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Death & The Civil War
by Joe Escobar - Sunday, March 4, 2018, 7:03 PM

This thread is for discussions on the Death & The Civil War 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.

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We Don't Know How To Cope
by Heather Saxon - Monday, March 5, 2018, 12:20 PM

When adjusted for the inflation of the population, we would have lost 7 million people now if we lost as many people as America did during the Civil War; that and the statistic from the PBS Then/Now article stating that 2.5 percent of the population died in the Civil War were the first to add to my knowledge the significance of the war. Additionally, the idealization of the “good death”, the absolute cultural necessity for it, was something that really made me think of the terror of families that aren’t just losing family members but are also losing the ability to practice what was, at the time, a fundamental part of their religion. I already knew death in the Victorian Era was more prevalent in culture than today (for instance, after a person died it was a practice to pose them as if they were living, oftentimes with living family members beside

them, and take a photograph as a sort of “last” memory), but to be reminded of the less macabre, more emotional, aspect of death culture during the era, especially the destruction of traditional death culture in the face of war, really emphasized the significances of the Civil War and how it rocketed a shift in culture based on necessity for me.

I think it's less what the country has lost, but what we've failed to replace. Because coping with death was so interwoven with religion, when religion began to fall out of fashion-so to speak-a lot of the coping that was tied with it fell out of fashion as well. But we, as a country in general, didn't have new methods of grieving to fall in line with a less religious culture. Whereas there was an understanding with religion-you will live and die and go to heaven, and we can take comfort in knowing that you are not suffering but are instead with the Lord-without religion we didn't have pre-established ways of dealing with death. A lot of questions like, “where do you go?” “what happens?” “is it dark? Cold? Will I ever see my family again?” “does it hurt?” and otherwise existed beforehand, but as American culture became less religion focused they sprang up more, and without religion, specifically the rather cut-and-dry Christian perspective at the time, there were no answers, which creates a great amount of anxiety around death and dying that seems still prevalent today. In short, if we've lost anything, it's the comfort and assurance of a certain end, a certain ascension to heaven (or fall to hell) after death, and we haven't found many ways to help cope with it that don't involve religion.

Now the government has much better methods of handling the injured and killed. If a family member dies fighting, there is a slim chance that the family *won't* know the fate of their loved one, the complete opposite of the Civil War. There are entire Veteran Hospitals, healthcare programs, housing programs, there's literally a Department of Veteran Affairs in the US Government. While it's often said there still isn't enough support for veterans (most common example I hear is that veterans are allowed to be homeless in any capacity) it is a significant development. And now, if a soldier is killed, we have national cemeteries and programs to help their affected loved ones, as well as traditions to honor their bodies. Overall, the government is doing far better than it was pre and during the Civil War.

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Re: We Don't Know How To Cope

by Kyle McDaniel - Wednesday, March 7, 2018, 9:28 AM

I would agree that the government is doing way better in terms of caring for veterans and falling soldiers. In the article: "Caring For The War's Dead", it even says that the United States is still continuing to spend "hundreds of millions of dollars" to recover missing bodies from wars of the past (Vietnam, Korea, WW2). We seem to definitely have a better grip on caring for our fallen soldiers and hopefully at least beginning to make up for our shortcomings during the civil war.

I am wondering how the government failed so horribly back in the 19th century. I know that dying for one's country seemed to be an honor back during the civil war, but why didn't the government have a better plan to take care of fallen soldiers and their families? I am wondering if it all harkens back to everyone assuming it would just be a 90 day conflict. Or was everyone just in-denial over the whole thing? It is sad to know how much our government failed our heroes, but it is comforting to know that things are definitely better nowadays.

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Re: We Don't Know How To Cope

by Heather Saxon - Wednesday, March 7, 2018, 12:29 PM

I think it really was the 90 day conflict belief. Had the government anticipated a brutally bloody attack I believe they would have been like, "well, we need to make sure we don't have vultures feasting on thousands of corpses in Old Bob's cornfield" instead of letting that, well, happen. I think denial mostly played in the medical part of the war, evidenced by the lack of support for women nurses even though they had a dire need for them.

