

HST 209: American History: Civil War W14 (Escobar 32165)

Home ► My courses ► Winter 2014 ► HST 209 W14 (Escobar 32165) ► February 16 - February 22 ►

Forum 4 ► Comparing Sources

Search forums

Forum 4

Display replies in nested form Move this discussion to ...

(Comparing Sources) Next >



Comparing Sources

by Joe Escobar - Sunday, February 16, 2014, 7:00 PM

To post, you will click the "reply" link MY post. If you want to reply to a specific comment made by another student, click the "reply" link located on that student's specific post.

IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES As in all forums, put something descriptive in the subject line of your post, based on one of the three topics you are discussing. Other students wanting to talk about the same issue can click the "reply" button to your post, thus helping organize this discussion.

Sum of ratings: -

Edit | Delete | Reply



Lee and Grant

by Kylie Emory - Tuesday, February 18, 2014, 9:33 AM

The ken Burns episode took the most care in describing the Lee and Grant with their histories, strengths, weaknesses, and differences. The Clip just briefly discussed the men themselves, but focused more on the battles themselves. The book has an adequate discussion of the men. Overall the three sources paint a vivid picture of these two different men. Ken Burns personifies them, makes them more personable to the viewer. The book tells us the facts, filling in the blanks. The video clip was a nice compliment to these sources by mixing in information of the generals through the rest of the information presented.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: Lee and Grant

by Jacob Nelson - Friday, February 21, 2014, 6:43 PM

I agree with you that that the three sources when used together paint the best picture

of what both Lee and Grant were like. Our book is indeed more factual than the rest of these sources but, I think the video clip provided for this discussion board did the best job describing what these battles were like. I personally got a much better idea for what they were like and the landscape in which they were fought in.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: Lee and Grant

by Courtney Waterman - Saturday, February 22, 2014, 2:16 PM

I also agree that when used together the sources paint the best picture. The book is almost like a resume for the two. We get to see how they add up on paper, and what their thinking was like for battle. The documentary is more like the interview, and we get to see the person, and begin to understand them differently than we would with just the book. It's pretty cool that these sources allow us to get a more complete idea of who they were.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: Lee and Grant

by Keeler McJunkin - Sunday, February 23, 2014, 2:53 PM

Agreed. The Ken Burns episode does a really good job of bringing the two men to life for us. I feel it brings us to a level where we can really try and get involved with how the men were in their lives. It really gives us an idea of what it would be like to possibly have known them as people. Not just figures in history books that we learn about.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



medical care

by Kylie Emory - Tuesday, February 18, 2014, 9:34 AM

I thought all three sources gave excellent descriptions of the medical care given and hospitals, with each source giving a few different ideas and facts. They worked very well together to create a complete description of how wounded men were treated and cared for. The imagery described is appalling.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: medical care

by Jessica Mitchell - Wednesday, February 19, 2014, 6:08 PM

I think of the three sources Ken Burns most effectively stirred my sense of empathy towards the people receiving care in the hospitals. Seeing the visuals and hearing the

words of the people who witnessed and were subject to the conditions in these “giant warehouses for the dying” made it the most real for me. The book was also fairly thorough in covering the medical situations during the conflict. I think the clip was the least successful, though it did quickly cover the basic treatments, rudimentary amputations, and unhygienic conditions, it did so in a hasty few seconds and left quite a bit to the imagination. All three sources work well in conjunction with each other. And while Burns, and McPherson could stand on their own on this, I think the Divided Union needs the additional sources to support it's information.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: medical care

by Joyce Garipey - Thursday, February 20, 2014, 5:16 PM

I think hearing real quotes from the people that were actually there, made it more real for me as well. Those visuals when coupled with the quotes helped me to understand the conditions more so than just reading about it in the book. "Giant warehouses for the dying," sounds so gruesome, but that is probably a very apt description and it allows me to actually visualize what it must have been like.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: medical care

by Kristine Wallace - Sunday, February 23, 2014, 3:00 PM

I am going to agree with you Joyce on how hearing the quotes from people at the time, as read by narrators, made the Civil War come that much more alive. Combining photographs, true accounts(especially from letters and diaries) and reenactments we can get a very realistic picture of what people were going through at this time and place.

