



Forum 6

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[Move](#)**Death & the Civil War**by [Joe Escobar](#) - Monday, March 2, 2015, 9:25 AM

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IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

As in all forums, put something descriptive in the subject line of your post, based on one of the numerous questions I've asked you to discuss. Other students wanting to talk about the same issue can click the "reply" button to your post, thus helping organize this discussion. DO NOT attempt to answer all questions by posting a mini-essay that is difficult to respond to or discuss.

Sum of ratings: -

[Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Heart broken**by [Heather Reed](#) - Tuesday, March 3, 2015, 7:15 PM

One of the things that stood out the most in this documentary was how religious America was at the time of the Civil War. I never really thought about how death was viewed back then. Most of the American population was Christian and they believed in a "good death" surrounded by family and loved ones. They believed in dying at home and saying their last words. None of this was really possible out on the field. Death was a part of life that Christians thought about constantly as an approach to dying and they prepared for it. Yet now a soldier out fighting on the battlefield was being provided with material for a lesson in how not to die suddenly and violently. They usually had no last words and they usually died alone. Some soldiers even surrounded themselves with pictures of loved ones. They would also make pacts with tent mates and other soldiers to convey to their families what had happened to them in their final hours. Many soldiers would even write to their family's hours before a battle just in case of fatal results. Families wanted to know that their family member's death was a worthy one. I believe that we as a culture now have lost a lot of religious devotion since the Civil War. We as a society for the most part don't usually plan for our deaths the way they did back before the Civil War. It's not very often that we are surrounded by love ones when we die, let alone say our last words. We have come a long way with how we treat the dead and the wounded since the Civil War that is for sure. I am shocked that we didn't even have a way to identify a soldier back then. It is a relief to know that today we spend hundreds of millions of dollars a year trying to recover servicemen who are missing and presumed dead from other wars. However, if we would have had something better set up for identifying these soldiers in the first place we wouldn't have to be doing this now.

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I think that the role of planning your death is very telling about the difference between how society viewed death then and now. You said "Some soldiers even surrounded themselves with pictures of loved ones. They would also make pacts with tent mates and other soldiers to convey to their families what had happened to them in their final hours. Many soldiers would even write to their family's hours before a battle just in case of fatal results". In modern society, we do everything we possibly can to prevent death and if it is unavoidable, people usually just write a will and maybe had life

insurance. I think many people even consider it morbid to plan for death as much as they did back then.

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Re: Heart broken

by [Opal Burdge](#) - Sunday, March 8, 2015, 10:41 PM

I feel like this was when religion in America was still beautiful and wasn't used against people. Everyone believed because it gave us hope in dark times, and something to believe in during the nation under distress.

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Room for Improvement

by [Jessica Ballestrazze](#) - Tuesday, March 3, 2015, 9:46 PM

Veterans' benefits and ongoing care has certainly improved since the 1860's. Based on all of the sources for this forum, the Civil War was a rude awakening for how inept or nonexistent government aid was. According to the "Then and Now" article, the Veteran's Administration now "includes 152 hospitals, 800 outpatient clinics, 126 nursing home care units, and 35 domicillaries as well as numerous mental health and crisis prevention programs." Which seems great. And yet...

According to http://www.va.gov/vetdata/Veteran_Population.asp, there are approximately 22 million living veterans in the United States. That means that if each of those facilities were used equally, they would each have to serve 19,766 veterans —one time only. Suddenly, all of those systems once again seem inadequate. This point became clear to me while I worked in an optometry office several years ago. The VA clinic from which veterans received new eyeglasses was so backed up, that they contracted with our office to provide glasses for their patients. We noticed a definite trend that these men and women were extremely excited to have a voucher from the VA for new glasses, because many of them had been waiting for six months to a year. Granted, I would hope that in the case of medical necessity, the process would be expedited for patients. But from what I have seen, civilians with private insurance generally receive faster and better medical treatment than veterans do at the VA clinics.

In my opinion, medical services for veterans is an ever-evolving field. The system has improved exponentially over the last 150 years, but there is always room for improvement, and new issues that must be addressed. Though it was casually noted as "shell shock" in previous wars, PTSD wasn't even officially diagnosed until the 1980's. We have gradually come to understand the extent to which this condition can go, but unfortunately have not yet developed completely adequate means to treat victims of PTSD with the depth and breadth of care they require. I do believe that someday, we will look back on our current systems with incredulity of the primitive treatment of our veterans, just as we now look back at the Civil War with deep sympathy for the living casualties of that era.

