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HST 209: American History: Civil War W17 (Escobar 31664)

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The Divided Union

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The Divided Union
by Joe Escobar - Saturday, February 18, 2017, 1:46 PM

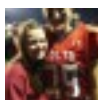
This thread is for discussions on the The Divided Union topic.

To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post. To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post that focuses on the questions and SPECIFIC EVENTS you are addressing. Do NOT simply leave it RE: The Divided Union

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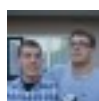


Strengths and weaknesses of each approach

by Jared Lake - Tuesday, February 21, 2017, 11:38 PM

I felt that each of the four items being discussed here; Ken Burns' videos, the textbook, the article and the video, each had their own charm and their own downsides. For example, the Ken Burns films had their strong sense of information and passion behind them, but lacked the gusto and ability to engage specific target groups. I feel that the textbook had so much information, and such a clear and precise delivery that it simply lacked heart, whereas the article touched a little on the points made previously by Ken Burns and also somewhat on the video clip. I seemed to find the video clip to be by far my favorite because it touched on all of the important topics while still remaining precise and accurate.

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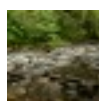


Re: Strengths and weaknesses of each approach

by Josh Myhre - Thursday, February 23, 2017, 7:17 AM

Can you give an example of what you mean when you say Burns' films "lacked the gusto and ability to engage specific target groups"? Personally, I think Burns is heavy on gusto and (at times) skim on details. I like that episode 6 profiled the two generals, and gave you pretty deep insight into how their troops felt about them. Burns had a whole section on the operation of hospitals. And really, Shelby Foote serves up such heaping portions of gusto that I could listen to him all day. His enthusiasm is impossible to resist.

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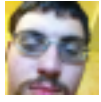
Re: Strengths and weaknesses of each approach

by Joseph Miller - Sunday, February 26, 2017, 8:00 PM

I think you really said it. I know I put it in my original post, but Shelby Foote, amazing. Who can tell a Civil War story better than him. You can see his skin color change, his eyes open up, his smile get real big, the emotion behind it. You could swear that he was there. I mean if he told me he was there. I would believe him. People can tell a story, but with Shelby Foote, he gives you more of a description to emotion's and how they felt when he tells it. The book on the other hand. I don't know if I can read any more on the politics of civil war after this week. No offense, but this weeks chapters, had me seeing stars, but when I watch the Ken Burns episodes, I get sucked in and Shelby Foote makes the hairs on the back of my neck stand up. I really gave Ken Burns a hard time in the beginning, but without the episodes, this class would have been a lot different for me. They really do give you some connection that the book lacks.

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Re: Strengths and weaknesses of each approach

by Zachary Embree - Sunday, February 26, 2017, 10:29 PM

While I did find the video clip less compelling than you did, I can see that there was an effort to blend the factual information with engaging storytelling. Though I only was able to see a few minutes of the series, what I did see leads me to think they have gone for a more factual approach than Burns did. In part that may have been because Burns was trying to draw in a national audience and therefore thought he needed a bit more showmanship. In retrospect I may have let my first impression color my viewpoint a tad when it comes to the video clip. When I look over the clip again I get the impression that it stands as a solid middle ground between the factual presentation of the textbook and the more bombastic video series. The presentation has its own merits, like incorporating more information rather than building up a story around the events.

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Different priorities

by Lillith Ka'at - Wednesday, February 22, 2017, 11:54 AM

I think I had about four stress-cry sessions from this forum, because all my brain really wants to do is analyze how the different mediums were used in contrast with each other, and talk cinematography, but then I'd spiral into a panic attack over how that was too similar the thing we aren't supposed to do. Ha.

So anyway. Ken Burns' documentary presents information clearly and concisely, and continues to do so when he starts getting into specific individuals and their background. When discussing Ulysses S. Grant, he doesn't linger long on the negative details, but gives a dozen humanizing little facts about him and his upbringing. What few negative things he says, he glosses over quickly. Almost all of the quotes on him were positive. He goes on to do the same for Robert E. Lee, though his back story doesn't seem to go on as long, and is prefaced by a negative quote, and a historian saying that people don't usually portray him properly, almost implying that people are overly positive towards him.

