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I found the reviews of the McPherson book *Battle Cry of Freedom* helpful in understanding the historical perspective and the writing style that the author uses. The review from the New York Times gave the book a glowing report, taking issue only with the poor printing of the maps included in the book, and the titles of both chapters 7 and 8. I personally did not have an issue with the titles "The Revolution of 1860" or "The Counterrevolution of 1861", especially the latter. In that particular chapter, McPherson quotes politicians and newspaper articles which use the terms revolution and counterrevolution. McPherson writes, "Senator Alfred Iverson of Georgia conceded that while no state had a constitutional right to secede 'each State has the right of revolution. ...The secession of a State is an act of revolution'" (p. 240). McPherson's choice to use these phrases as titles for chapters provides both intrigue for the reader as well as an acknowledgement of the deep division that was present within the country during this time. While I respect the review, I am hesitant to accept it wholeheartedly for a couple of reasons. First it was quite long for a review that had little criticism of the book. Secondly, it was published by the New York Times, a New York paper dating back to 1851 with an early history of Republican support.

The second review by an online blogger reminded me that it is important to watch for biased perspectives when reading texts. While the author of this review states the book is informative and engaging to read, there is a caution in endorsing the book. The blogger 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" (p 3). Although I have not experienced the book to be overtly North leaning, I am aware that McPherson teaches at Princeton, located in a Union state, which may influence his historical perspective.

Using critical judgment when reading the text will remain important, as well as recognizing my own biases and preconceived ideas about the civil war. I am reasonably confident that the text will provide a good understanding of the history of the civil war based on a couple of things. First, McPherson's writing style is engaging and I find it easier to read than many other texts, allowing better understanding of the content. I also enjoy the frequent use of quotes from those who lived the experience. This allows me to use my own judgment about what the historical figure meant, rather than the author interpreting for me the meaning of the statement. Secondly, McPherson uses footnotes extensively, allowing readers to verify sources and/or further investigate specific topics contained in the text.

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Amazon.com  
reviews?

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for future  
students!