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Re: Room for Improvement

by [Agina Hale](#) - Wednesday, March 4, 2015, 11:38 AM

As I read the article "then and now" I thought about that too. Just a couple months ago when the VA got in some real hot water for how horrible the service is for veterans. The example of glasses doesn't surprise me at all considering there were stories of how vets were waiting months for life threatening treatments and there were those that did die before it got serious attention. I think it is horrendous how our country doesn't take enough care of our veterans. A large portion of them have serious problems that now affect their income and families. That I know people who have gotten surgeries through the VA, and still have problems. So much so they won't get another. That's not even getting into the PTSD, which yes is just in it's infancy with regards to understanding and receiving care.

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Re: Room for Improvement

by [Heather Reed](#) - Sunday, March 8, 2015, 4:09 PM

Wow!! I can't believe that the facilities that we have would need to serve 19,766 veterans each. That completely blows my mind and breaks my heart. I understand that we have come a long way in how we treat our veterans now a days but really each facility helping 19,766 vets is ludicrous. These men and women serve us and we aren't taking care of them in

a proper manner. Some are even looked down upon for even fighting in a battle. I think a lot of the disrespect comes from the fact that we don't see the fighting first hand and that it doesn't really affect us. Out of sight out of mind mentality is very unfortunate for these heroes. We have money and resources to send these troops overseas to help other countries re-build and help protect them. Yet, we don't invest in our own people. The men and women that sign up to serve our country know how bad it can be but they are still willing to serve. That alone deserves respect and proper treatment. As for your comment of us looking back someday as seeing the incredulity of the primitive treatment of our veterans, I hope you are right and I hope it is quicker than 150 years.

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Government the "Great" Provider

by [Trenton Bieker](#) - Sunday, March 8, 2015, 9:02 PM

All this talk about how poorly our government is at taking care of vets brings up a question in my mind. Isn't it more fitting for the vets to be taken care on a local level? Seems to make sense to me that if Oregon cares about its vets, then Oregon would take care of them. Better yet going even more local, if Lane County cares for its vets, then Lane should do what it can. Let me flesh this concept out. If counties did what they could for the vets that reside in them and Oregon State gave help to counties where needed, the Federal Government could better assist states that need help assisting vets in need. I can't stand hearing about issues of not caring for our vets, because it is one of those no brainers. They deserve the help and should be accommodated for their services. I too hope that it doesn't take 150 years.

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Desperate for Peace

by [Jessica Ballestrazze](#) - Tuesday, March 3, 2015, 10:12 PM

To me, the "Death and the Civil War" segment significantly cemented the huge toll that death brought to every aspect of American life. I had never considered the religious significance of dying in a certain way, and I can see how that romanticism was cruelly crushed by the horrors of war. Because nothing of its magnitude had previously occurred, there was no buffer between the battlefield and the home front. From a religious standpoint, it is difficult to justify an "untimely death" as God's plan for 750,000 men. The concept of a dignified death had to evolve, not for the sake of the dead, but for the sake of the living whom they left behind.

Currently, I think that the American public allows itself to be obscenely sheltered from the realities of war. This was not even a possibility during the Civil War—which made people desperate for peace and fully cognizant of the hellacious nature of battle. War has been glamorized by media to the point that I believe many young soldiers really have no idea what they are signing themselves up for. I was baffled when viewers of "American Sniper" were suddenly surprised by how physically and psychologically brutal war can be. I think we have done ourselves and our servicemen and women a great disservice by remaining distant and disconnected from wars that are now fought on foreign soil. The sources for this forum made me even more convinced that though war is sometimes necessary, that necessity never negates the horror and ugliness. And without a true grasp of that horror and ugliness, war more often seems necessary.

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Re: Desperate for Peace

by [Andrew McGarry](#) - Sunday, March 8, 2015, 10:58 PM

Hello Jessica, I really like your thoughts and perspective about war being glamorized. In our country and culture we are often only shown part of the images of war. Media often doesn't provide us with full details and rarely depicts any visual images of war, so the people in our country during the Civil War were being exposed to it far more, it really seemed like it could've made it hit home a little bit harder.