Hospitals are portrayed as "warehouses for the dying." They spend a very brief amount of time discussing the details of operations and medical care. They seem to use it more as a way to give us some new individual names and brief stories, and to characterize. Without re-watching 5 hours worth of videos, I can't say what else they've said on the subject of medical health, which is a sort of bad sign. Ken Burns'

is very preoccupied with individuals - he often spends a couple minutes introducing us to any random person he had information on, whether they are more relevant to the progression of the civil war than one short quote or not.

The Divided Union clip that we watched gave more context on what medical treatment was like, something that Ken Burns, at least in episode 6, completely skims past. Although the 'hospitals' being discussed were different; huge spaces versus a handful of on-field tents, the subjects it was discussing were mainly about the knowledge available at the time, something that wouldn't change too much between the locations. Not knowing about sterilization, amputation, etc.

The Divided Union definitely seems more engaging, and its strength comes from being more visually stimulating and emotive. I know we're not supposed to talk about the medium so much as the content, and so steering away from my thoughts on directing and cinematography, it just seems to have a different focus. The Divided Union does not (from what I've seen) care so much about dumping a bunch of Fun Military General Trivia on its viewers, instead talking more about the settings and covering events in broader strokes.

Ken Burns is all about listing off events one after the other - and Battle Cry of Freedom, of course, does the same but with more and more information. The Divided Union seems to be more focused on context within events over the events themselves - spending the time to talk about the confusion in the terrain and the medical drawbacks and illnesses. Details that Ken Burns may mention more briefly seem to get the limelight. Details that Battle Cry for Freedom also puts in, due to the more freeing written medium.

As always, my position is 'the more information we look at, the better.'

Despite that being my stance, I'm not sure I would necessarily say that the two videos compliment each other. It's hard to know with only a 12 minute clip. I would definitely have to watch more of The Divided Union to have an opinion I'm more confident in - as it stands, they seem to be talking in such different ways that they don't mesh well. On one hand, you're getting context on things like the medical issues, but on the other hand, without bridging the gap between the hospitals described in one to the hospitals described in the other, it can be jarring. (Though that's a good place for the book to come in. Alternatively: again, the full length content of The Divided Union may make that bridge easier.)

Battle Cry of Freedom is an excellent source to go with both videos - it helps to clear up errors, timeline, and give that neutral recounting that I think was Ken Burns' goal. Overall, given how detailed and accurate the book is, it meshes with anything. The two videos are the two that seem mismatched, because they hold different priorities on what details were most important. But that can be good, because it helps to fill in each others' blanks.

Regardless of if they mesh well, ultimately I still think all of our material should be used together. So when I say they don't mesh well together, I don't mean 'therefor, don't.' I mean 'therefor it may be jarring at times.'



Re: Different priorities

by Aimee Chow - Friday, February 24, 2017, 3:58 PM

I couldn't agree more with your post. I also was resisting the urge to discuss the different sources and about their film and information quality. They're different in several ways and I can go on! Anyways, I greatly appreciated that Burns went into depth and gave us a background on Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee. The context and positive outlook on these men guides the episode on informing the audience on how important their role was during the war, and especially Grant's behavior, which lead to a victory.

The Divided Union did provide more information on medical treatments. At least after watching the two videos, although short, the Divided Union's "soldier treatment" segment stuck with me. That's something I appreciated over Burns' episode. This is definitely a strength for the clip. As I mentioned in my post, the Divided Union appeared to me as a summary of the textbook and documentary. I did find myself more engaged with the visuals and information presented.

The textbook does compliment the videos together. I believe it provides and clarifies more details the other two could be missing. I would be interested in watching the full series of The Divided Union and compare how the two approach the war. Maybe even do a comparison just between Peter Parish's and Burns' documentary? Overall, in my opinion, I had difficulty seeing all of them mesh perfectly. However, I do agree that all 3 sources should be used together. Like you said, "the more information we look at, the better."



