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**Petersburg - Graveyard of the Confederacy**

by Joe Escobar - Sunday, February 22, 2015, 2:32 PM

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[Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Tested Endurance**

by Jessica Ballestrazze - Tuesday, February 24, 2015, 10:43 PM

I definitely felt that the in-depth look at the Petersburg siege was informative. In fact, while reading through chapter 24, I somehow missed that the Confederate troops were in earth-works outside of the city, and assumed that they were all inside Petersburg. I also think that Petersburg proved to be a crucial point in the outcome of the Civil War, so it perhaps deserves more attention than some of the "fruitless" battles.

I think the "Graveyard" segment did a really great job of illustrating the specific demands and challenges of siege warfare, as did McPherson. Sherman's quote, "The enemy holds us by an inferior force. We are more besieged than they," portrays the sort of monotonous and tedious nature for both the Union and Confederacy. The point from the segment about men becoming disenfranchised because they felt like "moles and gophers" probably had more of an effect than we would expect. Many soldiers joined the military primarily because they believed in their cause, and wanted to fight with honor. To be stagnant for so long would be more difficult for this type of soldier than for an average person. Ultimately, the siege of Petersburg did turn out to be "a war of nerves and tested endurance" (Petersburg).

Sum of ratings:3 (1) 3

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: Tested Endurance**

by Agina Hale - Sunday, March 1, 2015, 2:56 PM

Yeah. The breastworks and guns being part of the line were 10miles from the city on out. I thought about it later that they were living in a world where war was a constant and keeping that was necessary. Aesthetically very unappealing, and cities wouldn't have anything like that today because we don't think about fighting against each other anymore.



I agree about the Graveyard episode, it really did let us know what things were like. I couldn't imagine. Thinking about the trenches. It was interesting when the Ken Burns show pointed out the part about thanksgiving. That it was a "union" holiday that the confederates didn't celebrate, but didn't fire out of honor.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1) 3

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These Trenches

by [Trenton Bieker](#) - Sunday, March 1, 2015, 10:44 PM

The trench systems are intimidating!!!! imagine marching over Crater hill and seeing one of these



Where would you enter? These photos really put in perspective what it means when they saw an elaborate trench system. Your statement "we don't think about fighting against each other anymore." struck a bell of curiosity for me. I wondered when have we as a Union been at peace? We haven't been at peace for very long, 21 years total is all. Seems that comments of Lee in God's and Generals has an eerie truth. When told "This is a great opportunity for you to serve your country." Lee responds with this "My country, Mr. Blair? I never thought I'd see the day the president of the United States would raise an army to invade his own country." In my life I have seen some wars that have this same essence only it was done overseas. Here is an article about the wars we have been fighting.
<http://www.washingtonsblog.com/2015/02/america-war-93-time-222-239-years-since-1776.html>

To me this is a heart wrenching and crazy fact, I would never have realized true, without seeing it listed out.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Tested Endurance

by [Andrew McGarry](#) - Sunday, March 1, 2015, 8:47 PM

Hello Jessica!

You did a great job in your post of making unique and interesting comparisons to how the soldiers were feeling. I agree with your statement that this was one of the more crucial battles of the war and needing more detail. Though there were other momentum shifts in the war this battle was a very extensive one and was much more mentally taxing on those involved. Do you think this is something that is still felt by our soldiers when they have long stints in places like Afghanistan?

Andrew

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Re: Tested Endurance

by [Rebecca King](#) - Sunday, March 1, 2015, 10:50 PM

I think one of the best parts about watching these videos is when it touches on things that I missed or forgot in the reading. Your comment about that was interesting because the same thing happens to me. I also that that that particular part, about the Confederate troops outside Petersburg, was very interesting (especially in video form). I also also that the video was useful because of the detail it goes into, especially about the conditions of the war, like in the Graveyard section, which you mentioned.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Pledge of Allegiance

by [Jessica Ballestrazze](#) - Tuesday, February 24, 2015, 10:53 PM

Just a small thought I had after watching both video segments today. I started thinking about the Pledge of Allegiance, and how many times I muttered the pledge as a child without realizing the implications of what I was saying, or the history enveloped in those words. It was originally composed in 1892, and while that is several decades after the Confederacy's surrender, the Civil War, secession, and emancipation were still very much in the author's mind. **"One nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."** (The words "Under God" were not added until 1954.) It's amazing to me how one sentence can sum up pretty much every point of contention that contributed to the Civil War, and equally impressive that we still say the words today, though our generation will probably never grasp the magnitude with which they were written.