There is a lot of heartbreak and grim details to wade through in order to really get this feeling but it is worth it in order to understand what people in the mid-1800's were experiencing.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: medical care

by Kyle Housley - Saturday, February 22, 2014, 1:36 PM

I agree that all three gave great descriptions of how care was giving back then. I still don't understand or can even fathom seeing some of the things described. I really don't know how people stayed sane; especially the surgeons.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



The Wilderness and other battles

by Kylie Emory - Tuesday, February 18, 2014, 9:35 AM

The only source that gave an accurate description of all three battles was the book. Both videos were decent at describing a couple points about the Wilderness, and Ken Burns touched on Cold Harbor. Overall there could have been more descriptions of Cold Harbor and Kennesaw Mountain in both of the videos. Between all three sources there was adequate information presented.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: The Wilderness and other battles

by Jessica Mitchell - Friday, February 21, 2014, 11:50 PM

I think the book does the best job of depicting the three battles completely, followed by Burns, then the clip.

The Wilderness was covered by all three sources, though more thoroughly by the book and Burns. The clip covered it quickly but wasn't as descriptive of the strategies implemented by both sides.

Cold Harbor was also addressed in all three sources. All three sources clearly defined Cold Harbor as one of Grants major defeats, and did a decent job of covering the accounts of Cold Harbor.

Kennesaw Mountain wasn't covered at all by the clip. The book and the Burns both covered it in effective detail, and worked well in conjunction with each other, guiding the audience through the events that unfolded there.

It's my opinion that the book and Burns do the best job of offering a complete picture of these battles. The clip adds some perspectives but not enough that I found it completely necessary to have an understanding of what happened, that being said, with the exception of Kennesaw mountain all three did have something unique to offer about these battles.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: Comparing Sources

by Kyle Housley - Wednesday, February 19, 2014, 1:05 PM

Consider how your McPherson textbook, the ken burns episode and this clip from the Divided Union documentary cover the following topics:

Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant:

I think overall the ken burns documentary has gone into fine detail about these two men. Even as far as there history and beliefs on the war and how they decided who they would be. The book gives really good information on them as well but not as "fun" as the documentary. The video mainly covered the generals in a tactical manner; focusing on how

they fought and where.

Civil War medical Care and hospitals:

The book and the ken burns documentary really went more graphic in the process and the conditions of the medical care/hospitals during the civil war. The short clip did a really good job in portraying the conditions and process in the little time that it had but not as specific as the other two.

The battles of the Wilderness, Cold Harbor, and Kennesaw Mountain

I think the clip did the best job at describing the wilderness and Cold Harbor. I don't recall too much on Kennesaw from the clip. The book did an ok job but not as specific as the clip. The ken burns documentary touched on these things but not specific enough in my opinion.

What were the strengths and weakness of these three different sources when compared to one another? Did they work well together and complement each other, or not?

I feel that overall the three covered the same points just a little differently. Offering less information in some aspect and more in others; creating a wider view of all the aspects as a whole. The clip I feel did the best job in the little time it had in comparison to the amount of information in the others.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Medical Care

by Courtney Waterman - Wednesday, February 19, 2014, 3:41 PM

When it comes to looking at medical care during the Civil War they all overlap on how dismal treatment was, and that disease was a big threat. McPherson states that, "Disease was a greater threat to the health of Civil War soldiers than enemy weapons" (487). Both documentaries echo that sentiment, as well. The video clip talks about "Disease being a tremendous factor" (The Divided Union). Our book goes into more depth than the documentaries, but books don't have to worry about time restrictions.

The New York Times review makes a good point by saying, "Filling in the blanks with re-enactments is no doubt inevitable in an age when good "visuals" can determine the extent of a story's exposure" (NYT). Exposure and needing to bring viewers in is one of the biggest weaknesses of TV documentaries. That's not to say that they aren't making quality documentaries, because they are good, but they do have to sacrifice information, or give the briefest version, so that they don't bog viewers down with too much. Books, on the other hand, don't run as much of a risk with this. Plus the sources are in the footnotes, so if you question a fact, or want to know more about it, you have better place to start from.