Re: Different priorities

by Lillith Ka'at - Saturday, February 25, 2017, 3:51 AM

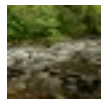
I was so worried about getting off-topic that I didn't talk about it much, but - yeah! The Divided Union is so much more engaging, and I think in general I just have a looooot of complaints about Ken Burns' directing, well past just the 'he makes mistakes' part. I think a lot of people might worry that the visuals give people a false image of what it looked like when they're taken from things like reenactments and *movies*, but at the same time it's like... Listen, if that lets a general audience connect more with the material and remember the details being said better, so be it.

That medical segment of The Divided Union had me wincing. In general, the whole thing about how so many more soldiers died from disease and illness than in combat or from injuries always messes me up. So scary...

I feel like the book compliments everything, but because the two videos don't really complement each other, it doesn't *bridge* them together, so they stay kind of. Not meshed. Does that make sense? Ha. Like it's extending my understanding of the two videos but in different directions from each other instead of towards.

But ultimately, yeah. No matter if it all seamlessly works together, it's best to look at everything we can.

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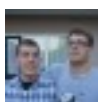


Re: Different priorities

by Joseph Miller - Sunday, February 26, 2017, 8:07 PM

One thing that caught me the most with your post was about how Ken Burns will throw people in here and there to make note of them during the episode if they are relevant to the time or place. I realize that he only has so much time. What I noticed with the series is that most of it is about the actual war and fighting. The generals, the battles, and the soldiers. If you want to know about the civil war battles, generals, and soldiers, go to the episodes. If you want to know the politics behind it, read the book. Burns spends as little time on politics as the book spends in the opposite direction on politics. Don't get me wrong, I appreciate it. this weeks readings, I don't know how Ken Burns could possible get 10 percent of that in a episode and make it interesting.

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Good holistic understanding between all 3 sources

by Josh Myhre - Wednesday, February 22, 2017, 2:46 PM

Specifically in regards to the battle of the Wilderness, I think that all three sources together give a pretty good higher-level understanding. For the first time in this course, the McPherson text felt a little bit lacking in terms of the battle of the Wilderness. Based on my (little) previous knowledge of the battle of the Wilderness, as well as on Burns account of the battle, I expected "Battle Cry" to spend a good chunk of time discussing the battle, but it's almost as if McPherson skims right over it. He gives only a couple pages on the maneuvers each army engaged in, mentions casualties, briefly talks about the difficulties of fighting in the woods, and then just moves on. In contrast, Burns spends ample time discussing the battle, the reputation

Grant received in the wake of the battle, and the significance of Grant's decision to continue moving south toward Richmond. "Divided Union," even in this 12-minute clip, seems to devote more energy to discussing the battle than McPherson does.

With this in mind, I actually kind of like the differences between McPherson, Burns and "Divided Union." I feel that McPherson is, in some respects, giving us Grant's perspective on the Virginia campaign of 1864: yes, there were serious losses and the battles were horribly bloody (even for civil war standards), but what was needed was simply to keep moving and keep putting pressure on the enemy. It's not that Grant didn't understand what was happening to his troops, it's just that he couldn't afford to think too hard about it if he was going to continue to put pressure on Lee. In contrast to this, Burns gives us an account that is closer to the perspective of the public. Burns gives us Mary Lincoln's quote about "Grant the Butcher" and spends ample time discussing the horrors of the brush fires in the Wilderness that claimed the lives of so many wounded soldiers. Burns tries to get the audience to feel the full brunt of the horrors involved in Grant's Virginia campaign; McPherson discusses the Virginia campaign in the overall context of the Union's strategy for victory.

I've still got about 15 pages of this week's reading remaining, so I could be wrong about all that. But taken all together, I think the various sources we have at our disposal this week give us good contrast of perspectives.