Andrew

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Undefined Loss

by [Jessica Ballestrazze](#) - Tuesday, March 3, 2015, 10:32 PM

I was quite overwhelmed by the statistic that if Civil War casualties were converted proportionately to current population, our country would have lost 7 million people in the war. Imagine attempting (through second or third-hand accounts) to find one grave out of 7 million where your loved one is buried, or simply knowing something was wrong because you haven't heard from them in several months. Life would be constant anxiety and perpetual sadness. I thought the "Death and the Civil War" segment summarized this beautifully by saying, "Lives were shattered in undefined ways because so many of the dead were unknown." For some reason the term "undefined" sticks with me—the struggles of the families left behind could not be understood before the Civil War, nor have they been understood in the same exact manner in any war since. These were fresh wounds, unidentifiable injuries, for which treatment had not yet evolved. The scarring on the psyche of our country was justifiably enormous, and as Ric Burns asserts, "You cannot go through that without being transformed as a people."

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Re: Undefined Loss

by [Heather Reed](#) - Saturday, March 7, 2015, 11:46 AM

I was also overwhelmed by that statistic being so high. It breaks my heart to even think about having a loved one die and not even know where they are. They men fought for what they thought was right and in return they didn't even get the respect to be buried properly. It was like we just threw them away because they had served their purpose and were no longer needed.

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Life After Death

by [Andrew McGarry](#) - Wednesday, March 4, 2015, 11:47 AM

This weeks additional materials were extremely interesting. It was very easy to see in this film that Ric and Ken are brothers as they both had such a similar style. For me the films angle focusing on the response to the death toll was something to appreciate as this has never really been one of our focuses during the course. Throughout his episodes Ken Burns includes some statistics about the certain battles he covers but he never really puts in right out in front of you by giving you the death rates at the end of the war in full, nor does he put it in a more realistic perspective by comparing the percentages to our population in the United States currently. Hearing that the number of deaths in the Civil War would equate to 7 million of our population today was staggering and was an angle that I thought was a nice complement by Ric. It was also amazing to see how much more religious the country was in its entirety back in that era, every letter that was sent and discussed in the film talked about how the soldier was "right with God" and passed peacefully. Passing peacefully is hardly something you would imagine for someone who is dying on the field of battle but it just goes to show how strong the American faith was.

One thing that did not do a whole lot for me as far as knowledge goes was the article, I felt that it really just reiterated what the Ric Burns film had just got done covering. It may have been more beneficial to read it first and then watch the film as it seemed like it would have been better off as a precursor. It did a really good job of summarizing the film and also seemingly promoting it. Something that I did find to be useless though was Stephen Colbert claiming that the film made the Civil War "sound like a downer". It was clear that Ric Burns had the intentions of displaying the process of passing and how it was handled in the war, not to try to make everyone feel bad that it had happened that way. It was a unique and valuable perspective to have towards the end of this course.

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Re: Life After Death

by [Heather Reed](#) - Saturday, March 7, 2015, 11:57 AM

I had known throughout this course that we had lost a lot of men during this war yet, seeing it literally in black in white as Ric showed us in his film. Seeing the numbers flash across the screen throughout the film really put it into perspective. The saddest part of the deaths is that most of the deaths could have been avoided if they had only known how to handle diseases back then. It was 2 out of 3 deaths that were caused by disease. It was stated that the Civil War had taken place 10 years before we really knew how to prevent disease from breaking out and how to treat it. At one point in the film it even said that the wounded soldiers arrived in the same box car as the dead. It would have been bad enough to die out on the battle field but these poor men that got diseases and wounds then had to suffer and still die.

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"Delighted" to Hear

by [Trenton Bieker](#) - Wednesday, March 4, 2015, 7:07 PM

The major thing this documentary gave me in my understanding of the Civil War, is driving home the monstrous fact of death in times of war. The numbers truly are a scary thought to think about. Being a parent, I know I would be in eternal pain reading a letter from my son dying on the battlefield. His words in that letter on the opening scene "I know you would be delighted" really struck me as odd. I don't know if I would be "delighted", maybe delighted by the fact there is no question as to his fate? Or maybe there is an honor in dying for a higher purpose that was held in their family. I think that the emotional approach the Burns's take works very well with this documentary. It highlights the impact of death that can be said is pushed under the rug for more exciting sell able aspects of the war. This approach helps me fully understand the amount of bloodshed and how this impacted the American people from times past. They stated if we lost the same percentage of lives today, it would reach 7 million! That is a lot of lives to lose. Even with how crazy our world is today we are truly blessed to live where we do today.