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Scale of war was never seen before

by Paul Geu - Thursday, March 8, 2018, 8:26 PM

One major thing that caused so much chaos was the fact that the number of dead/wounded in the civil was higher than any other previous wars by many times. Many civil war battles alone had more than all the previous wars combined. I agree with you that many thought that the war would be bloodless and very short but I also wonder why we did not have a national cemetery before this war. As a country we had fought multiple wars but no care for the heroes of the revolution?

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Re: We Don't Know How To Cope

by Desiree Mantey - Sunday, March 11, 2018, 11:20 PM

Kyle, I have a reply to the bottom half of your post. A lot of things that were needed to take care of the soldiers and their families didn't exist back then because they hadn't experienced anything that made them necessary. Before the Civil War the United States never had a major medical system because there weren't that many people hurt at a time. There were no large cemetery's because there weren't large numbers of people dying. It wasn't stupidity it was lack of need that led the US to be lacking in many areas when it came to wartime necessities.

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Re: We Don't Know How To Cope

by Andrew Smith - Sunday, March 11, 2018, 9:13 PM

I really liked your assessment on loss of religion and how we cope with living our lives with an uncertain aftermath. I fully agree that belief in Christianity adds comfort to the dying and loved ones. Believing in a wonderful afterlife adds so much light to death. However, I don't think that not believing in a great afterlife and the uncertainty that follows makes our deaths

any more troublesome. On the contrary, I think for many people this uncertainty adds so much more value to the life we have now. We may as well make the absolute best of this life because we have absolutely no idea what may come next.

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Re: We Don't Know How To Cope

by Jackson Peterson - Sunday, March 11, 2018, 11:05 PM

I agree that the government today has a much better handle on the soldiers that are injured or killed in duty. With modernization its easier to keep tabs and give the soldiers the attention they deserve in honor of their duty. The hospitals are better as well, nothing like they were then. The moderation of American shows in war today and we can reflect on our past mistakes that were done in wars like the civil war.

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Re: We Don't Know How To Cope

by Jackson Peterson - Sunday, March 11, 2018, 11:14 PM

I agree that people get to caught up on what we have lost and need to see how we can do better. The civil war was a great loss for American but looking at history and seeing the advancements we have made since then shows how far this county has advanced.

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Religious Devotion

by Kyle McDaniel - Monday, March 5, 2018, 3:16 PM

Ric Burns' film "Death and the Civil War", just judging by the short clip I watched, is a highly emotional, more personal take on the civil war. Right from the start of the clip, we are treated to a letter a dying soldier wrote his father which is very tragic, and yet very poignant as a message to say that the civil war was more than just a war of two armies.

After viewing this clip and reading the follow articles, I had never known that death in the 19th century was such a grand affair. These mentions of a "good death" and if the death had "meaning" really just blow my mind. In the article "A Worthy Death: How Civil War Families Made Sense of Suffering", the author states how Nathaniel Bowditch died in the war and his father actually sought out his son's comrades to see if Nathaniel's death had meaning.

Today, I don't think death is as big of an event as it was back in the 19th century. Sure, death is still everywhere and it's tragic and horrible; but death almost seemed to be like an honor back in the time of the civil war. Nowadays, I think people tend not to even think about death. A lot of people seem to be in-denial that everyone will someday die.

However, I think it's unfair to say "what has our society lost by the decline in religious devotion..". I personally do not think we have lost anything by choosing to believe our own beliefs; it's what diversity is. I do think it is admirable that people were so prepared to die for their country and their faith that they would go to Heaven. These people were heroes, and I respect them and their beliefs very much. But personally I do not think a decline in religious

devotion has made us, as a culture lose anything. If anything, it just makes us all more unique for having different beliefs. But as a society now, death seems to just be something we do not talk about or acknowledge, we just meet it one day, unlike the civil war heroes who died for their country.