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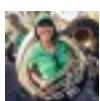


Re: Good holistic understanding between all 3 sources

by Aimee Chow - Friday, February 24, 2017, 5:06 PM

I appreciate how you view the sources as different perspectives. I too noticed the little coverage on the Battle of the Wilderness, and I felt like it jumped to Spotsylvania quickly and the events after. It was simple and straight to the point. I see how the text gave us Grant's point of view. There was a quote that stood out to me from the textbook. It shows how he didn't want to think about his troops, but focus on his goal to keep going, like you mentioned. He wasn't caught up, and even told the brigadier to "go back to your command, and try to think what we are going to do ourselves, instead of what Lee is going to do" (pg 726). Clearly, this contributes to the Union's strategy for victory, starting off with the leader himself. Like I said, I agree that these sources can be seen as different perspectives. I think it's helpful to view them like this, because it allows the audience to understand what was going on in the heads of both sides.

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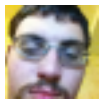
Strengths Over One Another

by Aimee Chow - Wednesday, February 22, 2017, 6:09 PM

After reviewing all 3 sources, I would say they complimented each other just fine. They all had their strengths and weaknesses definitely. When compared to one another, Ken Burns' episode, Divided Union, and the McPherson textbook covered all the events occurred in 1864, as well as behavior of Ulysses Grant and Robert E. Lee. Overall, crossing the different sources helped me understand the campaign. However, some sources had advantages over another.

The Divided Union and textbook, in my opinion, appeared to be more factual. Even though they do have insights from historians and quotes from key people, these sources provided straight details, versus Burns' episode to be more of a story. I noticed a strength Divided Union had over the textbook and Burns' episode. Towards the end of the clip, there was an overview of hospitals, wound care, technology of the Civil War, and how these little bits played major parts during the war, such as steam engines and railroads transporting goods up the rivers, and even the telegraph, sending messages between Sherman and Grant. Burns' episode strength over the 2 sources include providing background information on Ulysses Grant and Robert E. Lee. It was nice to have the overview of the generals, as Divided Union and the textbook didn't give much background. These 3 sources provide similar information on the Overland Campaign. One notable detail that I caught between the sources is that they all explained Grant's order to move forward instead of retreating, which tells us a lot about Grant's character during this year of the war. In my opinion, I believe that these sources do complement each other. The way I view it, you have the narrative (Burns), detail (textbook), and summary (Divided Union).

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Failure to Engage

by Zachary Embree - Wednesday, February 22, 2017, 9:20 PM

One issue that stood out for right away was that in the "Divided Union" video clip it failed to draw my interest and indicate the importance of this information. Both the book and the series by Burns also covered relatively dry information but they made an effort to do so in a way that highlighted its importance. When Burns talks about how disease ravaged the armies of both sides it presents facts, personal testimony, and compelling narration. In contrast the historians in the clip go over the facts with a somewhat monotone narration and rather low quality footage.

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Re: Failure to Engage

by Josh Myhre - Thursday, February 23, 2017, 7:08 AM

You gotta give credit to Burns for finding some extremely engaging historians for the series. I love listening to Shelby Foote speak. His enthusiasm is infectious. He just seems so tickled with every story he tells; it's very clear that he LOVES the history and would rather be doing absolutely nothing aside from talking about what he's talking about. Anytime he's on screen I find myself completely absorbed in the documentary. You're right, the Divided Union historians were a bit drab in contrast.

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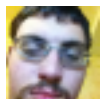
Re: Failure to Engage

by Nicholas Esser - Saturday, February 25, 2017, 6:10 PM

I have the exact same thoughts on Shelby Foote! I feel my eyes widen and my ears perk up especially when he comments on even the most trivial aspects of the Civil War. He is an exceptional story teller. I'm glad you shared this.

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Re: Failure to Engage

by Zachary Embree - Sunday, February 26, 2017, 10:06 PM

I personally have found that one of the great strengths of the series is that Burns found a selection of historians who clearly are very passionate and enjoy teaching about the time period. That enthusiasm really comes through when they recount facts and tidbits to the audience, which helps bring me more into the narrative. It also works with the soundtrack brings more personality, for a lack of a better term, to the series. Listening to the recount of the various battles builds to exciting crescendo, and listing the gory aftermath mellows out into calm introspection.

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Re: Failure to Engage

by Lillith Ka'at - Saturday, February 25, 2017, 3:56 AM

I think my reaction to these videos is on the complete opposite side of the spectrum, haha! I find Burns' videos so slow and monotonous that it's hard for me to engage with anything he says. Whereas I felt like the historian clips in The Divided Union were a lot easier to digest than the voice acting and limited visuals in Ken Burns'.