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Re: Pledge of Allegiance

by [Agina Hale](#) - Wednesday, February 25, 2015, 8:40 AM

The interesting part about this is that generations underneath me, don't say the pledge of allegiance because of the "under god" part because of a part that was only added in 1954. The only way that people keep up the sense of this allegiance is at sports games. It makes me wonder if we wouldn't have added the "under god" part, would it be something that helped maintain a sense of patriotism.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Pledge of Allegiance

by [Rebecca King](#) - Sunday, March 1, 2015, 10:54 PM

I think your comment is interesting because I'm part of the generation you're taking about AND I didn't often say the

pledge in school. For me, there were a couple reasons I didn't, but the big one was the part about "under God", which I felt uncomfortable saying because I'm not Christian. I felt like it was strange that I would be expected to say that when I don't even believe it. I also think that being compelled to say the pledge, from a young age before you even know what you're saying can also be an issue when thinking about patriotism.

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Re: Pledge of Allegiance

by [Rebecca King](#) - Sunday, March 1, 2015, 10:58 PM

This is really interesting to me because I never even thought about this, even while taking this class. I've been hearing the pledge my whole life and I never thought about that part in relation to the Civil War, even though thinking about it know, it's very clearly related. I also think it's interesting to consider what the people at the time (especially in the South), would have thought of the pledge, which many modern Americans consider an extremely important part of patriotism.

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The Depth of the Crater

by [Trenton Bieker](#) - Wednesday, February 25, 2015, 6:18 PM

Petersburg: The Graveyard of the Confederacy definitely added to my in-depth knowledge of the war. For instance, at Crater McPherson writes a depiction of the battle that lacked details provided by The Graveyard of the Confederacy. The documentary explained that there was problems with the explosives and a man had to go in and find the problem before the gun powder could go off. Another insight provide by this documentary lacking in Battle Cry of Freedom, is how the Union reacted after the explosion went off. The Union was expecting a straight nice charge over the hill and when they reached the top they were caught surprised. The Confederacy was more organized and entrenched than expected. The leader of the first men to charge the Crater were depicted by both sources as holding back and drinking, as his men ran disorganized. The documentary went a step further claiming James Ledlie was one of the worst commanders of the Union army. I also really liked the fact they were explaining this story at the scene to get a better understanding at the size of the crater.

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Re: The Depth of the Crater

by [Agina Hale](#) - Sunday, March 1, 2015, 3:48 PM

McPhersons book describes how the charge ended up a chaotic battle because at the last minute they changed who was going to charge in first, and part of it was decided by drawing straws. "James H. Ledlie, had a mediocre record and an alcohol problem. During the assault he stayed behind in the trenches drinking rum cadged from the surgeon. With no preparation and without leadership, his men attacked." "One entire rebel regiment and an artillery battery were buried in the debris. Confederate troops for a couple of hundred yards on either side of the crater fled in terror. When Ledlie's division went forward, its men stopped to gawk at the awesome spectacle." That is insane. It doesn't give a graphic description, but we don't need it in order to imagine what it was like there. Not to mention the amount of soldiers that might have experienced temporary hearing loss?

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In depth of Petersburg

by [Jordan Hevern](#) - Wednesday, February 25, 2015, 6:29 PM

When watching this weeks Kevin Burns film, I was intrigued to learn about the 500 foot tunnel that the union built. Then to only find out that this plan basically back fired on them because they decided to go through the tunnel. With this entailed a lot of black soldiers being killed, because the Southerners were still not on board with equality. In the film, there is a statement the confederates say talking about the blacks and white, I will not repeat it, but that statement alone indicates what the war was about. At this point Grant had been notorious for not doing well in the last several battles, but he did not retreat like most of the other generals. He kept on fighting through, At this point, Grant had destroyed his army and in the documentary it briefly states that the quality of men was getting poor, unless they were of the younger men who were freshly enlisted. The confederate line was depleting, disease, and sickness was consuming their armies. This document gets into very good detail about causalities of each side, and how Grant and Lee planned their attacks on each. The documentary talk about both these general were diligent and even though they lost a lot of men, they fought until the end.