As a whole, these all work well together, and complement each other nicely. I look at the sources like a Venn diagram. The places where they overlap on things is where the more trusted information lies. Keeping that in mind makes it so that I can see where people agree, like with disease and medical care, and where I might need to find more sources to

fill things in.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Describing Grant and Lee



by Melinda Parks - Wednesday, February 19, 2014, 4:40 PM

Each source takes a distinctively different approach to describing Lee and Grant. The short clip from "The Divided Union" briefly describes the men in a few adjectives, then focuses on the battles that they fought and their approach to battle. The Burns documentary paints a significantly more personable picture of each of these men, using personal quotes as well as what other men said about them, such as "We all felt at last that the boss had arrived" (said about Grant). The Burns documentary tries to let us see just a little bit into the heads of Lee and Grant, tries to let us see who they really were. I appreciate this approach, as it makes history seem more "alive" for me. The book balances and compliments these two documentaries, in my opinion, as it presents the facts in a clear and concise manner while using personal quotes and hints about the character of these two men. While the Burns documentary may sometimes sacrifice historical accuracy for the sake of making history "come alive," as we've seen, and the clip from the other documentary barely personifies the men at all, the book seems to present accurate information while painting us a picture of these two great men.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Describing Grant and Lee



by Jacob Hutchins - Wednesday, February 19, 2014, 10:56 PM

I feel Ken Burns did an excellent job of humanizing both men. I think this is something much more easily accomplished with film than, say, McPherson's book. While the book is a trove of credibly authored, historically factual information, we also want to know a general *feeling* of the men behind the actions and battles. Burns accomplishes that. The contrast of their personalities, backgrounds and interactions with their troops adds a flavor that doesn't quite come through in either the book or the short video clip.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Describing Grant and Lee



by Joyce Gariepy - Friday, February 21, 2014, 12:46 PM

I like the fact that the Burns documentary inserts photos, quotes, letters etc. it totally does "humanize" both of the men. In addition, the simple facts about the men that may not seem to be all that important to the facts/statistics/details of the war, are actually beneficial because it gives us a closer look at who these people were. The McPherson book is an excellent resource for historical information surrounding the details of the Civil War, but it doesn't seem to have a "voice" that speaks to me and draws me in. I have a hard time reading the McPherson book

for very long at a stretch. I have to break it up over several days in order to get the assigned reading done.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: Describing Grant and Lee



by Jacob Nelson - Saturday, February 22, 2014, 12:18 AM

I think that the book and the Burns documentary best describe Lee and Grant, especially when used in tandem. I personally like how our book uses more of a concise factual manner in talking about both Lee and Grant. However, the Burns documentary provides us with details about these two men on a more personal level which I think makes us better understand these two historical figures.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Robert E. Lee & U.S. Grant



by Joyce Garipey - Wednesday, February 19, 2014, 4:26 PM

Overall, all three sources contain good information about the Civil War and they work well together to give us a more comprehensive view of the events that took place during the war. However, In the Civil War documentary series by Ken Burns, Grant and Lee are described in more detail than in the 12 minute 1987 video clip, "The Divided Union." Ken Burns spends several minutes on each man illustrating minute details, such as the fact that Hiram is U.S. Grant's actual first name and that at West Point, Lee did not earn a single demerit. These little facts made the men seem more real, to me at least and not just General's at the head of troops fighting in horrific battles. The video clip gave us some good information, but it doesn't go into much detail. Our textbook talks about both men and does a pretty good job, but it seems more cold and analytical.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: Robert E. Lee & U.S. Grant



by Jessica Mitchell - Sunday, February 23, 2014, 5:52 PM

Each source goes about depicting Lee and Grant in different ways. The clip offered quick descriptions of the men and their battle strategies, but little in depth insight into who they really were. Burns gave more of a back story into the men and who they were before the war as well as gave visual and verbal descriptions of their approaches to battle. Most significantly he made a point to show what the men who served under them thought of them through quotes from journals and such. I think the book falls somewhere into the middle of the other two sources. My preference is the Burns piece. He makes it more real with the visual references and the readings from journals

and letters. I can picture in my head a little better who they were.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Civil War Medical Care



by Melinda Parks - Wednesday, February 19, 2014, 4:40 PM

Each source took care to point out the horrible conditions of the medical care available during the Civil War, and pointed out that many more men died of disease and wounds than were actually killed on the field of battle. As the book says, "Indeed, twice as many Civil War soldiers died of disease as were killed and mortally wounded in combat."

Here, again, the Burns documentary distinguishes itself by bringing it home to the watcher through use of photographs and quotes. The documentary clip from The Divided Union gives shocking statistics and uses fewer photographs. I thought that the Burns documentary did a better job of making the reader realize just how horrifying these conditions were, especially through its use of personal quotes.

The book does not have the advantage of poignant photographs, but it provides much more information than do either of the documentaries. I liked that the book includes information about the ambulance corps and gave more information on some of the prominent woman nurses. It also relates disease to the disruption of military operations, an angle that was lacking in the documentaries.

