book I would say that judging by the reviews it seems to be a reliable source of information on the history of the Civil War. After reading all the reviews it seemed like most of the complaints were from people who know a lot about the war already and are paying attention to very little details. In the long run these little details may become very important but for this class, or for someone like myself who knows very little about the war I will not be paying attention to those little details. My main focus is going to be learning the overall basics about the war.

Judging by the reviews it seems that most of the issues with historical accuracy in this book are pretty minor. They had to do with little details such as the amount of votes that were casted, which in my opinion does not matter as much as the outcome of the voting. As long as that is correct then it probably won't affect my learning that much. There were other issues talked about such as a place that never actually existed. But as long as there were no major events that apparently happened in the so called place then it should not affect the outcome of the book.

Overall it seems to be a good book for an overall view on the war detailed enough for a person who knows very little about the war which is probably how a lot of the students in this class will be. For the most part the complaints about the facts in the book were about little details like number of votes etc. To someone who is just learning the basics on the war little facts like that won't matter so much, as long as the outcome of the voting is the truth then I don't see how it will matter that much to an amateur "civil warist". I like it does not just focus on the war itself but on what lead to the war and what else was happening during the war and what was going on in society. It seems he may have chosen some vocabulary poorly (issues with "revolution" being used improperly), and is a little too one sided at times but now that I am aware of these issues I will be conscious about them while reading the book.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:37 PM (357 words)

Marcus Calahan

1/9/2011

Prof. Escobar

Battle Cry of Freedom

The articles gave more positive outlooks on the book than negative ones. The decision I have arrived to is that the book can be used as a close to concrete text for the history of the Civil War. The detailed attributes that are used in the book such as maps, politicians and generals that were discussed in reviews seem to be right on. I have a high level of confidence in the book and that it will serve well as a good source.

There are not many concerns that I have with the book. The book is mostly military based and I believe sides are taken in the change of the narrators voice. Making General McClellan seem like the bad guy and Robert Lee seem like the good guy. A bias may be present when the viewers go into saying how Lincoln had a chance of not being re elected and how Lee could have been defeated at certain points in the war which are all debatable topics. History must be based on facts and not what could have happened. The obvious exist of course. I think if we investigate the authors background and see if he was raised in the north or the south which could be an important part in how he attacked this book. For me as an African American for example: I would probably write the book a certain way because of how my ancestors were treated then and maybe take a different point of view.

Based on how many five star votes the book has received on Amazon.com and from what I have read I believe that the book can be used as a main source for class. It is pretty accurate with the happenings of that era and by reading it as a narrative it can come to life depending on your level of imagination and putting yourself in that time period mentally when reading the book. I give this book a pre read vote of 5 stars and I believe Professor Escobar is a good judge on material.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM
Last edited: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 10:42 PM (236 words)

After reading the online blogger, the buyers of the book, and the newspaper review I realize that they all liked the book but did find some flaws in the book, about what they did or didn't cover, or what they didn't cover enough or covered too much. Just like most reviews you are going to find some that like it and some that don't. I do worry that when I read a review and they say that the book might have left out some key historical facts or didn't cover some of the more important events throughly I am a little worried. When you read a history book about a specific time period you really want to cover all the details about that time frame, I want all the information at my disposal when I read a book for a class, espically one about history. I do find that the peer reviews offer the best insight to the book, the other reviews are done by people that do it for a living, but the peer reviews are done by people that may be students like me, so I give their review a liittle more weight. So as I start to read the book I will take into consideration what the reviews say but also go into the reading with an open mind, but have the reviews in the back of my mind.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM
Last edited: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 07:25 PM (286 words)

Battle Cry of Freedom

By James McPherson

Battle Cry of Freedom has been a very good book thus far. From what I have read, McPherson is taking a different perspective on this book than what you would typically see in other Civil War history books. From reading the reviews it looks like the book has been both admired as well as criticized for the way it was written and the material that McPherson chose to include.

I will be approaching this book with an open mind. I have read many books on the Civil War and it's always nice in any situation to hear a different perspective on the material that is being covered. I feel that McPherson is trying to reach a wide variety of audiences in the way he has written his book. I am the type of person that actually likes to hear different ways in which the story was told. Who knows, it could be that I learn something in this book that wasn't mentioned in other Civil War books.

I'm not quite sure of which parts of the "historical accuracy" I'm going to be worried about. It does puzzle me that McPherson doesn't mention the assassination of Lincoln in his book, but rather continues on to the next section. As mentioned in **The Bloodiest of Wars** review, it may be because as the review mentions he's looking to tell the story of the end of the war.

