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(Another Documentary) Next >**Another Documentary**by **Joe Escobar** - Saturday, February 16, 2013, 11:34 PM

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DO NOT attempt to discuss ALL 3 bullet point topics in a single, long post.
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IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

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Sum of ratings: -

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**Trouble with the Video**

by Julie Skinner - Tuesday, February 19, 2013, 10:32 AM

Hi everyone!

This may not be the correct place to ask this question, but is anyone else having difficulty playing the video?

Julie

Sum of ratings: (1) 0

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**Re: Trouble with the Video**

by Alexander Kristy - Tuesday, February 19, 2013, 2:59 PM

It wouldn't play on my computer either. But it worked when I clicked the link for "video not working, click here" The link is right underneath the video.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Trouble with the Video

by Julie Skinner - Tuesday, February 19, 2013, 8:40 PM

Thanks Alexander! I was finally able to get it to play on the 4th computer I tried!

Julie

Sum of ratings: (1)

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The Divided Union more substance

by Alexander Kristy - Tuesday, February 19, 2013, 3:16 PM

I thought "The Divided Union" documentary was more complete as far as details. Though it's only twelve minutes, it seems more in-depth than the Ken Burns video. It's not accompanied by the same dramatic music that Burns' uses or famous voice over narration, but it contains more detailed information. For example, in the beginning of the short video it speaks about how "Southern leaders were traditional thinkers, and skilled masters of the art of war, but they had trouble learning outside these lines. Lee was a master of mid-19th century warfare, and he was an exception from his southern peers in that he contributed to it, with trenches and dividing his army in the face of battle and getting away with it." (The Divided Union). While Burns video will briefly touch on these types of subjects he doesn't go into this type of detail, in my opinion. Just from this short clip I get the sense that information and detail are more important than setting an atmosphere for the documentary, which is what I get from the Burns documentary. Less glitz but more substance.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: The Divided Union more substance

by Julie Skinner - Wednesday, February 20, 2013, 1:25 PM

Alexander-

I can definitely agree with your take on "The Divided Union". I found the twelve minute "teaser" quite interesting and would love to see the whole thing. I too

was drawn in by the feeling of more substance that I got. It really does feel as if it will be more in depth than the Ken Burns video series, but I wonder if it is just because, like you said, there isn't the drama involved of the dramatic music or more famous narrators. The Burns video series that we are watching is a whole lot more "Hollywood" to me than the standard documentary. That being said, I don't know if there is a way to accurately compare content without watching both series in their entirety.

Thanks for sharing!

Julie

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Re: The Divided Union more substance

by Mark Gorski - Wednesday, February 20, 2013, 2:52 PM

Julie-

As someone who actually owns both video series I have come to feel that they both pretty much convey the same facts and statistics. From my personal perspective the Ken Burns video is easier to watch because of the "dramatic" touches. "The Divided Union" seemed very "dry" to me. I find it very difficult to sit through an entire episode without becoming distracted.

I suppose in a classroom setting "The Divided Union" would seem much more appropriate while the Ken Burns video is just entertaining enough to hold the attention of the home audience.

Of course either video series presupposes an interest in the subject matter but while one presents information while entertaining us the other presents information in a fashion more suited to a classroom.

Since both were presented on television networks available in our homes I guess it is a question of which series would appeal to a wider audience?

For most of us, when we sit down to watch television in the evening we are looking to be entertained not educated. (*my television does not come on until all my work is done for the day*). For my money an entertainment venue which is also informative is the best of both.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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Re: The Divided Union more substance

by Whitney Stevens - Sunday, February 24, 2013, 2:35 PM

Hi Mark,

I found it interesting to hear your take on the video's since you've watched both of them. From a entertaining perspective, the Ken Burns film definitely takes the lead, I found it almost impossible for me to watch the entire 12 minutes and was desperately hoping to get to the end. I'm aware that may be a little blunt- but I struggle at keeping attention with most things that involve sitting down.

While I read the article, it stated that the Divided Union documentary had been sent out and used as a curriculum for educational purposes, I'm thankful we get to watch the Ken Burns episode. Although people may overlook the hollywood aspect of a documentary, we can't forget that educational video's need to be suitable for a range of audience.

Whitney

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: The Divided Union more substance

by Kirk Nikas - Sunday, February 24, 2013, 9:31 PM

I agree that the short clip has more information in it than the entirety of Ken Burns' series routinely gives. I see that Ken Burns offers a more entertaining perspective on the history of the American Civil War, rather than the straight forward approach The Divided Union takes. But, how do you feel the McPherson book compares to either video as a source of informative entertainment? I feel print makes certain things easier to comprehend than the fast motion flow of cinema.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: The Divided Union more substance

by Alexander Kristy - Sunday, February 24, 2013, 10:46 PM

I understand that some people prefer a little "hollywood" when they are watching a documentary, it helps keep them watching. But, I've maintained through the course that I don't think that's what documentaries are supposed to be about. That's why I preferred the straight forward approach of "The Divided Union." It's hard to compare a documentary to print. I think with print you can include more information and go into greater detail in certain areas. With film it needs to be edited, and cut down for time, which means things are going to be left out or briefly touched on. That being said, I hold print to a higher standard. While I have enjoyed McPherson's book I do think, like many others in the class, that he does seem to favor the Union a bit and that he could've worked on trying to be a little more un-biased. But, in his defense I think the presentation of film and print are completely different. Film generally reaches a wider audience,

especially the Burns documentary. With documentaries I always feel like I'm being told information, and not so much being presented with something for me to interpret myself. With print I feel I'm being presented with information that I must now digest and think about. If I want to go really in-depth on a subject I prefer print over film. This way I won't be influenced by music or famous narrators; it's just the information and I'm able to make a more open opinion about the subject.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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Week 7 Discussion Topic - Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant

by Mark Gorski - Tuesday, February 19, 2013, 4:29 PM

The Divided Union documentary was released by A&E in 1987.