I thought that each of the sources complimented each other well in this case. Each source seemed to have a little something more to add.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



The Battles



by Melinda Parks - Wednesday, February 19, 2014, 5:07 PM

The Burns documentary seemed to me to focus more on showing how horrific the battles were, whereas The Divided Union focused more on the bare facts. This isn't to say that the Burns documentary didn't present the facts, but it definitely showed the horror more than did The Divided Union. For instance, it points out that the rain had opened the shallow graves and shows photographs of skulls. The audience can't help but be shocked and aghast, and is thus encouraged to keep watching.

The book, again, gives more detailed information than do the

documentaries. It also gives us an idea of how horrific these battles were. It says of Spotsylvania, "Blood flowed as copiously as the rain, turning trench floors into a slimy ooze where dead and wounded were trampled down by men fighting for their lives." For me, the book represent the "happy medium" between these two documentaries. And so in my opinion, these sources work well together and each present a unique viewpoint to the events described.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Persons Behind the Titles

by Timothy Wilson-Haley - Wednesday, February 19, 2014, 5:44 PM

Burns does a good job showing who Grant and Lee were as persons in addition to their titles and positions, which I think is important. When such momentous events occur, many subtleties of those events depend on temperament of individuals in powerful positions. Likewise, temperaments often are results of past events in those individuals' lives. To come close to understanding the nature of such events, we must study how these situations affected the individuals, but also how the individuals affected the situation. The feedback-loop between various forces is what reverberates through time, constantly creating new situations, new people, and new responses.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: Persons Behind the Titles

by Kylie Emory - Friday, February 21, 2014, 9:42 PM

This is a wonderful way to think of it. A person is not who they are today without the events that led to today. The three sources together create a large picture in the audience's mind of who they really are, by describing their past and major life events to us. I most enjoyed the Ken burns documentary.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: Persons Behind the Titles

by Melinda Parks - Sunday, February 23, 2014, 2:15 PM

I really appreciated how the Burns documentary took care to give us insights into Lee and Grant's backgrounds. I agree with you that history is shaped by individuals and their pasts, and it was amazing to see the differences in these two men. Lee was the perfect soldier, and it was no wonder to me after hearing his history that he decided to stand with his state. Grant failed so many times during his life, yet kept on going, and that helps me understand how he could be the first Union officer to push forward instead of retreating after a defeat. The Burns documentary really gave us a chance to

peak into the lives of these massively influential men and get a glimpse of who they really were. I think that this is important to understanding history and the motivations behind many well-known events.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Comparing Sources

by Kristine Wallace - Wednesday, February 19, 2014, 8:25 PM

After comparing the three different items, McPherson's textbook, Ken Burns Civil War episodes and the clip from the Divided Union documentary, I felt that it was definitely hard to decide which piece of media was best at defining and explaining the different generals, battles and medical treatment facilities.

Obviously, we do not get the whole picture with the short clip of the documentary, so I would really like to view the whole documentary itself.

The McPherson book goes into a good deal of detail about all the subjects, especially concerning military tactics. I felt that the book sometimes gives too much detail about the military maneuvers and glosses over the individuals to some degree. I would like to have seen more of the inside details of the people that were involved in the war.

I felt the Ken Burn's documentary was pretty detailed on the individuals, giving us some more insight by the reading of the letters written by the people in the war. This gave us more of a personal view as to how people were feeling and what they were seeing at this time in history. Unfortunately, I have been made aware of some of the inaccuracies in this film, so from this we still have to fact check to make sure that everything we are viewing is correct.

If only we could mesh all these videos/documentaries together in some way we might possibly have the perfect account of the Civil War possible. Until that time, we just have to view the different media pieces and get what we can from each one.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Comparing Sources

by Joyce Garipey - Thursday, February 20, 2014, 5:09 PM

I think that the book goes into a lot of details, but not enough is said about each individual. We don't get a good sense of who each person is or what that person was actually like. I think going into those kinds of details makes each person more "real." It gives them personality and humanizes them. Military tactics and details about the battles are vital information, but I agree with you that more details about the people themselves would be beneficial.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Comparing Sources

by Courtney Waterman - Saturday, February 22, 2014, 11:13 PM

I wanted some more insight on the individuals involved in battles as well. Military tactics give a really good base for learning but having first-hand accounts bring it all together. The Burns' documentary does a nice of bringing it all to life but knowing that there might be inaccuracies does make this all a bit more difficult.

The University of Virginia has put together this website <http://valley.lib.virginia.edu/VoS/choosepart.html> They use two counties, one northern and one southern, and they've compiled records, newspapers, letters, and diaries, from the 1859-1870. Looking at this has really helped me see the personal side of the war. Searching for specific battles in the letters and diaries has been pretty insightful.