I think sometimes I get so critical of the things I hate about Ken Burns' directing that I forget that how effective he is... Is totally subjective to the viewer.

But I think for me the biggest thing was that the Divided Union's historians were something refreshing and colorful to look at, and body language to take in for a more memorable clip, whereas Burns' use of his historians is pretty sparing, and most of his videos are still-photos with a limited palette and an over-dub.

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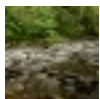
Re: Failure to Engage

by Joseph Miller - Sunday, February 26, 2017, 8:15 PM

I did like the fact in the short video's they were at a battle site. Instead of looking at pictures we got to actually see trenches dug in. No matter how many pictures I've seen or heard about them digging in, Such as Robert E. Lee, and the wilderness battles. I mean, his soldiers probably had digging trenches down to a science after that. It was just nice to see some historians dressed up and they gave their watered down version of the events that happened at the particular site. I found it very interesting. Brief, but I liked it. It gave you a taste, and if you liked it, you may watch the Civil War series, and if you liked that, you go read the book. We drag Burns through the bushes but these two historians at the battle sites giving their take on the events. They can thank Burns for reigniting excitement and enthusiasm in the people of the world, and they are in turn, going to these sites, learning history and pouring money into the local economies. I can't remember, I know it was week one, where it discussed that after the episodes aired, people started visiting the sites more and the attendance went up tremendously.

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Complimentary? Yes!

by Joseph Miller - Wednesday, February 22, 2017, 10:02 PM

When it comes to Lee and Grant. The strengths of the textbook are profound in the information it gives us. We are able read much more into the war effort and what goes into it. Wilderness, Cold Harbor, Kennesaw Mountain, all laid out in detail in the book. In the text, we get to see more information, for instance in the Battles of the Wilderness, in the book you get to see maps, more firsthand accounts. I almost feel too that if you watch the episode first then read the book, it seems to follow it to point. Both the video and the book do a great part in showing the numbers of soldiers in the north ranging around 115,000 to the south at 64,000 and the fact that Lee would have a much better time in the trees than the open field. They both went over the repeated flanks by Grant and the drive to Richmond and the battles that

followed. What episode 6 had that the text book doesn't have is Shelby Foote. Although the episodes have to cover a lot of material in a short amount of time. Shelby Foote is able to give his insight into what was going on in the war. The text is going to describe Grant and Lee in a factual basis. Grant's father a tanner, graduated middle of his class at West Point, Clerk made a mistake on his papers and that's how he got his name. He was sensitive, withdrawn as a child. Lee on the other hand, born from a prominent family, 2nd in class, no demerits, 7 children with his wife (granddaughter to George Washington), They owned 250 slaves, married into that. I feel the Text and episodes did a fair job at describing the two, where they came from and in a nonjudgmental point of view. I mentioned Shelby Foote, What I like about the videos, their strength, the texts weakness, is his commentary. His insight. When he talks about Grant going to the Willards hotel and the desk clerk not knowing him until he signs his name, just hearing it from Shelby Foote, makes the hair stand up on the back of your neck. He has a way of making you believe he was somehow there, or he knew what they were feeling. He puts a perspective on it the book can't do.

Civil war medical care and hospitals, again, the book and movie do an adequate job. The video's strengths are the pictures, with the letters, and music. When it talks about being fixed. Or Fix Me. You just can't get the feeling without watching the video and seeing the picture and realizing these men are going to die and they want their socks pinned and their arms crossed. Again, even though you don't get some of the detailed information in the book like the fact that the state of medical knowledge in general than to the particular incompetence of the army doctors (McPherson 486). Also, according to the text the Civil War was fought at the end of the medal middle ages. It was the dawn of a new era according to the text. Bacteriology had revolutionized medicine. Link between mosquitoes and yellow fever, the concept of antiseptics in surgery, antibiotics, none of this could have been conceived by the doctors during the civil war. Touch on in the book, not in the video in depth. But you still got a good idea of the horror soldiers went thru if they were injured and not killed. Like they said in the episode it was worse if you survived and were wounded rather than to be killed outright.