In the siege of Petersburg, they also built trenches, that they later used in World War 1. The documentary says that these trenches caused a lot of disease, and make the fighting either on the outside of the trenches, or with snipers.

Since this was 10 months of fighting, I think that is very important that we get into detail of this battle. This was one of the last battles of the Civil War, especially since there is a cemetery for men of this battle. I think that other battles are very important as well, because each one ended different, but this battle lasted so long, and had so many different outcomes, that it showed just how easy it was for the Civil War to take a drastic change.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

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Re: In depth of Petersburg

by [Rebecca King](#) - Sunday, March 1, 2015, 11:29 PM

I agree that it's important to go into detail, especially with something as important as Petersburg, which also went on for so long. I also think that when learning about history, it's most important to learn *why* things happened and what effect they had on later events, it's critical that we go so in depth about a battle like Petersburg. Petersburg was so important to the outcome of the war and had it gone differently, the whole war could have.

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Different details

by [Andrew McGarry](#) - Wednesday, February 25, 2015, 10:18 PM

Ken Burns does a good job in general as far as providing interesting details of the war, I have also wondered how he selected the particular topics he goes into more detail about. I thought this weeks added short film was a great focus, this was a very crucial point in the war. Soldiers were at an all time low as far as health and moral, this is something you could see coming with the continuing decline in the Ken Burns series. But to see a focus on this one particular stretch of time that Petersburg was fought was definitely a an important detail to see. It showed how dedicated Grant and Lee were to finishing the war.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

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Graveyard of the Confederacy

by [Rebecca King](#) - Wednesday, February 25, 2015, 11:50 PM

I think that focusing on Petersburg is important because it had such a huge effect on the outcome of the war. I think a video like this about Fort Sumpter, Bull Run, or Shiloh would be just as beneficial because they were all critical battles in the war. Had it been about something very minor, I would say that it wouldn't be worthwhile to watch. However, I do think there were many small details in the film that aren't really important to the overall battle, so they would have been skipped over. Other things, like the part about disease in the trenches, is important to why the battle went the way it did, and so it's worth learning about.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

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Re: Graveyard of the Confederacy

by [Andrew McGarry](#) - Sunday, March 1, 2015, 8:55 PM

Hello Rebecca, very interesting point about having more detailed videos about the other important battles. I wish that was something we had in this course! Especially with all the major battles having different overall effects on the war I think there is probably a lot more time we could spend learning about all those different details, probably too much time in fact. I do agree with you though, they skipped the minor details and included what was truly important. By including these details about what the soldiers were experiencing in the trenches as well as how low their morale was gives us a more personal feeling to what they were experiencing.

Andrew

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Re: Graveyard of the Confederacy

I agree that there's so much more we could go into. If we really went into the detail we could with the civil war, this class would probably be a year long. I don't know about you, but as much as I'm interested in learning about the Civil War, I don't think I could do that. I think that's it's really important to go into such great deal, however, especially about the people involved because the personal connection to history is what makes it feel more real and effects us the most.

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Pretty boy

by [Agina Hale](#) - Saturday, February 28, 2015, 6:37 PM

(The part I can't quite get out of my head about the podcast was when they were describing the differences between Grant and Lee's looks. I honestly giggled out loud. I'm sure the descriptions are accurate, but it was hilarious to me that they mentioned the attractive demeanor of Lee and that Grant "looked like he started out low and advanced." I just had to share because it was so funny to me)

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

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Re: Petersburg - Graveyard of the Confederacy

by [Agina Hale](#) - Saturday, February 28, 2015, 6:55 PM

The thing I love about the textbook is the amount of detail it gives on everything going on at the time. They give pretty much every play by play about the battles, and what is happening on conjunction with the battle. I do still enjoy watching the Ken Burns videos for an entertaining pleasure. But if we didn't have the textbook information, there is a lot of information that has been left out.