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Patriotism Today

by [Trenton Bieker](#) - Wednesday, March 4, 2015, 7:14 PM

I think as a nation we are a little more divided due to the lack of religious union today. For instance views on gay rights, marijuana legalization, and conflicts of separation of church and state keep us moving slow in progressive laws. Honestly in areas of our country where Christianity is still strong are the same areas where we get the most recruits for our military. Here is a graph of our enlistment rates in America. <http://www.ijreview.com/2014/07/158892-military-pride-states-boast-highest-enlistment-rates-america/>

This information shows me that this could be why we have patriotism and God so closely connected. Our money has "In God We Trust" and "Under God" in our allegiance. They are the ones that feel the tragic side of war today and in the past the most. If they are the ones that fight our wars just or unjust, it makes since that God and USA go hand and hand. It doesn't sit very well that the North could be said are making the calls and the South is going to war for them today. Though today there is no North vs. South war taking place or that lifestyle blatantly obvious, I am merely making a observation demographically with numbers of today's enlistment data connected to the geographical sites of the Civil War. Just thought it was interesting.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

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Re: Patriotism Today

by [Agina Hale](#) - Sunday, March 8, 2015, 1:18 AM

Well I don't know. After looking at that data that you posted, I can see a little of what you are referring to, however it doesn't answer a lot of questions about other states. Overall what strikes me about this data is it doesn't mention officers or enlisted men only. Also this says the data is from 2013, and it says 18-24 enlisted, but for many years now the enlisted age has been raised. The cap for all branches is 42. I'm not picking on you, i'm just pointing out a few things to look at with stuff like this.

It does bring out some interesting points worth talking about. I can only give a little insight considering I am only married to one southerner. There are two big driving forces for enlistment in the south, which both correlate to each other. Family pride and cultural pride. A lot of the southerners who enlist come from families that have generations who fought all the way back to the reunification, or even the founding of states. I know that it might seem like it is directly correlated to religion, but I think it's more about cultural pride. Many families are proud that they fight for what is theirs. Think about all we have talked about with the Civil War. Trust me there is still a lot of bitterness between the North and the South. The culture hasn't changed much during the last 150 years either. The North is known for being more about individuals and less concern about communities. The South which is still strongly an agrarian society, has a stronger sense of community. Not that people can't feel that way in the North, it's just an overall statistic.

As far as our nation and the closeness with "God", that is a more modern interpretation. The "Under God" and "One Nation Under God" came about in the 1950's. Ironically around the time we were worried about communists in and

against our nation. This Nation has had people fight for it for over 170 years before we pledged to a deity.

Sum of ratings: **3 (1)**

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In The Hearts of America

by [Trenton Bieker](#) - Sunday, March 8, 2015, 8:33 PM

I understand that "In God We Trust" and "Under God" are modern in their application. However, I do feel that this was more than a reflection of the fear of communism. Our nation was founded on two huge ideals. One being the Freedom of commerce and right to regulate it's own money. Secondly the right to worship God how one chooses, today know as Freedom of religion. It can be said that these two ideals made two distinct cities, Jamestown(Economic) and Plymouth(Religious). Though today we have lost our financial freedoms,our Freedom of religion remains, and our understanding of Freedom of religion has broadened. In my opinion, we as a nation when talking about Freedom of religion, was focused on the persecution of worshipping the Christian God. I don't think there was much debate back then about the majority of people in America believed in the Christian God. Today, we think of anyone can worship anything, freely and without restraint. My point is that yes these terms "Under God" and "In God We Trust" are modern, but weren't needed to be expressed in the beginning of our nation simply because everyone was practically Christian. I think as we developed as a Nation and the fear that we would lose our Christian heritage, this manifested itself in these terms. This leads to my main point, that I think we have been pledged to a deity in our hearts as a nation until recently we have had to manifest terms declaring such beliefs, because not everyone believes that in their hearts in modern times. This is a really big subject and is one that I look into from time to time. I know this is one that is huge for debates. Thank you for your post.