Ken Burns – The Civil War was released by PBS in 1990.

James McPherson's "Battle Cry of Freedom" was first published in 1888.

Given that all three of the sources we are discussing were released within a 3 year time span one would think that their views on Generals Lee and Grant would be similar but that is not necessarily the case.

The Divided Union documentary appears to paint Lee as a caring and inspired yet traditional commander anticipating Grant at almost every turn while painting Grant as tenacious yet uncaring and uninspired with little understanding of actual tactics.

Mr. McPherson's book seems to paint them both as competent commanders though his bias clearly favors Grant.

On a completely separate footing is Mr. Burns' documentary which really does not praise either commander over the other but gives us diverging viewpoints of each. Lincoln and Sherman's personal praise of Grant versus the scathing rebuke of Grant by Marry Todd Lincoln.

It would appear to me that Mr. Burns, and to a much lesser degree A Divided Union are presenting us with both sides of the debate and allowing us to form our own opinions while Mr. McPherson Praises both but is clearly biased in his presentation.

The debate of Grant versus Lee is a debate that has become a favored topic for historians since almost immediately after the war ended. I fear that it is a debate that can never be settled.

I have my own opinions as I am sure we all do so I will not open up that can of worms here.

As I have maintained throughout this course no single source should ever be considered the best source. Each of these three sources presents us with excellent information yet each of them is restrained by the medium in which they present that

information as well as the bias of their authors. It is up to us to weigh that information, combined with information from other sources to formulate our own opinions.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Week 7 Discussion Topic - Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant

by Chance Cornish - Wednesday, February 20, 2013, 8:57 PM

Mark,

I'm sure I'm not the only one when I say this but I really appreciate that Ken Burn's gives us both sides of the story and allows the viewer to come to their own ideas and conclusions.

I have noticed also over the past few weeks that McPherson does try to attempt to show both sides but he does clearly favor Grant/ the Union (except in McClellan's case).

With the "A Divided Union" film, I'm not sure if it was just this section of the documentary or not but I liked the fact that the majority of film was commented by actual historians and not just a voice over. The even bigger plus for me was that this documentary not only used historians but used multiple historians and not just 2 or 3 like the Burns documentaries do. I'm not saying that I enjoy Shelby Foote's insight (because I certainly enjoy his small stories as well) but it'd be nice to hear someone else's input and see if Foote is bias or not.

I understand that it's the "true" United States of America that won the war but it seems as though some of the sources I have come across really seem to not only favor Grant but also strongly favored the Union. In a Confederate victory, sources sometimes act as though it was a catastrophe for the Union and don't really go into what the victory meant to the Confederacy. In a Union victory, some act as though it was the blazing guns of the Union and still don't like to go too deep into the backdraft of the lost to the Confederacy. I'm not sure if any of that made sense but it just seems some sources don't like to give the Confederacy almost....I guess that's what I'm trying to say.

As you too Mark, I have my own opinions and don't really want to go into it and open that can either. But I will leave you with saying that I feel that if Lee had the same resources that Grant and the other Generals of The Army of the Potomac had, the Union probably would not have stood a chance.

Chance

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Week 7 Discussion Topic - Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant



S

by Mark Gorski - Wednesday, February 20, 2013, 10:36 PM

Had Lee had the same resources as the north the war would not have lasted 3 years. With McClellan, Pope, Burnside, Hooker & Mead in command Lee would have rolled right over them. However, had it been Grant against Lee from the beginning the availability or manpower would have ultimately been the deciding factor. Unfortunately given Grant's single minded focus and Lee's tenacity that war would have lasted longer than 4 years and would have come very close to wiping out this country's ability to provide for itself.

Scott, McClellan, Pope, Burnside, Hooker, Mead and yes, Lee were the last of the Napoleonic, Aristocratic, Gentlemanly generals who applied their aristocratic upbringing to their military comportment. On the other hand, while Grant learned his military skill at West Point he learned his single minded focus and stubbornness in the private sector. In other words, the school of hard knocks. You get knocked down you get back up! You don't go off and rest. And you certainly don't give your enemy time to rest.

In the end Lee could not hold up against Grant's incessant pounding.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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Re: Week 7 Discussion Topic - Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant



S

by Julie Skinner - Friday, February 22, 2013, 9:59 PM

Chance-

I agree with you that it was nice to have so many different historians narrating "The Divided Union" piece. I hope this is something that the director kept up during the whole series and not just the portion we saw. I found their insight extremely interesting. I liked that they all offered their own opinion and point of view in explanation of events.

You may very well be right that given the same resources as the Union, the war may very well have had a different outcome. The Confederacy had some of the most brilliant military leaders of the time on their side, more so than the Union, but not the resources to support them. I don't know if I would go so far as to say that the Union wouldn't have stood a chance. Maybe the outcome would have been the same, maybe not. Maybe it would have just taken longer and involved even more casualties. We will never know.