I feel confident in the book that was chosen as our main source of information covering the Civil War. I'm always looking to learn new material and I think this book will allow me to do so.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:00 PM (313 words)

It is always interesting how a book will unfold after reading such varying reviews regarding the book's quality. In this instance, a professional book reviewer who appeared to have plenty of experience with books covering the American Civil War, found himself blown away by not only the content in the book, but the style in which the author presented the content. On the other hand an amateur review from Amazon.com found the style and content both significantly lacking. In my experience, it is the professional reviewers who are the more critical of an authors work, yet in this case it is quite backwards and leaves me unsure how to approach this book. As a result, I shall likely be deciding early on if the book is easily readable (a judgment on style) and also deciding if enough details are being included. If either seem lacking

Similar to one of the Amazon.com reviewers, I also have read *Team of Rivals* and was rather impressed by the overall quality of the book. As such, I might also be hoping that this book does cover the military aspect of the war closely. According to the online blogger Dave Thomer, after the narrative of this book reaches the beginning of the war, it becomes "primarily a military history." So while, personally this might be something I would like, it does make me feel uncertain about it being the primary source of historical information for the Civil War. A book that lacks much of the politics surrounding the Civil War is problematic at best.

The Amazon.com reviews do help me to be conscious of some possible flaws including inaccuracies as well as subjects that lack necessary coverage. If I had only read the professional review, I might not be as attentive to these problems.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 02:52 PM (158 words)

After reading the Amazon.com reviews for my final reading of literature reviews for 'Battle Cry of Freedom,' I have made the decision to face this book with openness, not judgment. From the critiques, I noticed that a the Amazon.com critics believed collectively that 'Battle Cry of Freedom' fell short of telling the actual accounts of the civil war, or didn't include the accounts in enough detail. I've decided to face this book with the goal of soaking up as much information as I possible can, while searching out connections between events, even if not disclosed in the text. In terms of historical accuracy, it is difficult to trust in everything that is listed in a text, but most of the reviews were surrounding lack of detail, not lack of truth. I have high confidence that 'Battle Cry of Freedom' will match my interest in the civil war and provide adequate information that is trustworthy.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 12:43 AM (291 words)

McPherson Assignment:

The Battle Cry Of Freedom from what reviews are saying is simply a military history story. Readers from Amazon are giving it 5 stars with an average review of people saying "Completely accurate information" or "Great historical read". From these reviews I think that Battle Cry of Freedom is going to be a challenging read because there is a lot of information, dates, names, and locations. Which might be overwhelming at first, so the technique I decided would work best is to spilt the weekly homework up in small doses to start off that way I don't become stressed over lots of work to memorize at the last moment.

Some historically issues that might become relevant to this story, as pointed out with the short review done by "notnews.com" that McPherson can sometimes throw him self into a story so much that he "over does it" by over emphasizing some things and leaving others out to make the story more interesting to the reader. An example of this when McPherson writes about the Gettysburg Address he goes on and on about how this was the one major turning point of the war and it is most important to remember that if Meade did not counter Robert E Lees attacks then we would be calling ourselves The Confederate States of America.

I have a high level of confidence that this will be a great resource as our main text book in this class. There are hardly any negative reviews about this book and the Amazon readers seem to find it both entertaining and helpful. For a personal aspect too I know people that have read this book for fun, and say it is enlightening and a joyful read.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 09:36 AM (352 words)

After reading two chapters of Battle Cry of Freedom I can understand why critics say that McPherson writes in a narrative form. If it were not for this writing style I would have a hard time keeping up and interested with so much information. I feel as if McPherson is telling us a story as if sitting across the table from us. I see where McPherson brings the past back to a vivid life again. By McPherson's style of writing he is reaching out to both serious and casual readers.

As one of the reviews states, " Battle cry of Freedom is primarily a military history, concerned with the tactics and strategy of the war, with a secondary but significant emphasis on the political maneuvering and events of the era." This draws me in. I have read in history books and seen so often from the history channel the politics behind the history to many times. I lose interest fast by this type of writing, but by McPherson choosing the tactics and strategy direction is what draws me in and keeps me interested.

One of the critic articles stated that McPherson leaves out Lincoln's assassination but takes us to the next chapter without Lincoln in the story. I realize that this would leave us readers with an impact of what happened, but not something we had to read. However, I would like to read more of the assassination and explore it further. Leaving something like this out is something that worries me in reading this book. I am a person who likes details, and I only hope that where McPherson leaves out significant events he will add in other ways so that I continue to stay interested in the book and not leave with more questions.