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Re: Religious Devotion

by Hannah Cartwright - Thursday, March 8, 2018, 11:44 AM

Regarding our decline in religious devotion, I completely agree. I think it is crazy to think that we would gain more if we were all being forced to follow the same religion. If we all were expected to believe the same thing or believe in the same religion, there would be a break out because every person has their own beliefs and opinions. No one would be happy if they were told what they had to believe, I think allowing everyone to believe what they want and not forcing our religion onto anyone is what helps makes us civil. For me, personally, if someone does not share the same religion as me, I do not feel the need to talk them into believing what I believe or judge them, I just accept it and move on, which is what I've noticed what most people do, and what everyone should do. I feel that the decline in religion devotion has helped our country because it's not like nobody is religious or can talk about their religion, it's just that we can accept the differences we have in others. For example, regarding slavery, I learned in many of my classes in high school and in college, many Christians back believed that God simply did not love blacks, and that slavery is what God wanted. Now, most people, Christian or not, never even think twice about the worth of anyone who is black because we know we are all the same (though, there are always going to be those who don't believe that). Religion is such a personal subject in general, that talking someone in or out of a religion would make us turn on each other and we would be forced to "choose sides" in a way. So yes, I agree that we, as a country, have not lost anything because of the decline in religious devotion.

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The State and its Citizens

by Jonathan Wheeler - Tuesday, March 6, 2018, 7:55 PM

In "Death and the Civil War" the topic of death and how unprepared both the South and North were for it. I had never thought about this, no had it ever occurred to me. Whenever I was taught about the Civil War it was always about the military campaigns and slavery. Mark Samels; the executive producer of "Death and the Civil War", suggests this is usually the focus of study in his 3 minute video.

In the documentary "Death and the Civil War", I found it interesting how unprepared the government was in dealing with the dead, sick, and lame, "death on a scale not imaginable". First off the governments were unprepared for the type of war that was to follow. The armies were fighting a modern war, a war of attrition. The military strategies employed were a step behind the modern technology of the day. There were no national cemeteries and no support for fallen soldiers, their families, nor the wounded. There was no infrastructure to burying, marking, and IDing the dead. Tent mates/battle buddies would make pacts with each other to "die the good death". This was for the alive buddy to write the family of the fallen, to explain

how one died and where to find the grave site. Stanger's also took it upon themselves to bury and document the dead. "Humanity 101" as Thomas Lynch put it. As a Christian nation at the time, death was seen as a part of life. It was not uncommon for a person to pass away at home with all their loved ones around. During the Civil War, death was seen as something inevitable. Today it feels like people are not surrounded or exposed to death like those back in the mid 1800's. Today people live longer and almost try to "avoid" death for as long as possible. Back during the Civil War death was unexplained except through Christianity. With the technology of today, we can discover how someone dies and explain what is really happening to the inside of the body.

The creation of different programs after the Civil War to help the wounded soldiers and the families of dead soldiers was never heard of before. In some countries, crippled soldiers would be reduced to begging on the steps of government buildings. Most of the programs in the USA were private organizations that pushed Congress for change. Today we have the VA, but it too still has its own share of problems. Friends of mine who have served in both Iraq and Afghanistan continue to have problems getting the proper care from the government.

In "Death and the Civil War", my favorite quote that I feel summarizes all of this and can bring it into the modern world is, "What the State owes its citizens". Citizens, in regards to those who were/are willing to lay down their lives for the State.

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Government and war

by Leah Livesay - Tuesday, March 6, 2018, 8:42 PM

During the Civil War, there were very little resources or services available for soldiers, veterans or their families. To me, that seems pretty crazy considering these people were risking their lives for their country. However, in general there was simply less available back then compared to now. During the Civil War times, there were no ambulances or federal hospitals providing help for the soldiers, soldiers wore no sort of identification in case something happened to them, many soldiers' families were never notified of their deaths or their burial locations, if they even received a burial, families who lost loved ones in the war did not receive and benefits or assistance, etc. Today, while we could offer more in my opinion, most of that has improved. Our government now has many services, benefits and resources available to active service members, veterans and their families. We obviously have much more technology now also, meaning soldiers families are notified in the event of a death and are able to receive the bodies of loved ones to bury them at home. There is much more adequate health care, transportation and support for wounded soldiers. I think that our federal government is doing much more for those willing to risk their lives for their country than they did during the Civil War.