Julie

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Week 7 Discussion Topic - Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant

S

by Whitney Stevens - Sunday, February 24, 2013, 2:41 PM

Hi Chance,

Great point, if the Confederacy had the same resources as the Union- I agree with you- the Union probably wouldn't of had a chance. Or perhaps they would of with the set of "brains" they had- although it didn't seem like the politicians and academia's were agreeing with eachother. I find it amazing the confederacy was able to stay in as long as they did and fight as hard as they did. I wonder if the fighting grew from the passion, from all the pain and suffering their "country" was facing or if it was purely from their hobbies in hunting, shooting, exc. or even a mix of both.

Yes, it's true, the Union seems to always be favored. Yet, how could you not slightly favor the side that kept the country together and was against slavery (not really at the time- but it obviously helped free the slaves by winning the war).

Whitney

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 7 Discussion Topic - Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant

S

by Alexander Kristy - Sunday, February 24, 2013, 11:13 PM

I think one of the reasons why Grant is favored so much is because of all the failures of previous Union Generals before him. Lee was dominant until Grant took over. Grant's persistence ultimately turned the tide of the war, and on the path to victory. He was the only Union General to take it to Lee and he beat him to win the war. None of the other Union Generals were able to even come close to doing that. I've noticed that with history the winners seem to viewed more positively.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 7 Discussion Topic - Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant

S

by Alexander Kristy - Sunday, February 24, 2013, 11:05 PM

While I agree with most of what you said, I do think that the Burns video also presents Lee in a caring and inspirational light. Around the 20 minute mark, Shelby Foote discusses how brilliant Lee was and there are many other points where Lee is praised for his maneuvers. Lee was able to accomplish quite a bit with limited resources. The Burns video also talks about how Lee was able to anticipate Grants moves, and how tenacious Grant was in pursuing Lee. That is a common theme in many interpretations about Lee and Grant. At the 29:22 point in the Burns documentary Foote talks about Grant and says "Grant, he's wonderful." Video six talks about how Lee was able to anticipate Grant and how Grant was the only Union General not to retreat and kept pursuing Lee, and that's why people like Mary Todd Lincoln did not like Grant. The lives lost during those pursuits didn't sit well with everyone but he got the job done.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Week 7 Discussion Topic - Civil War medical care and hospitals



by Mark Gorski - Wednesday, February 20, 2013, 3:01 PM

At the beginning of the war when men who had seldom been far from home were brought together for training with thousands of strangers camp hygiene was poor. First were the epidemics of childhood diseases like chicken pox, mumps, whooping cough, and, especially, measles. Northerners operating in southern climates for the first time brought diseases previously unknown to them like diarrhea, dysentery, typhoid fever, and malaria that ran rampant through Union camps. There were no antibiotics, surgeons often prescribed coffee, whiskey, and quinine. Harsh weather, bad water, inadequate shelter in winter quarters, poor cleanliness of camps, and dirty camp hospitals took their toll. Twice as many soldiers were likely to die of disease than of actual battle wounds. (*McPherson*) Many soldiers believed that being sent to a hospital was akin to a death sentence.

When the war began, there were no plans on either side for treating wounded or sick soldiers. In the North commanders believed the war would be short and there would be no need create a long standing source of care for the army's medical needs. This all changed after the Battle of Bull Run, when the Union government took possession of several private hospitals in the Washington, D.C. area. After the appointment of General McClellan and the organization of the Army of the Potomac a medical director of the army was appointed who enlisted regimental surgeons to travel with armies in the field, and the creation of general hospitals for the badly wounded to be taken to for recovery and further treatment. Each regiment was required recruit one surgeon and one assistant surgeon to serve before they could be deployed for duty.

Skilled, well-funded medical organizers in the north took action, especially in the much enlarged United States Army Medical Department, and the newly formed private agency called the United States Sanitary Commission. Numerous other new agencies also targeted the medical and morale needs of soldiers. Repeated funding appeals raised public awareness, as well as millions of dollars.

Thousands of volunteers worked in northern hospitals and rest homes.

A few worthy of note are:

- Dorothea Dix (volunteering as Superintendent of Army Nurses throughout the war)
- Clara Barton (volunteering as a nurse at several front line hospitals during the war and later founding the American Red Cross)
- Walt Whitman (the renowned American poet who volunteered as a nurse in Washington D.C. hospitals)

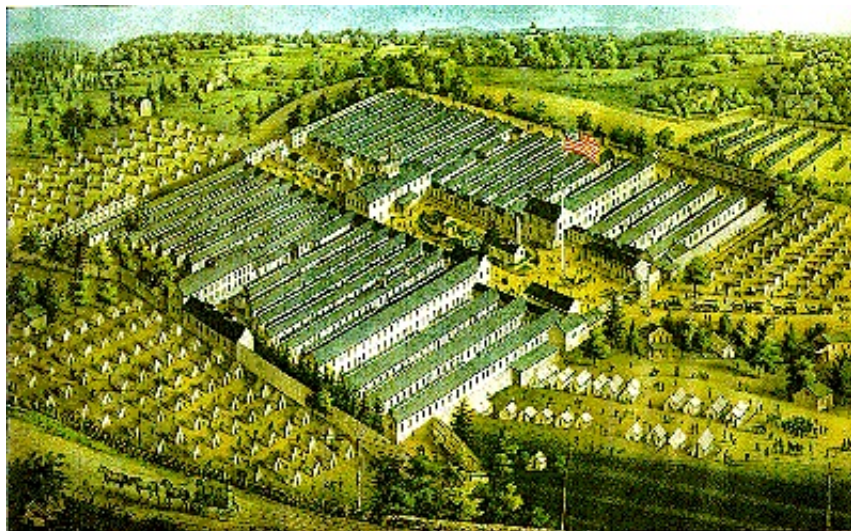
The Confederacy was quicker to establish a medical corps but the Confederate medical corps was at a serious disadvantage throughout the war due to the lesser resources of the Confederate government. A Medical Department was created with the initial army structure by the provisional Confederate government on February 26, 1861.