As far as Petersburg being an integral point of the war, i'm pretty sure it is because of how important it was because of how badly things had gone previously. Grant approached Cold Harbor with more troops, but found out how well prepared the south was safely entrenched. Grant then started destroying railroads to Petersburg, because the city was the last city not cut off by the north. It was believed that if they were able to take Petersburg, then the Union would win the war, or rather the south would lose the war. I can't imagine being in a battle over a town lasting 10 months. I keep thinking about bits and pieces that i've read and watched, and they fill in the gaps quite nicely. When the ken burns movie described how women would just continue throughout the day when shots were being fired into the city, but since the battle went on for so long, I guess it makes sense.

When comparing the differences between the ken burns movie, the podcast and the textbook. The ken burns movie definitely pointed out how much Grant was this almost parasitic entity continuously trying to penetrate the city getting stalled. However the book had stated that Lee had a small army holding the city of about 2500, and within an hour Smith had captured 1 mile of the line and 16 guns.

To be completely honest. I take notes, but I can't always remember which part I received information from. I remember reading or watching something about the trench battle that the Union had 300 slaves with them that they had decided to help along the way, but they needed to move fast and had to leave the slaves who ended up being returned to their angry owners. My point is that all of these things are working together to give us more facts, or different perspectives on each subject. For instance in the Ken Burns movie they discuss how bad the southern prisoner camps are, especially Andersonville. Well one of the things I already knew was how the south dealt with poverty and inflation. How would it be possible to keep prisoners alive in a camp if you couldn't even feed your own troops. Having said that, I can empathize with the Union when they found out how bad the prison camps were. I disagree with the decision of lowering the rations they were giving to "match the south", because the south wasn't necessarily doing it out of spite. They were dealing with poverty on their own.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

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Military Leadership

by [Jessica Ballestrazze](#) - Sunday, March 1, 2015, 2:37 PM

As far as performance of military leaders, I didn't feel that the "Petersburg" episode gave a huge amount of information that I didn't receive from the McPherson text. I also felt that their descriptions of Union leaders and decisions were for the most part negative. For instance, when the narrator is describing Grant's refusal to move into a comfortable home during the siege of Petersburg, it appears that he is commending him for choosing instead to remain with his men. But there is a little backhandedness when the narrator says, "So typical of this man who never really became anything more than that old storekeeper from Galena, Illinois" (42:00).

Regarding Grant's attempts to break through the defenses at Petersburg, there is a definite Confederate hue in the description that "Piecemeal assaults and heroic counterattacks became the norm" (38:20). The impression taken away by the viewer is that any Union action was lackluster and disorganized, and that the Confederate rebuffs were gallant and successful. When speaking of Benjamin Butler's attacks, it is stated that, "Butler's weak punches and a strong Confederate defense...saved the day" (38:50). This seems like another attempt to make the Confederacy appear more dominant than it actually was. There is certainly more grace bestowed upon failed attempts by Southern leaders. For example, in the case of Five Forks and George Pickett, it is stated that "he did the best he could with his position" (49:30), despite his quick defeat. After this Union victory, the wording, "the road to the southside railroad was open...Grant just had to reach out and take it" (50:10) implies that the Union had simply stumbled into this success and had this opening not because of superior skill or strategy, but because of dumb luck.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Depiction of Troops

by [Jessica Ballestrazze](#) - Sunday, March 1, 2015, 2:44 PM

The depiction of the Confederacy in the "Petersburg" episode gives the impression that they were simply victims of circumstance, and that the Union just happened in to victory. Describing the ways in which the soldiers had changed, the narrator discusses that the quality of Union troops had declined, because the fresh troops were largely a product of conscription, and lacked the gusto of the soldiers who had originally rushed to join the fight. The video states, "The first men to rush to arms are the best," therefore implying that the new troops were there begrudgingly or with less fervor. (Although according to the PBS documentary, 140,000 Union troops re-enlisted, casting doubt on that claim.)

The only negative aspect they point out regarding the Confederate troops is that there weren't enough of them. They are portrayed as fighting valiantly and whole-heartedly, but simply being overrun by Union troops. They had no disposable troops, and as Grant stretched the front line further and further, their lines of defense were weakened and stretched. The McPherson book confirms this particular fact, but the way the information is presented to the viewer in the episode seems very one-sided. It also portrays the south as an "underdog", presumably to garner sympathy from the viewer.