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Re: Government and war

by Jonathan Wheeler - Thursday, March 8, 2018, 2:15 PM

I thought it was pretty crazy too, how the government provided so few resources to soldiers, veterans, and their families. What I thought was really sad was how the government had not set up some way to inform families of dead or wounded. Even to bury a soldier back home seemed near to impossible, especially if the family lived a long ways

from the battlefield. It was interesting to hear that a lot of this procedure was done by private individuals and organizations, like the American Red Cross. It's also interesting to note how none of the modern procedures, of informing a family or proper identification didn't happen until around World War 1. That is some 50 plus years later. Today it does seem that the system has gotten better, but far from perfect.

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Re: Government and war

by Jackson Peterson - Sunday, March 11, 2018, 11:07 PM

The resources today are much better I agree, especially in medical aid. Not only have there been uncountable medical breakthroughs since then but we also have a better hospitals. If we had the medical supplies and rescues they had back in the 1800's today, our losses in war would be far greater. thesis a key to human existence and moderation that shows through our medical advantages.

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Government Honoring and Helping Soldiers

by Hannah Cartwright - Tuesday, March 6, 2018, 9:12 PM

As I am provided with the new materials and information for this forum, it is crazy to think about the way soldiers who had been killed and/or injured were dealt with in the Civil War. I noticed in the article "Caring for the War's Dead and Wounded", and the video clip of "Death and the Civil War", it is mentioned how there were no cemeteries, no ambulances and no federal hospitals for soldiers who had been injured. As mentioned by David W. Blight, a historian, in "Death and the Civil War", 2.5% of the American population during the Civil War were killed in the war, which was about 750,000 men in all. Considering this large number of deaths, it is so sad to learn that most of these men died unidentified and could not be buried or individually represented in honor, the way soldiers are today. Today, the government has cemeteries where family and friends can go to visit their loved ones who were buried and died in battle, which is something every family should have to opportunity to do so whenever they want. Not only is our government doing better with honoring soldiers who have passed, which also brings comfort to their families, knowing where their loved ones body is rather than knowing their bodies are lost somewhere, but also with soldiers who are injured. During the Civil War, there were no ambulances to transport injured soldiers to hospitals to get help, and I can only imagine how many soldiers could have survived and avoided death, had there been an ambulance to pick them up and take them to immediate help. Now, there are ambulances who take injured soldiers on the battlefield to get cared for at a federal hospital. I feel that, all in all, our government is doing a better job at taking care of and honoring brave soldiers today, as well as giving loved ones of these soldiers more peace and comfort as they grieve.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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Re: Government Honoring and Helping Soldiers

by Jonathan Wheeler - Thursday, March 8, 2018, 2:26 PM

I agree with what all you have said, I would however like to add in the medical practitioners. They probably could have saved even more lives had they known more about disease, bacteria, and proper medical cleanliness. I believe that because of the higher standards now (and obviously technology), and the ability to effectively and quickly evacuate wounded, more wounded soldiers are able to survive.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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Re: Government Honoring and Helping Soldiers

by Hannah Cartwright - Friday, March 9, 2018, 4:39 PM

Yes, absolutely, I don't know how I forgot to mention their health. Especially considering the fact, which we all learned, disease killed more soldiers in the civil war than combat related injuries.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

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Disease killed more than fighting

by Paul Geu - Sunday, March 11, 2018, 10:27 PM

Being wounded during the civil war was just a bad or even worse than getting killed out right. The lack of medical technology and the understanding of disease left many of those wounded with little chance for survival. Thankfully the civilian organizations helped bridge the gap left by the lack of government planning and was able to provide better care and improve the sanitation of the camps and hospitals. It is crazy to think today of just cutting off limbs without any sedation when a soldier is wounded but they really did not have any other options back then.

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More Dignified Today

by Sydney Hall - Tuesday, March 6, 2018, 9:27 PM

There were a few key points in the material for this week that really stood out to me. First, in the short video with Ric Burns, he said, "The recently revised death toll: 750,000 people. If we had comparable death rate in any war today, with 300 million Americans now, we'd have 7 million dead." In the second video Death and the Civil War, Mark Samels states, "We take things for granted that there are national cemeteries for our soldiers that were fallen in war. We take for granted that we are going to honor those soldiers and we are going to bring them back no matter how much effort goes into bringing them back."

