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Based on the reviews, I will be approaching this book with a little bit of caution. Whether it's the positive review in the New York Times, or the negative ones from Amazon, they all point out various issues with this book. Whether or not these reviews are fully right or wrong, I think the more important point to understand is that a historical record, no matter how seemingly unbiased, can only present a limited interpretation of history.

I'm most concerned about a potentially biased, agenda-based approach regarding the events of the Civil War. According to a decent number of reviews, this book lays out a strong, anti-Southern diatribe. Various reviews from Amazon claim that McPherson simplifies the causes of the Civil War into a good versus evil battle over slavery, or that he glosses over the atrocities committed by the North during the war, or that he ignores that most, "99.9 percent," of Southerners were solely defending their homeland in a just cause against an invading aggressor.

In this case, I would trust the New York Times review the most. The reason for this is because it seems to be the most well thought out, balanced, and comprehensive review of the book. The review does not, as one Amazon review, focus on a few entries in the book and then claim that the rest must be horrible because of the perceived inaccuracies in one section. Also, the NYT review is mostly positive, but does contain some criticism of chapter titles, for example. And, there's at least a small amount of credibility associated with the source of the review, along with its author. This stands in contrast to the numerous Amazon reviews written by "A Customer." It's hard enough to trust an anonymous source, and even harder to take someone seriously when that person claims, anonymously and unsupported, "the end of slavery did not create a better life for former slaves."

I feel reasonably confident that this will be good source of information about the Civil War. Pulitzer prize aside, it seems that most reviews, negative ones included, acknowledge this book is a decently comprehensive resource for the Civil War in general.

great intro.

Northern state NY?

good

explain the credentials

excellent

a reason to trust it?

Overall good job
see **
for needed further explanation by you

writers is...?

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largely true
BTW, but a subject
for an in-depth study in Reconstruction