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Re: In The Hearts of America

by [Rebecca King](#) - Sunday, March 8, 2015, 9:53 PM

I think that another big reason that enlistment rates are higher in the south, and I say this as someone both from military parents and the south, is that the south is largely a very poor area. Many southern states have very poor economies and rural areas have few economic opportunities. The military advertises heavily in poor areas because it can offer a stable job with the chance to travel the world. My parents weren't particularly religious or patriotic, but they did grow up very poor/

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Re: Death & the Civil War

by [Rebecca King](#) - Wednesday, March 4, 2015, 11:03 PM

I think we've lost the ability to come to terms with or accept death as a part of life. Death, even for especially religious Americans, is considered to be one of the worst imaginable things that could happen to a family. Even for people who believe that they or their loved ones will go to heaven, it's very difficult for them to deal with death. At the time of the Civil War, people saw death as a much more normal part of life. People died at home, surrounded by loved ones. Because death was so common and medical care was so limited, there was so much in the way of prevention. Because of that, people just accepted it. In modern society, people's first thought when faced with the possibility of death is often how to avoid it or make it not happen. It's not so easily accepted.

There are definitely a lot of things that the government is doing better for soldiers and their families. Soldiers and their families are cared for better while they're serving, there are are systems in place to identify the bodies and transport them back for burial, and they are compensated and treated for injuries. Their service and sacrifice are honored by the government too. However, it's not perfect. Even though we have these systems in place, they are often inadequate. Hospitals are not adequately equipped to care for the number of wounded soldiers and for the duration that they would need care. Government benefits for veterans is often not enough and it's often extremely difficult to contact and get sufficient benefits because of a bogged down bureaucracy.

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Re: Death & the Civil War

by [Agina Hale](#) - Sunday, March 8, 2015, 2:24 PM

I completely agree with you about us not being able to deal with. The field of medicine is always advancing ways for us to extend our lives. Cancer, diabetes, aids. These three things alone have had life expectancy increases within the last 10 years by leaps and bounds. Not taking myself out of this statistic either, mind you.

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Re: Death & the Civil War

by [Rebecca King](#) - Sunday, March 8, 2015, 9:26 PM

I agree and I really think that in addition to religion, the advances in medicine have made us less able to cope with death as a part of life. Being much more likely to be cured of disease or illness and fewer and fewer people believing strongly in an afterlife, has made it extremely difficult for people to reconcile themselves with death. During the Civil War era, especially for soldiers, a battle injury was pretty much a death sentence. If you didn't just bleed out, it was extremely likely that you would die from infection because doctors didn't sterilize their tools.

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Death's Statistics

by [Kayla Janis](#) - Wednesday, March 4, 2015, 11:22 PM

While I've heard many times that the number of deaths in the Civil War was huge, it's never really struck a chord with me. Maybe, because it was so far long ago it hasn't seemed to be that crazy of a number. But, when the film mentioned that approximately 2.5 percent of the population had died, I thought that seemed like quite a bit. But, again, it didn't really seem like that much. But, when she compared 2.5 percent of today's population, the enormity of it sunk in. Today, 2.5 percent of the population would be 7 million people! That's crazy!

For me, the statistics concerning the death toll was the most significant piece of information adding to my existing knowledge of the Civil War. Throughout the term we've seen countless images of dead soldiers. I don't think I truly understood the significance of these images until I understood the significance of the numbers behind the deaths.

At Fort Sumter on April 12 to April 14, 1861 there were 15 casualties and zero dead. That's about half of our class size. Relative to the nation's population, it's an incredibly tiny number. A year later, on April 6-7, 1862 at Shiloh, there were over 23,000 casualties and almost 3500 deaths. Assuming our class size is about 30 people, that's about 116 classrooms our size! While relative to the nation's population that's not a huge percentage, it's still a lot of people. In a war that wasn't supposed to last more than a few months, fighting battles with few casualties to thousands of casualties a year later, is a shock. Just shy of a year, is a short period of time to absorb the realization of how many lives will be lost in the Civil War.