Because of lack of field hospitals and limited capacity in their general hospitals Initial Confederate policy was to furlough wounded soldiers to return home for recovery. In August 1861, the army began the construction of new larger hospitals in several southern cities and the furloughing policy was gradually phased out. The earliest recruits for surgeons were required to bring their own supplies, a practice that was ended during 1862. The government began providing each regiment with a pack with medical supplies including medicines and surgical instruments. The Confederacy, however, had limited access to medicinal supplies and relied on their blockade-running ships to import needed medicines from Europe, supplies captured from the North or traded with the North through Memphis. Field hospitals were set up at the regimental level and located in an open area behind the lines of battle and staffed by two surgeons, one being senior. It was the responsibility of the regimental surgeons to determine which soldiers could return to duty and which should be sent to the general hospitals. Each regiment was responsible for transporting it's wounded to the nearest rail depot, where the injured were transported to the general hospitals for longer term care.

Given the Confederacies severe disadvantages in resources it is interesting to note that the largest and arguably the best hospital on either side during the war (*mentioned in the Ken Burns Video*) was Chimborazo Hospital in Richmond, VA. Built shortly after the war began, opening in October of 1861 with a normal occupancy of 3,000. (At its height it had up to 8,000) It had 120 buildings in all. It had its own ice house, soup house, bakery, soap factory, operated its own farms, beef and goat herds and canal trading boat. During the 4 years of its operation Chimborazo Hospital treated over 37,000 patients and boasted a mortality rate of only 4.52%. That means that over 95% of all patients treated survived.
(http://www.mdgorman.com/Hospitals/chimborazo_hospital.htm)

Conversely Opening in 1862 Satterlee Hospital in Philadelphia, PA was one of the largest Union army hospitals with 4,500 beds. (During peak times tents would be erected on the hospital grounds to house the less serious patients). During the 3 years of its operation Satterlee Hospital treated over 12,000 patients (1/3 the number

treated at Chimborazo) and boasted a mortality rate of 2.67%.
(<http://www.uchs.net/Satterlee/satterleehospital.html>)



Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Week 7 Discussion Topic - Civil War medical care and hospitals



by Robert Stimpson - Sunday, February 24, 2013, 6:08 PM

I find it interesting to think at the beginning of the war the Union felt that there wouldn't be a need for hospitals/surgeons, even if it was going to be a short war. Another thing that seems very interesting is that even though the Confederates

were less organized and were not as well off on supplies as the North, it seems like they had way better hospitals and surgical staff than the North did. It is also impressive that they had the biggest, and best hospital of the entire war, and the mortality rate of it is impressive.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 7 Discussion Topic - Civil War medical care and hospitals



by Micah Young - Sunday, February 24, 2013, 6:37 PM

Thanks for the extra information and picture about the two hospitals. It looks like you quote *Battle Cry of Freedom*, and provide a lot of good information from the book. I liked how McPherson dealt with the issue of medical demands and how support for it developed. His discussion of the issue comes relatively early in the war, at least in regards to where he placed it within his book in the same chapter as the peninsula campaign. He gives a much more thorough background to how medical systems worked during the war, particularly in the North, than do either documentary. It is interesting that each documentary places their overview of field hospitals near their segments about Grant's campaign and the tremendous losses suffered by the both armies. In this regard, the documentaries are very similar to each other in the timing of their hospital overviews. I think that they are also similar in content, at least when comparing all three sources, with McPherson's book being very different from the two. In content they both represent how hospitals functioned from the perspective of wounded soldiers coming off the field. They talk about how surgeries and amputations were performed near battles and to the rudimentary elements of surgery and patient care. A couple statistics that I learned from *A Divided Union* that I thought were helpful were the survival rate of injured soldiers: 1/7; and the percentage of contemporary medicine that didn't exist at the time: 95%. Also, *The Civil War* series mentioned how in the absence of an effective ambulance system, soldiers would often leave the front lines to carry wounded friends to safety where they could be recovered and treated because they knew that no one else would be available to do so. I think together, the two documentaries taught me about the dangers of not only dying, but of being injured, and also about how each army worked to keep injured soldiers alive.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Comparing Films



by Robert Stimpson - Wednesday, February 20, 2013, 8:35 PM

After watching and comparing both the Ken Burn's documentary and *The Divided Union* I noticed some marked difference. Though *The Divided Union* was much shorter than Ken Burn's, it presented the almost all the exact same information, and then some, though most of the extra information seemed like common knowledge

and common sense. I did find *The Divided Union* was not as entertaining as Ken Burns' though, it did not have much action to it, nor the first hand diary/letter accounts of people from the time. It was just straight to the point facts. I could see it being good for maybe picking up some quick information, since it did go at a fast pace, but for sustained viewing I fear I would become very bored of it very quickly.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Comparing Films

by Ashley Clark - Thursday, February 21, 2013, 1:31 PM

I agree. That was my reasoning for thinking that combining the sources would be the best way to approach things. I feel that *Divided Union* was a detailed but still concise overview--basically an easier-to-understand version of McPherson. It would be a nice way of gathering facts and taking notes, but not for a detailed learning. I think it would be best used as a refresher before an exam, since it covers the facts; as a primary learning source, probably not. Burns, even with all the creative license and dramatization, really presents an entertaining and (in my opinion) thorough narration of the event. He describes everything, from the reasoning behind decisions made to the actual happenings in the execution, even going so far as to include various soldiers' thoughts on them. While *DU* does a good job in describing the events, I don't think it would do well as a primary learning tool.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Comparing documentaries

by Meleah Drews - Wednesday, February 20, 2013, 9:44 PM

When I watch the Ken Burns documentary it doesn't feel like a chore. I enjoy watching it and find it engaging with the music, the photos and the readings. Even the sounds of battle help draw me into the history documentary. After watching just 12 minutes of the *Divided Nation* documentary, I was very glad this was not our primary video source. Although the documentary was rich with information, it felt more like a lecture. I realize that the point of a history class is not for my entertainment, but I find it much easier to learn when I am enjoying the learning process.