Since I have only read two chapters and do not have my own strong opinion yet of McPherson's work I am going to go into this book as a storytelling novel with facts included and not as a required reading that I have to read in order to get a good grade.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 04:39 PM (273 words)

As with anything worthwhile, I will be approaching the *Battle Cry of Freedom* with an open mind and genuine interest. There is overwhelming amount of support for this book and the research that was done in preparation for it. It is mentioned more than once to refer to the bibliography as a starting point for further research on the topic. I look forward to experiencing James McPherson's merits as a historian and writer without hesitation.

I have but only two main concerns related to the historical accuracy of the *Battle Cry of Freedom*. My first is mentioned many times in the reviews and implies that James McPherson imposed his own personal bias upon the historical facts he presents. Many of these reviews were posted by intelligent people that have an obvious extensive knowledge of the Civil War topic. They do acknowledge the work and literary skills McPherson exhibits but are then quick to point out the inaccuracies due to a bias opinion. My remaining concern is the minimal extend of my own knowledge of the Civil War. I was unaware of the surrounding politics during this era and that the war was not just about freeing the slaves. Many southerners did not even own slaves and were simply fighting for their Union which was attempting to expand into other territories.

In this forum and under these circumstances, I have a good level of confidence in *Battle Cry of Freedom*. I am not one to judge nor do I take sides, instead I am open to the views and opinions of all of those with the knowledge they hold about the Civil War.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 06:25 PM (129 words)

I usually don't read critiques of books until I have read them. Then I will read them to see if I agree or disagree with what the critics say. In this case, it appears as though McPherson does an excellent job of the politics and environment prior to the war, where as Burns did a better job after the war began. I don't have any real reservations about the information or shortcomings of information. It seems as though the two resources we are using seem to cover what the other lacks and gives us a full spectrum of information for this course. I am excited to find the differences and find out if these resources do in fact give us a greater understanding of the Civil War.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:20 PM (337 words)

Roianne Buystedt
McPherson Assignment
History 209 W11
January 7, 2010

The book *Battle Cry of Freedom*, was written by James McPherson a Pulitzer prize-winning historian and Professor of US History at Princeton. It is apparent that he is one of the foremost authoritarians on the subject of the Civil War. One thing to take into consideration is that in order to write an account of history about a topic with the magnitude of the Civil War, they would first have to wade countless writings from an earlier time period. These accounts would surely be biased to some extent on behalf of the author. To think that Professor McPherson hasn't formulated some of his own opinions based on his research would be naive; and to think those viewpoints wouldn't effect his work to some degree even more preposterous. I am sure people could shoot a few holes through it and they did.

A few of the arguments posed some interesting concerns but as for me, they were too minuscule to really matter. As I think about my approach going forward I will respectfully consider the opinions of others and at the same time treat it like a good stew... "Chew up the meat and spit out the bones!" What matters to me most is getting the facts right. The names, dates and and the basic story are vital. I think this will be an excellent resource for this class, despite the controversy over the names of chapters 7 and 8 etc. The author states it perfectly, and I quote: "Disagreements on points of emphasis do not deserve much emphasis themselves." I am looking forward to a fresh look at the events surrounding this time period and am exited to draw some of my own conclusions along the way. Who knows? I may find myself agreeing with the critics on a few points here and there, but at this stage in the game I agree with the majority that it should be an excellent main text.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM
Last edited: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 12:19 PM (415 words)

Roxanne MacDonald

A+ -- the grade I am certain to get if I carefully read McPherson's book titled Battle Cry of Freedom! Hugh Brogan published a review in *The New York Times* of this book and determined it is the "best one-volume treatment of its subject..." [Works cited #1]. Criticisms of the book are surprisingly few and seem insignificant in relation to the enormity of the subject and its place in the literary world. After all, Battle Cry of Freedom is used in history classes as a learning tool and holds a place as volume number six in Oxford's 14-book series *History of the United States*. Brogan's mostly positive review ensures this is one textbook I won't be selling back at the end of the term. It also should be noted that, based on my experiences in previous history classes taught by professor Joe Escobar, if a book is "assigned reading material" it is important and a resource I can trust.