In a four year war, the American people were forced to realize just how many lives would be lost and how devastating that loss would be. One of the historians in the film said that nearly every person would lose a loved one in the war. It was also said that at the Battle of Bull Run, there were 2700 wounded and 900 dead. These totals were about half of those from the Mexican War. At first, this statistic just felt like some numbers being thrown at me. They didn't register until it was mentioned that those lives were lost in 12 hours. When you think about what happened in your day in the last 12 hours, it's practically impossible to comprehend 900 lives lost. I don't know that I even saw 900 people today.

The presentation of these death tolls really drove home the staggering number of deaths. I think that because of that, I have a greater understanding of the impact of the Civil War on our nation. These large numbers lead to quite a few changes that we take for granted today- having dead soldiers returned to families, national cemeteries, and death benefits.

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Re: Death's Statistics

by [Agina Hale](#) - Sunday, March 8, 2015, 2:30 PM

It is crazy! When the video asked the question, how could a society function with that large population dead or dying. It is a lot to think about. It puts a lot of strain on those that are still living. During WWII the industries had about a 10% increase in women because of all the men who enlisted. This topic hasn't come up too much so far.

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Re: Death's Statistics

by [Rebecca King](#) - Sunday, March 8, 2015, 9:32 PM

I was also shocked when I heard the comparison of the number of deaths in the war to our population. I can't imagine what our society would be like if 7 million Americans were dying in a war, especially being killed by other Americans on American soil. I can't imagine what that would do to the consciousness of our society. How we thought, how we felt. I think things would be very, very different. Also, in the film it was said that the war touched everything and that virtually everybody had lost someone in the war. I've never experienced losing someone in a war, but I can only imagine how awful that would be. And I definitely can't imagine what it would be like if everybody experienced that.

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death

by [Agina Hale](#) - Thursday, March 5, 2015, 1:02 AM

The Civil War just marked a lot of firsts for the nation, and they couldn't fathom a lot of the realities that they were forced to deal with. However I think that the big shock is actually that the war was expected to be a short minor dispute, picture baskets and all. I wasn't very surprised with the summation of how death was so important to society at this time. In the victorian era death was a curiosity. "A good death" was something to be sought after so they had time to gracefully head to the afterlife. The death, the viewing and the funeral were all at home around people who cared. Mourners would wear mourning clothes for a couple of years after the fact. People would make jewelry with the loved ones hair to keep something of them close by at all times. Photography of the deceased was a very common practice. Everyone from children up to senior adults would be dressed in their finest, posed and a picture taken for loved ones to have a cherished memory for their eternity. If you ever go back east and look at the older cemeteries they are filled with elaborate mausoleums, crypts etc. The more grandiose the better. As time has progressed, we don't have as large of a christian population overall, but we have larger populations of similar religions. All of these religions promote the sanctity of earthly remains. It is still a very big concern for humanity. Even those who don't identify themselves in this manner have been raised with that moral or ideal, and we still see that in our society. Not taking care of dead remains is seen as sacrilegious, dishonorable and barbaric. I don't see any differences between then and now except the way it is projected. How many people have memorial tattoos, urns, pictures and vinyl memorial stickers for the back of cars. People get ashes made into jewelry, pottery etc. We still have cemeteries which are an archaic gesture that only appeases the living. It is even common to get your pets ashes.

In the Victorian Era, it was almost a backlash from the enlightenment, where interest in the occult became popular. People were paying big money for seances with the dead. Death has always been something that looms over humanity. I think that memorializing loved ones is a way of asking for the same to be done for us. As the population of atheists and agnostics increases, I think our mortality is hitting a different apex because we might think this really is the end, and what kind of life have we lived. The people of the civil war did want a good death with their loved ones, and to be at peace with god. I think we aren't choosing to die at home because we are obsessed with living as long as possible, usually in a hospital. We are unaccepting of death.

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Imapact

by [Heather Reed](#) - Saturday, March 7, 2015, 12:15 PM

Having a war that claimed 2.5% of the American population is mind numbing. However, it did cause the government to realize that it had a responsibility to its citizens and its troops. Yet, I believed that if it hadn't been for the citizens fighting for the troops it may have been a different story. How could the government send its troops out without even having a way to identify a body if they had been killed? Having troops taking the field without even having an ambulance on site is ludicrous. They didn't even have anything set in place to properly notify the next of kin of the deceased. I do understand that it would have be difficult to send bodies home of the fallen to their loved ones back then but they didn't even properly notify these poor families.