I was also glad to see that I wasn't the only one wishing that we could mash all the sources together!

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: Comparing Sources

by Timothy Wilson-Haley - Sunday, February 23, 2014, 10:49 PM

"Mashing them all together" is exactly what we're doing in this class. We're reading, watching, thinking, analyzing, discussing, thinking more, reading more, watching more, discussing more, analyzing more. This is what it means to be a student. There is no such thing as a "perfect account". Discrepancies, contradictions, disagreements - -subtle, blatant and everything in-between-- will always exist. Every source is at least slightly different. The best we can do is study and analyze as many as we can, becoming more aware of things to be aware of. This is hard work that will never lead to a complete and clear picture or narration of events.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: Comparing Different Mediums

by Jacob Nelson - Wednesday, February 19, 2014, 10:54 PM

I thought the three different sources all provided valuable information about the Civil War. All of the sources cited the important advancements in technology and medicine during this time period. I thought the clip from "The Divided Union" did a really good job acknowledging all of these points within a shortened format.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Medical

by Joyce Garipey - Thursday, February 20, 2014, 5:02 PM

Medical care and the medical staff were integral to the soldiers in the Civil War.

We learned in Ken Burns Civil War documentary Episode 4: Simply Murder that “disease is the chief killer of the war.”

Scurvy, dysentery, typhoid, diphtheria, pneumonia, malaria, etc. were all rampant. In Episode 6: Valley of the Shadow of Death we learn that by the end of the war the Union had 350 hospitals and the Confederates had 154. The biggest and the best hospital was Chimborazo in Richmond. Walt Whitman, who couldn’t participate in the war as a soldier, helped out with the wounded. Dorothea Dix was put in charge of all women nurses and stayed at her post for all 4 years of the war. We are given many photographs and quotes from people who were involved and that helps to give us a better idea of the conditions.

On page 487 of our book, we learn that “disease was a greater threat to the health of the Civil War soldiers than enemy weapons.” The book also mentions Chimborazo Hospital, but expands on it a little more than Ken Burns documentary by explaining that only a fraction of this particular hospital had been built by June 1862 when “thousands of wounded poured into the city and mainly died in the streets because there was nowhere else to put them” (page 478).

About $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through the short clip it talks about disease, wounds, medical treatment, and then hospitals. I’m not sure of the gentleman’s name but he says “disease was a tremendous factor in this war, more people died of disease than died of wounds in action.” James Robertson, Professor of History, Virginia Polytechnic Institute says, “Probably 90% of today’s medicine was unknown back then. People got sick they tended to die, not get well.” And he goes on to say, “that once a man were wounded, the knowledge of what to do with battle field wounds was so minimal that the chances are the man would die.” He also mentions that “The American Civil War the chances of surviving were about 1 out of 7.”

Overall, all three are good sources of information and I do believe they complement each other well. I also think I would be interested in watching more of the “Divided Union” documentary in the f

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Medical



by Kristine Wallace - Saturday, February 22, 2014, 1:17 PM

I found it truly amazing that DISEASE was such an avid killer during this time period. It was not the war itself and the guns but just sheer illness from wounds. If only they had the medications and antibiotics that we have now, there would most likely have been so many people that could have been saved. There was also the thought that if they had more pain killers and things of that nature how different it would have been. The thought of hacked off body parts (arms, legs) just lying in piles outside the doctors quarters is such a sickening thought!!

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: Medical

by Jacob Nelson - Saturday, February 22, 2014, 1:40 PM

I completely agree that disease and infections during the Civil War greatly contributed to the astounding amount of loss of life that took place during this war. Some of the medical innovations that could have save the lives of people fighting in the Civil War developed relatively shortly after the fighting. Hearing about all of the lives that could have been potentially saved through the use of modern medicine has made me have a greater appreciation for how far medicine has come in the last hundred years.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: Medical

by Courtney Waterman - Saturday, February 22, 2014, 10:42 PM

I too am interested in watching more of the "Divided Union" documentary. It's hard to form a concrete opinion on it by only seeing a small fraction of it but the 12 minutes were enough to make me want to watch more. I'm curious to see what it has to say on things that we've learned about. Like McClellan, or the start of war.

