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HST 209 - American History: The Civil War - McPherson Assignment - Mark A. Gorski

Can you come to an early decision about how you will be approaching this book?

I have been a Civil War enthusiast for well over 30 years and during that time I have come to realize that most writers are influenced by their own political and cultural biases. Historical fact is very difficult to dispute but analyzing past cultural views and political motivations can easily be swayed by one's own beliefs and values. Therefore I have developed the personal policy of verifying everything through at least one alternate source and have learned not to place too much faith in any individual author's analysis.

To that end I plan to approach this book exactly as I approach any other historical text. With a skeptical eye and as a starting point for additional research as well as a comparison to previous research I have conducted.

What issues related to historical accuracy worry you the most?

What concerns me the most are the large number of reviews that express concern over the author's bias towards the north and the author's tendency to evaluate historical events using current day standards and beliefs. The people living during these times made the best choices they felt they could based on what they knew, felt and believed at the time. Hindsight is always 20/20 but to judge events of the past using information known only after the fact is not only unfair to those being judged but also to those currently learning about those past events. The issue of slavery is one that had plagued many nations throughout their history. It was a major point of contention for our founding fathers. Many of whom wanted to abolish slavery in the Constitution. Given the fact that the northern economy thrived without slavery while the ~~Southern~~ Economy thrived only through the use of unpaid slave labor, it was inevitable that the ~~2~~ sides would eventually clash regardless of individual events or actions.

What sources/reviews do you trust the most, and why?

I tend to place more stock in unsolicited reviews written by those who are not compensated for their review. They owe no allegiance to the author, printer or publication and have no stake in the number of books sold.

On the other hand professional book reviewers can have far more experience with a given author or publisher which, as long as they can remain objective, can lend a much more credence to their review.

However, I have found that the most reliable reviews are those written by authors and scholars who write and teach the same subject as the book being reviewed. These types of reviewers tend to evaluate the truth and accuracy of the facts and opinions the author has put forth. → so, which review (given your analysis) is #1?

What level of confidence do you have in this, our main source of historical