It's clear that the Civil War was in fact a pandemonium for all those living during this war, especially those participating in it. Considering the high amount of lives lost during the war, it really wasn't that surprising to know that they didn't have technology or services to take care of their fallen/sick troops. The people living during that time period didn't have a lot of the things that we currently have now: a system for notifying next of kin, burials (honor system), federal hospitals, ambulance corps, veterans relief, and so on. They didn't have the resources, time, or money to create/invest in these support systems for troops at the time and because of that, I feel like those who died on the battlefield were left with no dignity.

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Re: More Dignified Today

by Kyle McDaniel - Wednesday, March 7, 2018, 9:35 AM

I would agree. And the fact that we learned that soldiers did not wear dog tags or have names on their uniforms so sometimes people were buried without even being known. That quote really stood out to me as well; can you imagine that much of our population dying in a war? It is unimaginable. It does seem to be something that we as Americans take for granted nowadays; the comfort of knowing that our nearly all of our fallen soldiers will be remembered and brought home for their families.

Not only did we not have the technology back during the civil war; I think a part of it is that the government was a little in-denial that the conflict was escalating into something massive. Part of me wonders if the whole "This is just going to be a 90 day war" attitude may have blinded people. It just a thought; but it is very sad to hear about how much of a total mess it was back then.

It was also interesting to hear how the civil war was a "perfect storm", where our military tactics weren't quite developed but our weaponry was getting more and more advanced. People were not prepared for the "perfect storm" of dead bodies that would follow. I think this also attributed to the government's lack of action when dealing with fallen heroes on the battlefield.

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3

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Re: More Dignified Today

by Sydney Hall - Wednesday, March 7, 2018, 1:40 PM

Agreed, denial and taking responsibility definitely seemed prominent in the war as well as being completely overwhelmed in what to do. I'm sure if 7 million people died in a war right now, there would be so much distraught even though today we have much more technological advancements in taking care of our troops. In a way, I feel like we would be overwhelmed as well but at least we had these resources that came during/after the Civil War. Those soldiers that were buried in the masses did not in fact have dog tags. In a sense, to their families it would almost seem as if the fallen were just lost and forgotten, never to be found or put to rest where they could visit (or possibly remembered). Because of that, I really do feel strongly about dignity for these fallen soldiers.

For the "90 day war attitude" remark, I definitely couldn't agree more with you about that being a possibility. It's clear that both the South and the North were not prepared for each others resistance to give up in regards of fighting for what they believed in, granted that the North had many more resources available in large quantities compared to the South that had so little of everything (especially food).

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1

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**Re: More Dignified Today**

by Heather Saxon - Wednesday, March 7, 2018, 1:23 PM

I agree that those that died were left with no dignity, but I honestly believe that if either side thought the war would last longer than 90 days that they would have had some forethought and thought to form systems for notifying next of kin, honor system for burials, and possibly better methods of refrigeration to transport bodies and some form of dog tags. However I think they would still have to play relative catch-up when it comes to medical conditions, since women nursing didn't come up exactly by choice, and there was a general sense of corruption or malpractice in some field hospitals, and benefits for families would have likely come later as well; but I think all of it would come sooner than it did when everyone was figuring it out as they go.

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**Re: More Dignified Today**

by Sydney Hall - Wednesday, March 7, 2018, 1:50 PM

Totally agree! Both of the North and South did not have these systems set up which leads me to believe that they really weren't expecting this war to drag on for months and rather only last for just a few weeks. I'm sure if the outcomes had been different like maybe the war being shorter that some of the advancements that came out of the Civil War (such as you mentioning nursing, hospital treatments, and veterans benefits) would have naturally been introduced to society later on down the road. In a way, I feel like the Civil War was the event that made people realize that things needed to change now in order for society to be functional in a good way as well as recover some of the losses that they encountered.

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**Civil War & Death. Then & Now.**

by Brennan Blankenship - Wednesday, March 7, 2018, 10:08 AM

This is a documentary that I found interesting. The video is right in that we as Americans take for granted what the Civil War actually did to help our country address death. Back then it was more religious when in the Ken Burns documentary the woman took the dove as a sign of her husband's passing that did in fact occur that morning. While religion and faith still play a role in how people view death and war I would argue we are more removed from war now of days than back then. War and death were in the face of the public back then but now we like to separate ourselves from them as far as possible. Such issues with soldiers returning from battlefields and suffering PTSD and shooting up VA's are crazy. While we can thank the Civil War for bringing about changes in care for the dead and injured it is important to remember that back then we saw both unification for a cause and political opposition like we see much of today. Even though people were overwhelmed with the amount of death that occurred during the war they rallied together and spurred forth much of the changes we see today. One thing that is still lost in translation and that some people never understand is the causes that which all soldiers fight and die for. Even during the Civil War many did not understand or see significance in their family member's death and we still see such controversies today as the articles stated with Iraq and Afghanistan.