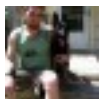
I eluded to Wilderness, Cold Harbor, and Kennesaw Mountain. I was disappointed that episode 6 gave probably 1 minute to Kennesaw Mountain. I felt they just pretty much touched on the fact that Sherman made a mistake on Kennesaw, should have never went up the center and had 3000 killed and wounded by mid-day and called off the operation. That's about all I remember. It doesn't paint the picture like the text that it was perhaps the worse, from the Union viewpoint and that it bolstered southern morale. It gave the south confidence, especially General Johnston. I felt they just left us hanging in the episode.

The 12-minute clip, good in getting about as much information as you possibly can into 12 minutes. In 12 minutes, they were able to mention everything from new rifle's and bullets, technology, with the railroads and supply. Mentioned Grant getting command in 1864. Went into the Battles of Wilderness, Spotsylvania, and Cold Harbor. Even in doing that it was still able to get information to us in regards to William Sherman, communicable diseases, hospitals, and what they had to go thru

medically during the war. It touched on the hospitals enough that you knew there was only a handful at the start and hundreds at wars end. You also knew from the clip the medicine was primitive and no sterilization. People learned of their loved one's deaths thru the newspapers or notices posted. The Clip gave you a quick down and dirty on the civil war and hospitals. Nice start.

I feel all of these complement each other. You can watch the clip and it gets you interested. It gives you the basics about the men and battles. The Ken Burns episodes with the music, pictures, letters and most importantly the excerpts from Shelby Foote, make it hard to pause. The episodes, visual imagery, for me make it real. I know it is, but the episodes just do more for me on that than the book. The book for me, fills in the gaps, from the clips and video's. There's a little more on politics than I care about, but politics were a big part of the war. I think that's what you get more of in the book. I felt a good progression by watching the clip, then the episode, then reading the chapters. Very informative.

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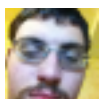


Generals of the Civil war.

by Nicholas Esser - Wednesday, February 22, 2017, 10:56 PM

One of the easiest concepts to agree upon in the Civil War seems to be the military leadership. The sources we have been introduced to have portrayed the bewilderment and frustration Lincoln dealt with concerning his rotating arsenal of Generals that failed to thrill him. Whether it's the inactivity of McClellan, the less than ideal battle outcomes early in the war, or even the vigilante politics of Butler and Fremont, Lincoln had his hands full. The Souths leadership, influenced by its plethora of superior military academies, seemed to have a better understanding of warfare. All accounts seem to have exceptionally glowing remarks about General Lee's military tactics during battles.

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Re: Generals of the Civil war.

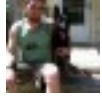
by Zachary Embree - Sunday, February 26, 2017, 1:02 AM

I agree that military leadership is one of the more heavily covered topic in all the available sources. One thing I particularly enjoyed about how they covered the generals of both sides is that both their strengths and weaknesses are explained. For example when comparing the military victories of Lee against the strategic failures that dogged McCellan it would be easy to portray him as a overall worse commander. However in the Burns documentary in particular the audience also gets to see how he had strengths in other areas, such as training up the army to an acceptable standard. Lee is not shone as an unstoppable general, but a very

skilled tactician with his own series of flaws. I liked how they explain how his overconfidence and unwillingness to let an enemy leave the field served him well in earlier battles, yet cost him at Gettysburg. Overall every source does a good job separating the people from the legends built up around them.