As far as how the documentaries presented Generals Grant and Lee, I thought they were similar in their assessment of the two men. What I found interesting is when the Historian on the *Divided Nation* documentary was describing Grant's movement during the battles of the Wilderness, Cold Harbor and Kennesaw Mountain, Grant continued to pursue Lee even when he had devastating troop losses. Grant's aggressiveness reminded me of the same strategy used by Lee during the seven days war in which he remained on the attack in spite of losses.

Regardless of what is portrayed about the differences in character between Lee and Grant, they shared a similar aggressive battle strategy.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: Comparing documentaries

by Ashley Clark - Thursday, February 21, 2013, 1:46 PM

I agree with you entirely. I've always been the type of person who enjoys watching documentaries regardless, but I especially like Burns' series because it's more engaging than others tend to be. I've noticed with many, including *Divided Union*, that they tend to be straight to the point, without much appeal to any aspect but knowledge gain. They're basically just a slightly more interesting version of a textbook being read aloud. Burns' documentaries stir up emotions with the soundtrack (I know I always feel a lot more lighthearted about the narration when "Dixie" is playing, rather than "Ashokan Farewell") and soldiers' letters, add a touch of humor with some of the included comments, and tell the story from the perspective not only of historians and the narrator, but from accounts by people who actually experienced these things. He uses these factors to make viewers interested and invoke certain responses, but while many feel like he does it for theatrical effect to solely boost ratings, I believe that he genuinely has an interest in the subject and wants the viewers to realize the reality of the situations, and ensures that they do by using what tools he can.

I think both documentaries do an excellent job of portraying the two generals, but I feel that Burns goes more in-depth by exploring their backgrounds, others' thoughts about them, and excerpts from their journals. It definitely does more when showing their attitudes as men, which further explains the reasoning for their military choices. To someone who knows nothing about the men in general, they may see their strategic moves as nothing more than a simple decision. The fact that Grant was determined and brave provides reasoning for his choice to march on rather than retreat at the Battle of the Wilderness, even with the incredible losses he suffered. The fact that Lee had the ability to remain calm and had a strong spirit explains his willingness to fight his adversary despite incredible odds. I also like the way that Burns praises both men for who they were, rather than show obvious bias to either side like many do.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Comparing documentaries

by Meleah Drews - Sunday, February 24, 2013, 3:11 PM

While watching the Burns documentary, I noticed another similarity between the two Generals Grant and Lee. They both seemed to be very

private and independent in their battle strategizing, as well as experiencing grief or regret. I think it is often portrayed that Grant was remote and withdrawn. The history provided in the Burns documentary stated how Grant was a quiet withdrawn person since childhood, who connected more to animals than to people. He was single minded in purpose when it came to battle, and the documentary left me with the impression he considered his options and came up with his battle plans in private without the counsel and dialogue of other military leaders. Lee seemed to have a similar strategy. Although he commanded great respect and loyalty from his troops, he could be distant. As Mary Chestnut stated in the documentary, does anyone really know the mind of Lee. This leads me to believe that he was discreet in revealing his thoughts, strategy, and emotions to those around him.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Re: Comparing documentaries



by Whitney Stevens - Sunday, February 24, 2013, 4:28 PM

Hi

Both of the documentaries and the book do a great job of illustrating Lee and Grant and I especially love the quote you used by Mary Chestnut to describe Lee. Although they were more secluded from the rest of the army, it makes sense to an extent. To go through being the leader and knowing that even when you win, you've let some of your men down- from the deaths that have occurred and when you lose, the grief must be unbearable. I feel that Grant and Lee had trouble conveying and sharing their grief with others. They also had trouble sharing other thoughts and emotional experiences, as their mentality had to be stronger than the rest to lead and strengthen their army and to be the great generals they were.

Whitney

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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All these sources



by Kirk Nikas - Wednesday, February 20, 2013, 10:36 PM

I found in watching the documentary, the 15 minute documentary, that there were several key connecting points between it and the other documentary, the Ken Burns documentary, we had been watching -- as well as with the book, the McPherson textbook. One of the many similarities between the three sources was their coverage of the Civil War. Another interconnected similarity was their (the documentaries and book's) mention of healthcare during the period. The Divided Union presents some

interesting facts towards the end concerning healthcare, showing picture with explicit narration informing the watcher as to what they are seeing and why it was there. From what the Ken Burns documentary stated of health care was The Sanitary Commission's creation, and maybe something about 4,000 female nurses helping out during the war. The book has told me of Clara Barton, that's about it from what I can immediately call to mind.

These three sources are comparatively similar in my experience, no one being any better than the other, and all necessary in my understanding of The Civil War, personally.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: All these sources

by Meleah Drews - Sunday, February 24, 2013, 3:43 PM

As a nurse, I found the information about the army hospitals very interesting. It is amazing to me how far medicine has come in the last 150 years. The current medical model stresses the importance of aseptic and sterile technique. This is quite different then wiping the saw off on a bloody apron before amputating the next patient's limb.