Echoing what Kristine said, the numbers of death due to disease is pretty astonishing. It's odd to think about what modern medicine might be like if these men didn't live in close quarters and share germs. Our knowledge of disease, or at least the spread there of, might be stunted. I'm not trying to find a positive side to the war or anything like that, it's just kind of weird, the way things come about. In the clip James Robertson says that in Vietnam the chances were "268:1 that a wounded man would die". I wonder how much different that would be without the knowledge gained during the Civil War.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: Medical

by Keeler McJunkin - Sunday, February 23, 2014, 3:14 PM

It really is amazing how big of a factor disease was in the war. I knew coming in to this class it was a factor, but I didn't realize it was such a huge problem. The fact it was so bad as to be called the biggest killer in the war. There just wasn't enough man power to treat the soldiers who became ill and the conditions were so bad that it made passing diseases around quite easy. Not enough doctors and bad conditions are a bad mix, especially during a time of war. Also the fact that so many of these diseases were unknown at the time was a huge factor. Medicine has come a long way since the civil war, it would be interesting to see what may have been different had medicine been more advanced at the time.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Information versus Experience

by Timothy Wilson-Haley - Sunday, February 23, 2014, 12:06 PM

Divided Union and McPherson excellently and clearly explain the sequence of events and their significance. McPherson also illustrates well how each moment created the next moment. Divided Union doesn't do this as well. The closest it came to talking about the humans behind the events was a park ranger quoting Grant "No, we'll fight it out on this line if it takes all summer". Little of Grant's temperament and past decisions were explained in a way that would allow this quote to fit in a greater narrative. Divided Union, to me, seems manufactured, with each expert (except perhaps Foner) exuding a scripted energy. Burns avoided getting bogged down by such formulaic limitations. Experts in Burns' film seemed much more conversational. Events seemed more real. Walt Whitman's writings used in Burns' film did much more to communicate the medical situation than the bearded, bespeckled man standing next to a canon reading a very dry essay.

I also appreciated from Divided Union the detailed description of photography from the time. However, they sacrificed the powerful potential these images have by depending too much on reenactment video footage. I completely agree with O'Connor of the New York Times; reenactment scenes are annoying at best. At worst, they detract from the reality of war by showing us battle formations and shooting without any of the carnage, death, blood, suffering, and horror. Weird doesn't even begin to describe the phenomenon of Civil War Reenactments. It's an example of Romanticism. I'm glad that Burns didn't use them. Heavy use of period photography, though flawed (as we discussed in previous forums), accomplished exponentially more than reenactment footage.

Divided Union offers information and reenactments. The Civil War offers an experience.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: Information versus Experience

by Kristine Wallace - Sunday, February 23, 2014, 2:03 PM

I guess I might be in the minority here because I actually like reenactment footage and civil war live reenactments themselves. It is almost like watching a movie and it gives you more of a feel for what was going on. I can still get a feeling for what is going on while reading a book but I get more of a sense of "being there" when I watch footage. As with any dramatization, you can see the pain on the faces of the actors and experience the carnage and suffering first hand.

And yes, I like the photography too, although flawed as we discussed before.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply

Re: Information versus Experience

by Keeler McJunkin - Sunday, February 23, 2014, 3:06 PM



I'm a fan of the re enactments as well. It helps to paint a picture in your mind of what really happened during the battles. While reading about them accomplishes the same thing it just is nice to have a visual image that an author gives to go along with it.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: Information versus Experience

by Timothy Wilson-Haley - Sunday, February 23, 2014, 4:12 PM

I see the point that watching the reenactments illustrates battle tactics in a way more easily understood than simply reading about them. However, I completely disagree that they show the "carnage and suffering". It is not the same as "being there", it does not show what really happened. I think reenactment footage, from a certain perspective, is a bigger lie than the "mistaken identity" and "moved body" issues with some of the photography. At least the photos carry the truth of death, suffering, destruction, horror; the truth of war. These reenactments show the glory and excitement of war with none of the reality. Nobody was "torn apart by minie balls" as described by Burns' narrator. There was no chaos of regiments being torn apart by exploding shells and grapeshot. No officers had their horses shot out from under them. Worst of all, there was no visual of thousands screaming as their limbs were either amputated or already blown off, bleeding to death or delirious with fever from infection. These reenactments seem to ignore Sherman's observation that "war is hell". Instead, they show excitement and glory. It's a bigger lie, and does more to dishonor those who were there than a moved body or mislabeled group of bodies.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: Information versus Experience

by Melinda Parks - Sunday, February 23, 2014, 2:59 PM

I, too, found the Divided Union documentary to be rather dry. I appreciated the information it gave, but you state truly that The Civil War really offers an *experience*. Some scholars may take issue with that, but for me, being a rather casual student of the Civil War (I'm certainly not a history major), it is most welcome.