Reviews by Amazon.com customers do not typically interest me. Any review that begins with "The beauty of this books..." (sic) is not an opinion that I would waste my time reading. Battle Cry of Freedom is not multiple volumes under the same name. Another customer review starts off with the first sentence jumping off the page with its clear lack of proof-reading "If you a political fanatic and Civil War buff well then this book is for you." (sic) I am by no means a *great* writer but I do know how to use spell check. I will also ask a person with an academic background to proof-read anything I am going to submit, regardless of where I intend to submit it. To some I may seem judgmental and dismissive but any reviews I read will come from a recognized academic source. Part of critical thinking is to choose any source wisely and read with the understanding / expectation that an author, more often than not, has a personal perspective and agenda. A wise reader will take that into consideration.

Disclaimer

Any compliments directed toward above mentioned professor are not sycophant and disrespect for the assignment by using humor was not intended. Additionally, any *spell check* errors are purposefully and strategically placed by the author within the text body for purely academic reasons.

Works Cited

[# 1] NYTimes Article

1. •Date: February 14, 1988, Sunday, Late City Final Edition Section 7;

Page 1, Column 3; Book Review Desk

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Monday, 10 January 2011, 09:40 AM (416 words)

Acclaimed historian James McPherson is highly respected in the historical community and has published several works which attest to his understanding of the accounts of the past and the lesson they tell. His book recounting the events that occurred before, during and after the Civil War, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, won a Pulitzer Prize and has been called one of the greatest historical narratives that deals with the subject. Whether the text deserves the praise it has received is a topic of great debate, a debate that has been published in several reviews that span several mediums.

Having read the articles in support of and with criticism towards *Battle Cry of Freedom*, I find myself approaching the text with a concerned skepticism. Originally, after reading the praise provided in the New York Times book review, I viewed McPherson's writing as a well researched and well presented historical narrative with slightly biased undertones. Apart from the skimming over of a few details and the misuse of the term "revolution" the review claims that McPherson's account of the civil war "is the best one-volume treatment of its subject." Having already read chapters eight and nine I couldn't agree more.

After reading the online blog, however, I began looking at the text in a much more critical light. The blog states that McPherson greatly under-exaggerates important details in his contingency based approach. He states that if important events that lead to the North's victory had ended up in the South's favor that the Confederacy could have had a legitimate opportunity to win the war. As the blog states, this notion completely ignores the vast superiority the North had in industrial ability to produce weapons and its much greater numbers in military population.

The primary reasoning for my concern with the text came from the Amazon reviews. It was much less apparent before reading these that McPherson had such a strong bias against the South, having a good versus evil approach to the Union and Confederacy.

McPherson leaving out important details such as black soldiers fighting in the Confederate army and his misinterpretation of the Dred Scott case left me especially skeptical of the apparent lack of objectivity present in *Battle Cry of Freedom*.

With both an appreciation for McPherson's style of narration and an understanding of where his text lacks strength I believe that I can learn a great deal from the book while understanding it is not a perfect account.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Wednesday, 5 January 2011, 12:59 PM (286 words)

I can't come to an early decision on any text without reading it first. However, based on my trust in our professor's expertise, and from what the reviews say I look forward to reading "Battle Cry for Freedom." The New York Times book review I read seemed to rave about the book, and his only real criticism was the titles of chapters 7 and 8. I personally don't have a problem with James McPherson referring to Lincoln's election as a revolution, because I believe it was a turning point in American history. The argument would be legalistic, as to whether a "turning point" is the same as a "revolution," but as far as a title I feel it's all arbitrary. No issues worry me as to whether McPherson will be fair and objective on everything, because no textbook ever is and that's why we have forums in class to discuss things we take issue with. I have extreme confidence in this text after reading the reviews. I don't care about the reviews of the amazon readers. They are usually coming from an entertainment standpoint, and aren't as interested in historical analysis as they are in reading novels that are fun to read. One constant criticism I saw throughout all the reviews is that McPherson had a bias towards the Union. This criticism is consistent with a disease that is spreading through education, where if one believes what is obvious and what he/she was taught growing up he/she is somehow not as intellectual or enlightened. I'm very much looking forward to studying this book and gaining knowledge about the most important time period in American History.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Thursday, 6 January 2011, 10:12 PM (293 words)

By reading the reviews about the book, I have learned that McPherson is a great author, but can be biased. I will have to rely on my previous history learnings. Since I don't really remember most of my history classes, I will probably have to find information on the internet or the library on the subjects **that I seem** are biased, farfetched or just doesn't seem like the right information.