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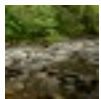
Re: Generals of the Civil war.

by Nicholas Esser - Sunday, February 26, 2017, 1:58 PM

Well said on the separating of people from their legends, I think that's important. What Ken Burns does with his Grant and Lee sections is brilliant. Though most of what was explained in these segments was touched on in McPherson's work to some degree, they are shuffled into the fold instead of lumped together. Burns gives us both a lighthearted break from the grim seriousness of the terrifying campaigns to come, along with some fascinating detail of their childhood that I particularly enjoyed. I admit that I would have appreciated the intimate details on these two characters earlier in our studies, I can understand holding back for the dramatic effect of the long-awaited clash of these two historical titans.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

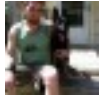
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Re: Generals of the Civil war.

by Joseph Miller - Sunday, February 26, 2017, 8:37 PM

I'm not sure about your post. My question is and I know it's late, but I don't know what your saying about a plethora of superior military academies. During the civil war there was West Point, the Virginia Military Institute, the Citadel and maybe a couple other not-so-known places so I would have to disagree that the south had a plethora of superior military academies. West Point, VMI were both before the war, we had soldiers on both sides who went to the same school. Even generals, I'm pretty sure that the Union had more notable generals than the south if you added them up. Even Jefferson Davis, the President of the South, even had the offensive/defensive approach. Can hardly call offense when you tried it and failed then gave up on that idea. But really, when your dug in on the defense, just camping waiting for someone to show up like Lee did to Grant on multiple occasions, your going to look good. You have the upper hand. Grant Marched in to the southern territory, didn't back down, didn't have time to prepare like Lee. Wasn't familiar with the territory like Lee, and had Lee over for tea at the Appomattox court house on April 9th, 1865, his treat. Something America does do extremely well is bringing the war to the enemy. That's what Grant did. He brought it.

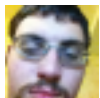
**Reconstruction!**

by Nicholas Esser - Saturday, February 25, 2017, 6:04 PM

This may not have been the focal point for this week's forum specifically, but I don't think I can finish this week without exclaiming my fascination in regards to the reconstruction happening in Louisiana (roughly pages 704-713). The detail that McPherson goes to in this, and many other aspects of life in those times, dwarfs the other sources we have been engaged in (perhaps the Burns documentary will expand upon reconstruction later in the series making this point void). One of the keys to my way of thinking in this matter is the detail McPherson adds about the "free people of color" in New Orleans that drew a petition to vote in January of 1864 signed by more than 1,000 men taken directly to the White House. McPherson goes on to include that the initial version of the House reconstruction bill included a registration requirements of "all loyal male citizens." The term "white" before all loyal males was added, deleted, and then added again in fears that "black suffrage" would kill the bill. My fascination behind this is how McPherson toys with the idea of how the right to vote among black citizens in reconstructed southern states came so close in 1864. I'm sure we are all aware that the reality of this concept took a century to unfold, and the idea that it only narrowly slipped through the fingers in 1864 is amazing to me!

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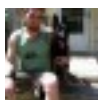
**Medical Care Conditions**

by Zachary Embree - Saturday, February 25, 2017, 11:30 PM

One thing that I would definitely credit the materials used in this course for is giving a comprehensive view of how medical care effected the war. Though often I find that disease is overlooked for the more engaging parts of a conflict, the materials made a point to bring this to our attention. Not just with the percentages of those afflicted but covering how treatment was organized and distributed among the different sides of the war. Everything from how the greater industrial and financial standing of Union allowed for more extensive and formalized care, to notable figures that were involved in the effort. I have found that the book is good for getting a general overview of this subject and how it evolved over the course of the war. The Ken Burns series on the other hand was good at bringing across what medical treatment was like for the common soldier, both through reports and quotes from those involved.

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The more the better.

by Nicholas Esser - Sunday, February 26, 2017, 1:39 PM

To echo what many here have already said, I feel history, of any period, is largely based on perspectives, or points of view concerning any given event. If this is true, then it would be most fitting for historians to analyze and address as many legitimate points of view as possible. As should we. From the three sources we have reviewed this week, it is easy to point out the many common perspectives they share, but also the different key concepts that they emphasize as cause and effect, a possible reason the Civil War will always be clouded with some degree of controversy. An example of different ideas of importance is seen in the Gettysburg address. Burns highlights this speech as one of the premier most speeches in American history, while McPherson, whom I would argue goes further in depth than any other source we've analyzed, completely writes it out of his history. Shocked by this, I searched the index thinking I must have missed or forgotten this section. I found the only mention of the address comes in an "afterword" section on page 859, and this is only to emphasize Lincoln's use of the word "union" slowly changing to "nation" throughout his wartime speeches. I'm very curious about this omission, and use this minor example of why when it comes to history, the more the better. Does anyone have a hypothesis to why McPherson does this? (If I have missed anything in McPhersons work I encourage someone to point it out to me).