"Experts in Burn's film seemed much more conversational." I agree. The experts in the Divided Union made me think of a school field-trip. Not that that's a bad thing, and certainly they were very knowledgeable, but you're right, the purpose of this film was to offer information, and it did that very well. The Burns film, however, keeps its large audience with short attention spans in mind. I've been especially enjoying the clips of the interviews with Shelby Foote in the Burns documentary. He seems to have such a joy for the subject, in addition to extensive knowledge. I actually went to the library and got a fiction novel that he wrote, "Shiloh," as well as a non-fiction book of his.

I went to Wikipedia for a list of his novels, and found it hilarious to see that others shared my sentiments: "Foote's drawl, erudition, and quirk of speaking as if the war were still going on made him a favorite....and the result was a burst of book sales."

I appreciated Burns effort to make the entire documentary enjoyable to his viewers, right down to the interviewees. I realize that historical accuracy is definitely more important than presentation, but this is just my two cents.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Comparing Sources

by Keeler McJunkin - Sunday, February 23, 2014, 3:02 PM

I feel the best way to compare these sources is to take pieces from each of them. The Burns episode helps us to learn about the men as people, While the book really helps us learn the basic facts about the men and their history itself. Then the video clip kind of draws them both together and ties in the rest of the story regarding them. It's always good to get different types of views on the same subject so we are able to come to our own conclusions as well. We are able to learn about the two generals through a personal and a historical perspective.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Comparing the Two Documentaries

by Jacob Hutchins - Sunday, February 23, 2014, 7:50 PM

The differences between the Ken Burns documentary and the one in which the 12 minute clip was taken are readily apparent.

In their discussion of the two generals, Lee and Grant, there is a distinct difference in both the style and the substance that is presented.

Ken Burns, in his examination of them, takes an approach that attempts to humanize both men. They are not just empty characters responsible for the events we discuss, but rather a part of the events themselves. By giving an (abridged) detailing of their lives, Burns immediately provides a pretext for the decisions they made during the war. In other words, knowing where the men came from helps us, to a degree, to understand where and why they ended up as they did. The use of personally written letters allows us to actually peer inside of their thought processes and get a sense of what they were actually thinking. While there has certainly been controversy surrounding Burns's use of personal letters within this documentary, I feel it adds a much needed flavor of humanity to what could otherwise end up as simply a dry recitation of statistics.

However, Burns emphasis on this technique, perhaps, takes away from the factual substance from time to time. Even though it is only 12 minutes long, the short clip manages to provide information that is contrary, or at least simply different, than what Burns cites. Specifically, the video clip features Frank Vandiver saying that Grant's charge against the Bloody Angle lost 7,000 men in 30 minutes, whereas the Burns documentary says it only took 7 minutes. This clip demonstrates the strength of the documentary it was taken from

when I can watch it for 12 minutes, catch a discrepancy like this, and tend toward siding with it over the Burns documentary. The straight forward, text book style that it uses lends an immediate air of accuracy that the emotional Burns film has less of. Neither film directly cites there source for that information, but the Burns documentary has it spoken from an off screen narrator, while the video clip has the words come directly from the mouth of the President of Texas A&M University. While the Burns film also uses historians and scholars (to good effect and purpose) the presence of them in the video clip, as it relates to this particular portion of our discussion, seems more effective to me for presenting simple facts.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Comparing the Two Documentaries, cont.



by Jacob Hutchins - Sunday, February 23, 2014, 8:04 PM

When it comes to the discussion of medical care and hospitals, I felt the strength of KEN Burns film really shone when compared to the video clip.

First and foremost, it should be pointed out that there may be more of a discussion of this subject than is contained in the 12 minute clip. It stands to reason that the whole documentary made more mention of the subject than just the bit contained here, but for our purposes I feel it suffices to make a comparison.

Ken Burns ability to create an emotional connection to the subject matter is in full force for this section of the film. His use of music, haunting photographs, and personal letters creates a completely somber and..... depressing atmosphere. The pain and suffering endured by the men that went through medical care during the war was just awful; it's not something that can be adequately summed up by quoting casualty statistics or making mention of disease killing so many people. The portion titles "Now Fix Me", taken from the personal writing of a union doctor, is very powerful. I still feel bummed out (and i've watched this documentary several times) as the doctor explain how a patient laid back and presented himself for after-death preperation *before he was dead*.