Based on what I learned, I have to read the book with an unbiased mind. If I think too much that everything is correct, I might be incorrect on information. If I think that everything is wrong, I will have to research every single line of the book. For now I will just have to read the book **until I find something in the text that I think is wrong and research from there**.

I have already started reading the book and I have found that, like some of the reviews had stated, the text is really dry and jam-packed with information. It is really hard for me to stay focused, especially when the text is really hard to read. From reading the book, I have found that I will have to be able to be completely focused on the text. I can have no other distractions around me or I will not be able to comprehend what McPherson is saying in his book.

I really have no expectations about the book yet. I am the kind of person that doesn't judge a book by the cover, so I will have to read a good majority of the book before I can have an honest opinion about the book. I am really exited about relearning about the civil war.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM
Last edited: Saturday, 8 January 2011, 03:29 PM (164 words)

For myself I feel that it is too early to say, I will have to read more of the book to know how I will be approaching the book. So far in my opinion I am seeing more of the political side and maybe having a better understanding because I am also currently taking a political science course. So far I have a better understanding of what I am reading a little more if I was not taking the course. I am also seeing the political side of history. I feel that there are authors out there that will just write whatever comes to his/her mind and call it history versus those who will take the time, effort to research, back up their research and list where they found it so that others can read more about certain facts throughout the book that really capture their attention. So far in this book I am seeing a lot of reference points from the author.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:27 PM (195 words)

I believe the best way to approach this book is with open eyes, mind, and with a pencil and a highlighter in hand. I thought it was interesting how both critics loved how McPherson portrayed this event. "The author has no space at his disposal for redundant details" was my favorite part, with this being said, I look forward to reading his work. The critics also said "Battle Cry of Freedom is in every respect a deeply satisfying book." and "Battle Cry of Freedom nevertheless manages to cover all those themes over the course of its 900-page narrative, and its extensive footnotes and bibliography provide an excellent starting point for more detailed research on specific topics." I agree that the footnotes are incredible and leave room for development, or further research. The issues related to historical accuracy that worry me the most are the parts that have been changed or altered over time to avoid embarrassing situations. I have a lot of confidence in this main source of information about the Civil War because so many other historians and experts also follow through on these events. It is their job to portray the truth.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 06:34 PM (535 words)

The primary arguments in favor of McPhearson are his scholarship, his ability to use the facts and his prose in the aid of the narrative rather than in opposition to it, and his ability to set the entire narrative in proper context. I have cheated a bit and so I already have some idea about his prose which I do find to be succinct and compelling. I think I agree with the New York Times reviewer who makes a point of discussing how little time is devoted to the assassination of Lincoln. Remaining focused on the true subject and only diverting when that subject would be served by it is the better writing.

McPhearson is lauded for his scholarship, including all but one the harshest of criticisms written on the Amazon reviews, and this speaks well of the book. I would be remiss to throw out a source for missing a year one way or another, but accuracy allows us to focus on the point at hand. It is very difficult indeed to make a successful argument if your listener/reader is forever quibbling over this detail or that.

A case in point. What is exhoriate? I dont know. I dont thing the internet knows. Websters.com doesnt know. Could be excoriate, could be some version of exhortation, maybe a combination of both? Regardless i couldnt focus at all on the Amazon reviewer's message after the second iteration of that.

It bears mentioning that primary argument by the Amazon reviews is one of bias. McPhearson is accused repeatedly of having a nothern, often liberal, bias. Since all of the people saying this seem to be southerners it is difficult to judge if this might be so. It may be impossible to judge anyways. If I state that the North won that predetermines a human bias to want to side with the victor, is it possible to discuss the Civil War without either internally being relieved or angered at the outcome? The Amazon reviewers smell a bit like the sort of people who think the 1st amendment allows them to say whatever they want on a message board when they start talking about some sort of pure ideal of the impartial historian. If such a thing is possible, I would like to see it. Until then I classify it as a relative of the impartial Journalist and take a pass on anyone's opinion who mentions it much as I would someone who talks about unicorns and faeries.

The notable exception to this is the review titled " Does This Pulitzer Make Me Look Fat?" The reviewer sounds like he may know what he's talking about, but there are no citations. No place to check his facts against McPhearsons. Some of it is quibbling, but it sounds like there may be more nuance to the story than McPhearson covers. I wish we knew more.

I look forward to the McPhearson book. I take the point that we should be sceptical of what we read, viewing it with full awareness that it may need to be fact checked and an eye for opinion and editorial comment. Similarly though, The Amazon reviews probably aren't particularly useful.