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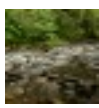


Burns, McPherson, and an except

by Jacob Micheli - Sunday, February 26, 2017, 4:38 PM

It goes without saying that a 12 minute excerpt can only cover so much. However, The Divided Unions main points were easy enough. It certainly reinforced this weeks Ken Burns episode along with our McPherson textbook. Its major strength was covering the who, what, when, where, and why. If it had a weakness it would be its common simplicity. It pales in comparison to McPherson or Burns. McPherson of course being the victor of the three. Burns appeal to emotion and use of visual imagery can't compete with McPherson's prodigious authority. Ken Burns is a romantic while James McPherson is a realist. The two authors cover the most important battles and facts. At times even working in tandem. However, McPherson's liberal use of statistics and insight proves to be in a class of its own. Burns hit the obligatory notes on battles and people but fell short on in-depth material. Burns use of still photographs definitely make the subject matter more interesting. Especially when covering Lee, Grant, and every battle in between. I would suggest reading our school text first and then watching Burns episodes.

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**Re: Burns, McPherson, and an except**

by Joseph Miller - Sunday, February 26, 2017, 8:42 PM

It's funny that you say they worked in tandem. I almost felt when reading about battles, Generals, soldiers, hospitals, or anything battle field related, it almost comes out of the text book word for word. Like Burns used the book as well for his story telling. I know you can only tell a story so many different ways before you have to call up Matthew Brady for some alternate facts and pictures, but the book and video did have a sense of togetherness when you think about it.

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**Re: Burns, McPherson, and an except**

by Aimee Chow - Sunday, February 26, 2017, 10:14 PM

I agree with you on how simple the Divided Union presented information versus the other sources. I'm curious to watch the whole series though and see if they go more in depth with other events, or if it's overall that general information. Personally, I find the still photographs difficult to focus on. Maybe it's just me dozing off? I just like the textbook because of the visual maps it provides.

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**Re: Burns, McPherson, and an except**

by Jacob Micheli - Sunday, February 26, 2017, 11:31 PM

It would be nice to know how the Divided Union covered other events. It's safe to assume they probably did it briefly. The NY times article said it was a five part series. Im guessing they recounted history on a time sensitive model. Also, I'm happy the textbook has maps included. It's neat to see their place in history. Looking at a bland map of U.S. will never be the same.

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**Precise facts but mellow presentation**

by Zachary Embree - Sunday, February 26, 2017, 10:19 PM

I have over the course of these past few week found that the McPherson textbook while full of interesting information lacks the same draw as the video series. I do enjoy how you can read through the various facts presented and make connections and conclusions at your own pace, but that is harder when the text lacks much narrative flow. In some cases I feel that the writer placed too much focus on trying to list out facts before a big event rather than fitting them in more

organically into the timeline. I do need context to properly understand the importance of say, the Battle of Vicksburg, but not so much that reading about it becomes a list of figures. To put another way when reading about the battle I know it is important because the says it is, in the video series the narrative has built up this battle for hours as a risky and huge endeavor.

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Burns vs The Divided Union

by Jacob Micheli - Sunday, February 26, 2017, 11:34 PM

Its interesting how the number of wounded, dead, and deserted differ from one historian (or filmmaker) to the other. This is clear when comparing Burns episode 6 to The Divided Union excerpt. The Divided Union puts the Wilderness Battle death at around 26,000 for both sides. Burns puts it at 17,000 Union soldiers including 200 federals who burned alive. At Cold Harbor The Divided Union states a loss a 7,000 Union men in 30 minutes compared to Burns 7,000 men in 7 minutes. For Kennesaw Burns puts a Union loss at 3,000 men and Confederate loss at 750. The Divided Union only mentioned that it was Shermans largest loss up till that point. Its obvious the two films have differing statistics. However, Burns seems to offer a more in believable account.

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The Divided Union ►

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