I was amused by the requirements Dorothy Dix had for her nurses. That they needed to be older than 30 and plain looking. Apparently she was attempting to avoid the Florence Nightingale effect in which a caregiver develops romantic feelings for their patient and/or vice versa. I did however admire her dedication to her work, providing diligent service for 4 years without pay.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Mix It All Together

by Ashley Clark - Wednesday, February 20, 2013, 11:01 PM

Having not seen more than the twelve-minute clip that I did, I don't feel that I can make an accurate assumption on the quality of the entire series. However, from what I saw, *Divided Union* gives a concise but detailed account of the war. It lacks the dramatic flair of Burns' series, but it still gets the information across well.

I personally feel that *Divided Union* focused on the personal aspects of the two generals more than their military decisions, describing the men themselves in greater detail than their tactical choices during the battles. McPherson seems to put more emphasis on their military character, portraying them both as clever and competent leaders, though he definitely shows a bit of favor for Grant. Burns does the best job, I believe. He combines descriptions of their character and background with reasoning for their decisions in battle, including quotes taken from their journals and accounts by other soldiers to really help give a feel for the men's character both on and off the

battlefield.

As for the medical situation, I feel that *Divided Union* provided the best description. It focuses a lot on the actual condition of the hospitals and supplies, as well as the trouble that the doctors and nurses faced with wounded soldiers. With Burns, it focuses more on the events leading up to the formation of the Commissions and the admission of nurses rather than their actual work. McPherson, as always, seems to deal in only hard fact with little to no appeal to the reader in terms of truly understanding the hardships.

McPherson gives only vague detail as to the battles themselves, putting more emphasis on the where and when of the battles. *Divided Union* provided detail, but it seemed to me to be too concise. It was a simple, "This happened for this reason, this was a result. Also this happened." kind of thing, rather than with Burns' dramatic flair in describing the battlefield and thoughts of the soldiers. Some may feel that he makes it a bit too theatrical, but I feel that it returns some of the reality of the battle, something that is not easily conveyed over text.

I think that the best approach would be to combine all three of these sources. They give similar accounts, but they each hold something that the others do not. McPherson deals with cold, hard fact, giving a crisp and to-the-point description. *Divided Union* provides a bit more flair, adding a bit of depth to McPherson's words and elaborating on the ideas that he presents. Finally, Burns adds a theatrical aspect that grasps the viewers' emotions with music, personal accounts, recognizable voices, and a bit of toying to make the story *pop*. While all the sources are fine on their own, I think that information would best be expressed and more easily retained if the three were combined in the curriculum.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Medical documentation and contributions of women



by Micah Young - Wednesday, February 20, 2013, 11:55 PM

The Civil War series and the excerpted documentary document the injury and illness aspects of the war from the perspective of the battle field and battle front. James McPherson does a little more than that though and explains how the nation back home endeavored to take care of the injured and wounded. The perspective from *Battle Cry of Freedom* is, in that sense, is more comprehensive. McPherson introduces his reader to the Surgeon-General Clement A. Finley, comments on his inadequacies, and explains how Lincoln replaced him with William Hammond who was the privately run United States Sanitary Commission candidate. He also highlights the significance of women's involvement in medical efforts and introduces the work of Elizabeth Blackwell, Clara Barton, Mary Ann Bickerdyke, Dorothea Dix and the wife of George Templeton Strong.

The past history that I have learned about the Civil War tends to focus on fighting, battles, and their consequences. Social, economic, and political factors from back home are taught if there is extra time left over it seems. I always appreciate learning

about the United States during this time beyond the front lines of the war. I appreciate that McPherson, although not an exhausted study, still gives the topic about twelve pages and reveals how the nation, and women back home labored to develop systems that would take better care of the soldiers who needed it.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Bias in the North and South

by Ashley Clark - Friday, February 22, 2013, 6:13 PM

The three sources all give a different perspective on Generals Grant and Lee, and their biases conflict with each other terribly. From the other posts that I've read, everyone seems to agree with the fact that McPherson is clearly biased toward Grant and the Union, while the second documentary focuses a bit more on Lee and the Confederacy.

I did a bit more research into *Divided Union*, and found that it was originally aired in the UK. I have to say, I wasn't really surprised at the bias when I discovered that, as other sources I've read through say that our friends across the pond tended to side with the Confederacy for a multitude of reasons. I read the reviews on Amazon, and while there was a lot of praise for the series for offering such a concise summary of the war, there was a particularly scathing review on how biased it was to the South. Apparently the full documentary presents slavery as the driving force of the war, despite all of the evidence that many of the men unaffected by slavery (which were most of them) fought for their states' rights. As for Lee, it presents him in a much more positive light, being clever and cunning and just a generally wonderful guy against the crazed, overly-determined, and egotistical Grant.

McPherson, on the other hand, favors Grant. While he hardly dismisses Lee in the way that *DU* does with Grant, readers can tell that he holds a rather strong bias for the Union. While I'm hardly surprised, I'm disappointed. It seems as though most of the sources I read focus mainly on the Union. Confederate victories (while Lee is sometimes praised for his tactic) are presented negatively, and they don't really show how the battles affected the South. McPherson certainly does a better job than most, but I find myself saddened with the lack of decent, objective sources.