The video clip doesn't come close to tugging at my heart strings the way Ken Burns manages to. It does the job of informing us of the numbers, but comes much closer to sounding like a recitation from a text book. Again, it's only a short portion of what I am sure is a much more comprehensive film, but the style it uses does not lend itself to the emotional appeal Burns captures- and which I feel is wholly appropriate for a discussion of the prolonged and terrible suffering the men in those hospitals endured.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Comparing the Two Documentaries: The Battles



by Jacob Hutchins - Sunday, February 23, 2014, 8:25 PM

There is something to be said of both documentaries here.

As mentioned before, the stylistic difference in film production takes these two documentaries in a different direction to approach the subject from.

The strengths of Ken Burns film, in the strictly educational sense, is less clear in regards to the specific facts of any battle discussed throughout the series; these battles are no exception to that. His emphasis on personal letters gives us the human side of things, but the nuts and bolts of the fights are sometimes left out. For example, I felt that the video clip did basically as good a job of summarizing the lead up and fallout of Cold Harbor (in the technical sense) in 12 minutes as Burns did in half an hour. The video clip just gets right to the point, whereas Burns takes a long road of personal explanation and backstory before coming to the concrete events.

I think this contrast shows a perfect picture of the strengths and weaknesses of Burns film - compelling, human story that may sometimes get hazy with facts- vs. the video clip - text book material presented in a bland (if not downright cheesy), impersonal fashion.

Which brings me to McPherson!

I have a hard time comparing McPherson's book to these two films. Whether it be Grant vs. Lee, medical care, or specific battles, the feel of an actual, scholarly book is just not something that is reproduced on the camera. The video clip comes closer, perhaps, but is still fundamentally different in that the information presented on camera is read *to* us, while information taken from a book is read from within our own heads, in our own voices. To be clear, I trust McPherson's historical accuracy far above anyone shown in this specific clip (although the Times article does say that Professor Foner is in there somewhere, and he certainly knew his stuff) or the Burns film. McPherson is just so accredited and respected within the historical community that I implicitly trust what I read from him. I don't find myself constantly wanting to fact check random dates and figures; I think McPherson knows his stuff pretty good. Going back to one of my older forum posts, here is a link to his wiki article:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_M._McPherson

If there are any weakness to McPherson's book, when compared to these films, it has specifically to do with the differences of medium and not with substance. In my opinion, a visual telling of war horrors is more emotionally compelling than just imagining it. I mean, seeing something with your own eyes, such as the terribly haunting photos of mangled corpses and bleached bones, just brings it home in a way pure imagination cannot accomplish.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: Comparing the Two Documentaries: The Battles



by Timothy Wilson-Haley - Sunday, February 23, 2014, 10:21 PM

In comparison to The Civil War and Divided Union, I think McPherson explains the situation and thinking that led Grant to his decision at Cold Harbor much better. I got the impression from Burns that he did it out of stubbornness. However, McPherson explains the necessity for action at that time and place.

I don't bother checking McPherson's facts either, but I try to remain aware that he has a perspective just like everybody else, and his narrative, while solidly founded on

factual information, may not encompass everything. It may even have some misinterpretations. I don't think that reading this one book, no matter how well respected the author is, means we are now educated about the Civil War. It means we know what McPherson wrote in his book. There are still other scholars who disagree with many of his interpretations and his over-all narrative. This is one reason why I think Burns' film is valuable. Documentaries have the ability to consult many scholars with different opinions in a short amount of time. An example of this is when the film showed three (I think) experts who all gave a slightly different reason for the outbreak of the war. Documentaries can illustrate more easily than books how much scholars can disagree or interpret evidence very differently.

I agree that visual aids tremendously help in the learning process. McPherson's book is available in a fully illustrated version, but it retails for over one hundred dollars. I'm glad we didn't have to pay for it for this class, but it exists for those interested enough.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Comparing the Two Documentaries: The Battles



by Jacob Nelson - Sunday, February 23, 2014, 11:47 PM

I think you bring up a good point that the Ken Burns documentary is more of a story telling type of program where as the clip provided for this forum is more straight to the point. While these two styles are very different they still are able to give us facts and historical information about these battle. I think in this case the Burns documentary is less to the point than the clip we watched. The clip we watched was concise and to the point. While it may have lacked a personal and emotional tone it still provided us with useful information about these two battles that were fought.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

(Comparing Sources) Next >

You are logged in as Joe Escobar (Logout)

 [Moodle Docs for this page](#)