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Due date: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 11:55 PM

Last edited: Sunday, 9 January 2011, 01:34 PM (358 words)

Those who lived through the Civil War have long passed, the only accounts we have of the events that transpired are taken from notes and letters left behind by those who lived through the highly talked about war. As with any event in our history, the details left behind are pieced together to paint a picture of actual events. As with any story, some accounts may be invaluable and un-factual. It is important to sift through the information determining what pieces of history are factual. A good history book will provide factual accounts of the topic, in this case the Civil War, followed by supportive documentation without the authors personal opinion attached. For those who are new to the subject, we learn with the flip of every page counting on the truth and unbiased opinion created by the author.

When I began reading the *Battle Cry of Freedom*, I found it to be boring and dry. I have held out hope that the reading will gain my attention; however, after reading the reviews I must admit I have mixed feelings. Being new to the Civil War, I am unfamiliar with what documentation is factual and incorrectly stated. The author of the book has an extensive knowledge of the subject, so one would surmise he would be best informed to write a factual knowledgeable book about the accounts. But one must still hold out reserve, any factual knowledge is simply gained through research of documents of the era. Without living through the era, it is difficult to recount the events with absolute certainty.

Taking all the reviews into account, I am eager to read the book. Though some of those who read the book felt the information was inaccurate or poorly stated, many felt the lines between the North & South were clearly drawn. Because I am new to the subject, I will not be able to determine whether the accounts are inaccurate or factual. I am going to trust the decision made by my professor, this is a history class and he would not require a book that does not correctly portray the events of the war.

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Todd Lowry

History 209, American History: Civil War

Assignment #1

After carefully reading the opinions expressed in the three sources we were to consider, I have come to have a high degree of confidence in McPherson's book. Although it is early in the term, and I still have a mass of information to sort through, the arguments against the validity of the book seem trivial for the most part. The overwhelming complaint seems to be McPherson's negative bias against the South. While it is hard for me to feel anything but bias against those who would keep slaves, I realize this was not the only thing that led to the Civil War. Yet, based on our early reading, I am not convinced the war would have started had slavery not been an issue, regardless of the other issues like states' rights. I do realize we have only begun our studies, however, and I have a lot to learn about the war.

The single author reviews were, for the most part, positive reviews of the book. And they, too, commented on his seemingly pro-Northern stance. The vast majority of the Amazon.com reviewers share that complaint. Based on that recurring criticism, that would be my primary concern about the book. I have always thought that the North was the pillar of morality, and the South was mostly evil plantation owners, or their supporters, greedy to keep slave labor. Obviously, I do not have the whole story, and I would hope that alleged bias toward the North in McPherson's book will not prevent me from attaining an accurate perspective of the war.

On the other hand, the book seems to have maintained a solid reputation through significant peer review. This is evidenced by McPherson's book being chosen as our main source of information in this very class. I feel it would be an impossible task to write a completely error-free piece of academic history, or one free from bias. By its very nature history is ambiguous and cloudy. All I would hope for is that an author did his due diligence. McPherson certainly seems to have done just that.

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William Ridgway

09 January 2010

HST 209 W11 : McPherson Assignment

Soren Kierkegaard once said "The most terrible fight is not when there is one opinion against another, the most terrible is when two men say the same thing -- and fight about the interpretation, and this interpretation involves a difference of quality."

There are many things in life that we consider to be led by interpretation, some of it meaningless while the rest is material that will stick with us for the rest of our lives. It's important at times that we realize what is fact and what is opinion and more importantly how much of that opinion we believe to be fact. Thomas Edison shortly said after making a light bulb that he didn't find one way to make a light bulb but more importantly he found two-thousand ways on how to not make a light bulb. I felt the same way when reading different reviews regarding McPherson's work, that there wasn't just one way to interpret his story but many. With that frame of reference in mind I actually look forward to reading his work, not due to the fact that so many others have, but more due to the fact that I haven't.

There are so many interests out there for each person, just as there are so many ways to interpret various people and events.

When saying this I refer to the historical accuracy that has caused me to be somewhat worrisome. It seems that from reading various responses from fellow readers of McPherson's book that what McPherson claims or more thinks started the war is most commonly disagreed upon, therefore I find this to be the accuracy to which I worry about. Despite though this issue I am more than confident that I will enjoy McPherson's work, after all it is through interest, of both others and ourselves that present us and leave us with a great story.

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