It's because of this that I'm glad Burns' documentary is the way it is. I enjoy the fact that he shows no clear favor (that I can detect, anyway) and he doesn't present only a single view of anything. By including letters from others, viewers get to see both the positive and negative opinions on Grant and Lee, and can hear the conflicting views for both the North and the South.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Bias in the North and South

by Robert Stimpson - Saturday, February 23, 2013, 12:15 PM



Now that you mention it I do notice the biases that both the book and *DU* have towards each side. Even though these biases can hamper our learning, we can also learn something from them if we can look through the bias. Ken Burn's does a great job of presenting everything without a bias, and making it entertaining, which is why I favor it the most, I actually found that I like to watch the documentary before reading. The documentary presents facts, and in a broad spectrum, and the book focuses in on certain ones that the film didn't go into. With those combined and using Burn's as a shining light to find the things to look for I feel like it helps with the reading of the book a lot more than reading it first then using the documentary as a suppliment afterwards.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Bias in the North and South

by Kirk Nikas - Sunday, February 24, 2013, 9:42 PM

Wasn't everybody biased towards Grant? Mary Lincoln and the rest of them all called him terrible things and such, so it is no surprise that this bias exists still today. I'm not all that good at geography or up on current events and am unclear as to whether or not the South won or lost in the American Civil War, but in hearing that a clear bias is present amongst our curriculum I become even more wary and ultimately confused. I have trouble discerning Grant from Lee, they both appear to be the same person -- one slightly older than the other, visually. They both offered allegiance to either side somewhere throughout time and the terribly wishy-washy one is always ambiguously presented as maybe and either/or. I'm sure this is all in my head, but I lack definitive explanations as to whether one is different than the other for any reason beyond popular definition, both the North and South as well as the men leading their armies at this point in time, as obscured by time. I'm sure this would all make sense if I were living it and not looking back on it as an event to be studied and learned from. It is nice that McPherson favors Grant while the films seem to be biased against Grant, it offers a good starting point for understanding that I should maybe take to heart and put down on paper for further understanding and clarification of what I have explained herein,

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Bias in the North and South

by Micah Young - Sunday, February 24, 2013, 11:12 PM

Ya, after you put it that way, I'm confused too :) Didn't the South lose the Civil War?

I liked hearing the quote from Mary Lincoln denouncing Grant and saying that she could manage an army better than him. I thought so because after learning about these battles and the results at Cold Harbor I kinda thought the same thing. I'm not surprised that the Southern army began calling him the "Butcher." Although the burgeoning amount of casualties make him come across as careless, it seems that he cared about the men who served under him by the report about his break down after The Wilderness, and by how he was disturbed after Cold Harbor.

A lot of people liked Grant after the war. He managed to be elected to two terms as U.S. president, which has always bewildered me. During this class I have been pondering this again. I'm sure historians have the answers as to why the nation elected a general from this divided time, but I imagine that it would have offered security and reassurance to the nation during reconstruction, especially following Andrew Johnson's obstructionism toward Republican agendas. I think that current biases against or for Grant though depend mostly on a person's historical bent.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Re: Bias in the North and South

by Micah Young - Sunday, February 24, 2013, 11:26 PM

Thank you for looking up that information and posting it. I can see some of this now recounting what I saw in the film. It is interesting to learn where the documentary first aired as well as how it is reviewed on Amazon. Since reading your post I have been thinking about historical tensions between the U.S. and England and wonder again if a pro Southern bias exists there in parts. I can't imagine that it would, since the issue of slavery is polarizing.

Still, I liked the short excerpt from the documentary and the twelve minutes didn't seem to me to be heavily biased. I think that a pro Southern source would be helpful anyways since many of the history sources I read talk more about things related to the North.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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The Question of Lee vs. Grant

by Julie Skinner - Saturday, February 23, 2013, 8:20 PM

Maybe I'm alone in thinking this, but I feel there is a fair representation of both Lee and Grant in each of the three sources for comparison this week. They each

represent different facts and viewpoints, but they represent these two men as human beings that are capable of magnificent strategic movements of massive numbers of troops and supplies through extremely harsh and hostile environments, sometimes with great success, sometimes with great loss. Any facts or information portrayed is really just here-say passed down over time. There are isn't anyone living that had a birds-eye view or first hand knowledge of what truly happened. It's all open to interpretation. Because of this, I think both documentaries have done a reasonably thorough job of presenting the strengths and weaknesses of both Lee and Grant. The fact that it appears that "the Divided Union" leans toward Lee and Ken Burns leans toward Grant is explainable by the historians and experts that they have invited to speak in their films.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: The Question of Lee vs. Grant



by Micah Young - Sunday, February 24, 2013, 11:43 PM

I agree with you and think that the representation of both generals is fair. I think that McPherson definitely focusses his narration on Northern events and generals, and is thus giving Grant much more time than Lee. However, I think that he means to be fair with how he writes about the Southern cause, or at least I am thinking through this concept about his writing. I think that reading the comments of others has helped me recognize differences between these sources, particularly in the documentaries, and to see what kind of information they give about each general. And, I don't know what differences I could comment on that haven't already been mentioned in other posts.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Week 7 Discussion Topic - Comparing the three different sources.



by Mark Gorski - Sunday, February 24, 2013, 12:36 PM

- The Divided Union video series, while fact laden and mostly very dry and unentertaining does tend to favor the Southern position when discussing the war. This is not surprising considering that the series was originally written for a British audience and while Britain never officially acknowledged the Confederacy they clearly sympathized with it. At least the British aristocracy did.
- James McPherson's "Battle Cry of Freedom", also fact laden but mildly entertaining and much easier to read than most texts on the Civil War clearly favors the Northern position. This is also not surprising considering that the side which was victorious usually wrote the history books.