Overall, the South seems to be presented as heroic and committed to their cause, while the North is depicted as a giant mass of confused soldiers who conquered by sheer numbers rather than will to win.

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Re: Depiction of Troops

by [Agina Hale](#) - Sunday, March 1, 2015, 9:23 PM

Well to be fair, that is a pretty good assumption, except for each side did want to win. If you look over the battles that we have studied so far, there are a fair amount of them where the union either didn't seem to push hard enough, or just got out maneuvered. Looking at the generals on both sides, they both had some that were better than others, but let's face it the north had a hard time always finding great leadership. McClellan for example, he was relieved/posted 3 times I believe. Lincoln would bring him back out of sheer desperation. Grant had tenacity, but he seemed to always have to catch up to Lee in one way or the other. There were a few things that went wrong for the confederates that was bad luck such as losing Jackson, the blockades, limited supplies. Yet they seemed to overcome and keep going.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Checking The Numbers

by [Trenton Bieker](#) - Sunday, March 1, 2015, 10:16 PM

I think when taking a glance at just the numbers North Vs South, you can see why they think of the South as the "under dog". The Union had almost triple the numbers in all resources. If you were watching a baseball game and it was seven vs nine(with 12 reserves) wouldn't we come to the same conclusion? When looking at how the generals of both sides fought the battles we can see why the Union is seen as a "giant mass...who conquered by sheer numbers". Grant was even given the Name "Butcher" for sending his men to the slaughter. When looking at the causality numbers you see that the Union suffered more deaths than the Confederacy. I think having less everything and still having less casualties can

say a lot to how these battles were fought. I can see how the Confederacy gains a reputation as cunning and resilient on the battle field. For being so small in numbers it was the leadership that gave Lincoln such a headache. Thinking back to when we first started this class, I think if I remember correctly that the south was depicted as some unorganized farm boys and the Union as an organized army. If that were the case wouldn't this war have been over sooner and the Union suffering the least casualties?

<http://www.nps.gov/civilwar/facts.htm>

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Facts vs. Subjectivity

by [Jessica Ballestrazze](#) - Sunday, March 1, 2015, 2:51 PM

Many of the facts the video presents seem to line up accordingly with the PBS episode and the McPherson book. But in the list of four prompts for this forum, I felt the only useful information provided through this in-depth look at Petersburg was through a better understanding of the trials of siege warfare, and how each battle helped to lead up to Petersburg. This did give a better understanding of the importance of each battle, and how so many things interconnected to produce a Union victory. I do feel that this grasp can be obtained through the McPherson book, and some of it can be understood through the PBS series. The Petersburg video simply rounded out the details and filled in the cracks that someone may have missed when reading or viewing the other two sources.

I did find it interesting that siege warfare and the "grand strategy" leading up to Petersburg were the only topics in which the facts would be undisputable, and difficult to manipulate, and were therefore the ones I found more useful as a learning aid. The performance of military commanders and the quality of the troops are both subjective, and therefore took on more opinion than the information from the topics that I found more useful.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

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trenches

by [Jordan Hevern](#) - Sunday, March 1, 2015, 10:13 PM

Its funny, well not funny, but crazy to think that the unions spent so much time on these trenches, and planned when to blow it up, and they ended up doing more damage to themselves then to the enemy. They didn't even attack for an hour, and they still ended up forgetting ladders to get themselves out.

It was a little stomach turning to hear when the black soldiers where actually surrendering, the confederates kept killing them. These trenches impacted this battle tremendously because without them, the union might not of lost so many people.

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Re: trenches

by [Rebecca King](#) - Sunday, March 1, 2015, 11:07 PM

This week, there was definitely a lot that was difficult to think about, especially in regards to black soldiers (The Crater, Fort Pillow, etc). Considering the conditions of Black Americans and the attitudes of Southerners at the time, you can't help but wonder if things would have been different if the Union soldiers had been white. I think that, especially at Fort Pillow, the prisoners most likely would have been shown mercy if they had been white. I also think that at the Crater, the soldiers may have been shown more consideration is they had been white.

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