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Re: Imapact

by [Agina Hale](#) - Saturday, March 7, 2015, 10:34 PM

Well if you remember in the beginning it wasn't supposed to be a large casualty war, and took many people by surprise. I'm sure it bothered many people during the time to watch the dead not being properly taken care of, but it probably got put on the "back burner" as far as concerns go. Everything seemed to be quite overwhelming, in every facet of the war.

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Re: Impact

by [Heather Reed](#) - Sunday, March 8, 2015, 3:55 PM

I understand that the war was overwhelming and was supposed to be "short". Lincoln was only recruiting soldiers for 90 days in the beginning. However, after the first year of fighting people knew this wasn't going to just go away. Yet, there was still nothing set in place to take care of the injured and the dead. It took citizens to get the government to step up and to start doing something. Putting the dead "on the back burner" should never happen, let alone after a four year war. The government had plenty of time to take care of the wounded and the dead. There were new ways to kill but no new ways to deal with the dead and injured. In Ric Burns' film he even mentions what do governments owe to their bodies that make up the states? How about some respect and honor for these men and their families.

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Re: Impact

by [Agina Hale](#) - Sunday, March 8, 2015, 9:02 PM

Yes, this war gave the government a lot more "jobs" to be responsible for, but we just need to keep presentism out of the equation. We are so used to what is expected to be done for us, or on our behalf in the current situation. At this time the government wasn't something that people held much of an expectation of. We can't really say that it's ludicrous except in our own modern perspective. They might be devoted to the notion of dying a good death, but I don't think there was as much finger wagging as we would now.

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Re: Impact

by [Rebecca King](#) - Sunday, March 8, 2015, 10:37 PM

I agree, I think that back then, the role of the government and the way that people viewed it was much different. People didn't really think that the government was responsible for much of what it does today. Many people didn't even see the United States as a nation, they saw it just as the name implies a group of 'united states'. They even referred to it as 'the union'. People didn't identify as American, they often identified with the state they were from. So, they also didn't view the federal government as something that presided over them in the way we do now, so nobody felt like these kinds of things were owed to them by the government.

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Re: Impact

by [Opal Burdge](#) - Sunday, March 8, 2015, 10:35 PM

Reading over those parts sickened me really, I couldn't imagine not knowing what happened to my husband or son at war, or not even getting his body home to lay to rest. I understand it was a different time, but I just can't wrap my head around how no one could come up with a better way to deal with this.

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Re: Impact

by [Andrew McGarry](#) - Sunday, March 8, 2015, 11:05 PM

Hello Heather!

I was very surprised as well to learn just how badly the care for wounded or dead soldiers was in the Civil War. Obviously this was a war that had our country divided, but was also in a time when religion was at a much higher rate. People often referred to wanting a "good death", you would think that with that level of understanding with passing away

that they would have had some form of systems in place. Luckily that is not a problem as much anymore. It just seems like it would be awful to never know what happened to your father, son or brother.

Andrew

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Heartstrings

by [Opal Burdge](#) - Sunday, March 8, 2015, 10:32 PM

Getting a look into what was the care for veterans back during this era was eye opening and heart breaking. There was nothing for these poor men who served. Even now a century later we as a country are still struggling to provide for our veterans which is awful because we have had so much time and experiences to learn from to get this right. I know many vets who suffer from PTSD and other awful consequences of war that aren't being cared for or taken seriously by the VA hospital. I mean yes in an overall look we have much better services for the men and women who have served than we did back in this era. At least we have ways of identifying bodies and telling loved ones if their significant other has been wounded in battle or worse. But I still feel like we have such a long way to go as a country to really insure the health and over all well being of our veterans and men and women currently at war.

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Re: Heartstrings

by [Rebecca King](#) - Sunday, March 8, 2015, 10:41 PM

I agree and I honestly feel like much of what we say guarantee veterans are just empty promises. We say it's much better now, but so many veterans are homeless, suffering from untreated injuries or mental illnesses, or just forgotten. We say that things are so much better because of all these programs and benefits, but how many veterans even get these things?

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