- Refreshingly and somewhat surprisingly Ken Burns – “The Civil War” video series is fact laden (but not overly so) but manages to present those facts in a manner that is not only entertaining but does not appear to favor either side. Allowing the viewer to form their own opinions. By presenting us with images and writings depicting the “horrors” of war and the sacrifices made by individuals on both sides Mr. Burns does not take a side but instead demonstrates a bias against war itself.

In the history of human rebellions one side generally wiped out the other leaving no one to dispute the victor's version of events.

The American Civil War is unique in that for the first time most of the participants on both sides were able to return to their homes. Many, after taking an oath of loyalty to the Union, were even able to return to their previous lives. While the rebellion was defeated the rebels were not punished for rebelling.

Yes, slavery was abolished and many laws were changed or created to prevent the reoccurrence of the circumstances which the rebels rallied around but the Confederate states and the Confederate people were simply forgiven their trespasses and reintegrated into the Union. Attitudes and beliefs were not changed. In essence the Confederacy was defeated but the Confederate people were not.

Given this unique outcome it is easy to understand peoples biases.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Week 7 Discussion Topic - Comparing the three different sources.

S

by Meleah Drews - Sunday, February 24, 2013, 4:28 PM

I like what you said about how the Burns series presents the horrors of war. If there is one thing that I come away with after watching an episode, it is about how tragic the losses were on both sides of the war. And even though I know who wins in the end, I do not find myself rooting for, or being pushed into a pro-Union position by the documentary.

In a previous episode of the Burns documentary, I remember being intrigued by the veterans day parade in which both Union and Confederate veterans were marching and riding side by side. Until that time I had not really considered how people integrated back into society after the war. I liked what you said about how the rebellion was defeated , but the rebels were not punished for rebelling. That was probably an important piece to nation building after the war.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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by Micah Young - Sunday, February 24, 2013, 9:59 PM

I still remember the picture of men sewing badges and names onto their shirts before the infantry assault at Cold Harbor so that they could be identified in the event of their death. Also, the pre-dated journal entry of the Union soldier who wrote, June third, I died. Those are certain details and effects that I remember from *The Civil War* series and I think that it did well by explaining the fear that soldiers faced before Cold Harbor and some of the terror of the previous two battles. Most of the commentary offered by *A Divided Union* about Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania is brief and, I think forgettable. I think when the documentary summarizes Cold Harbor it provides a little more detail including the temporary consequences of the Union losses, Lee's political strategy of inflicting losses to sway the upcoming election, the effect of the campaign of Northern morale, Lincoln's worries about reelection, and a memorable story about three pages of a New York newspaper that listed the names of dead Union soldiers. I thought that *The Civil War* series did a better job of explaining this campaign than *A Divided Union*, however, I thought that both were short on information, considering the significance of the campaign.

I think that *Battle Cry of Freedom* is more comprehensive in how it explains the Union war strategy beginning in the spring of 1864 and therefore the battles of The Wilderness, Spotsylvania, and Cold Harbor make more sense. The book explains that Grant wanted to wage a campaign with the Union armies working in unison and it does a better job than the documentaries, as one might expect since it is text based instead of visual, at explaining Northern strategy, tactics, and movements during that spring. It explains Sheridan's cavalry raid that traveled south of The Army of Northern Virginia, and destroyed rail lines and army rations, ultimately clashing with Jeb Stuart's cavalry and fatally wounding him. It also explains "Sherman's orders to 'move against Johnston's army, to break it up, and to get into the interior of the enemy's country as far as you can inflicting all the damage you can against their war recourses.'" Banks was to attack Mobile, Alabama, Butler's army was supposed to move up the James and cut off the rail line from Petersburg to Richmond and threaten the capital from the south, and Sigel was to move his few troops down the Shenandoah Valley. I think that knowing the larger scale strategy helps explain why Grant proceeded the way he did and why these battles were engaged in at such great risk. Grant didn't intend to take these large risks, but most of the operations he had directed to other commanders had failed, thus leaving him unassisted in his confrontation of Lee and his army.

I also thought that the explanation of battle tactics was better in the book than the documentaries. Usually the documentaries didn't talk about tactics, but when they did, their explanation was not as clear as *Battle Cry of Freedom*. For example, the gap in the Confederate line at The Wilderness that was filled by the Texas Brigade. Also, the text provides casualties for the North and South whereas the documentaries primarily provide only Northern casualties. I am still baffled by how many casualties were sustained during this campaign, but the documentaries under represent Southern losses (exception of *A Divided Union* after Spotsylvania).

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Substance vs. Style

by Alexander Kristy - Sunday, February 24, 2013, 10:28 PM

The New York Times article was a short review on "The Divided Union." The article didn't give me much as far as substance. The article does seem to view the documentary in a positive light. The more we start to look at other pieces of information presented to us the more difficult it gets to decipher what is the best source of information. I did think the short video clip seemed like a more straight forward documentary in the traditional sense. I liked how there were more historians in it, even in just that short clip. The Ken Burns documentary is presented with more fluff and up to this point there is limited appearances from historians or other scholars. It's a more entertaining documentary, if that's what you you're looking for, but in my opinion it lacks in substance. What I mean by that is, it's hard for me to fully trust where the information is coming from when a lot of the documentary is done by narration. "The Divided Union" gave me more information from scholars mouths themselves, which I trust a little bit more. I'm not saying the Burns' documentary isn't full of great information but I'd like to know where the information is coming from; and when it's done by narration it's hard for me to get a feel on that.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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