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Re: Civil War & Death. Then & Now.

by Jonathan Wheeler - Thursday, March 8, 2018, 2:45 PM

I agree with all that you have said. I found in "Death and the Civil War" the question of "what the state owes its citizens", this being in regard to citizens who take up the call of duty to lay down their bodies for the state. At the beginning of the Civil War it seemed that everyone was able to come up with some kind of reason as to why the war was being waged. Closer toward the end of the war, it seemed like no one really knew what the war was about. Kind of similar to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, after 9/11 everyone seemed to know what the fight was about. Now, it seems like everyone has forgotten and/or does not know why. It also does not help that these wars are fought in faraway countries over a longer duration.

I think for me what really summarized what the North and South population thought of the Civil War as it progressed into its later stages, was the story Shelby Foote told. Mr. Foote told about a southern soldier; wearing rags and was obviously some lowly private, who was captured by some Yankee soldiers. The Yankee's asked the southerner what he was fighting for. The southern soldier responded "cause y'all are down here".

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Re: Civil War & Death. Then & Now.

by Jackson Peterson - Sunday, March 11, 2018, 11:09 PM

I agree that the beginning of the war was the citizens wanting to take the call of duty. People wanted to find a purpose for the war and to go to battle within the same county. And as the videos and text have said everyone thought it would be over right away and it drags on for years. after such a long time, its easy to see how people can loose interest and forget why they are still fighting when no one is actually winning.

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Improving our views on death

by Rose Thomas - Wednesday, March 7, 2018, 11:25 AM

It is amazing to think about all the modern ways we deal with death now, compared to during the civil war. In the 1900s we did not have many of the things we have today. Hospitals, military cemeteries, ambulances, and many other things. It is also interesting to think about the fact that if we had not had a war of that size on our homeland that maybe these services would have not been provided, then, or even now. I don't think that our culture has "lost" anything from the decline of religion and the "good death". If anything, we have improved in our ways and even have a better understanding of death. Before the civil war people would die at home surrounded by friends and family. Which still happens today, but people also die at war and in hospitals today as well. As a society we don't think any less of those who die at

war, most of the time we are proud of the sacrifice that person made to the country. The civil war gave Americans an up close and personal view at death and it has changed the way we think about dying.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Improving our views on death

by Kyle McDaniel - Friday, March 9, 2018, 1:58 PM

I totally agree with you. I even wrote something similar in a previous post. I do not think we have "lost" anything by a decline in religious devotion. I think as a people, we have become smarter and more open minded; hence the beliefs in different ideals. It makes us all more unique and diverse in all honesty. How boring if we all believed in the same thing, right?

I agree our understanding of death has changed significantly these days than the ideals of the past. I think the term "good death" and "honorable death" do not hold the same weight as they did back in the 19th century. We honor our heroes and treat our veterans and fallen soldiers with nothing but love and respect.

After reading that article and knowing that a father actually sought his dead son's comrades to see if his son died a "good death" kind of makes me scratch my head. Having a child myself, and if something were to happen her, a "Good death" or "honorable death" would not be on my mind; I would just honor them. It is crazy how much we have changed since then.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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How the Civil War changed how we went about death during war

by Brandon Gericke - Wednesday, March 7, 2018, 2:58 PM

In this last 30 minute video about death in the Civil War, I was made much more aware of how todays military and federal services were affected by their complete unpreparedness during the Civil War. Being a US Navy Corpsmen, I am familiar with the current rules and regulations in regards to dealing with medicine and death in the military. Being informed that the Federal institutions had no ambulance services, field hospitals, cemeteries, or even a way to identify the dead and notify the families, was shocking to me. I find it hard to imagine a functioning military having no way to really cre for the injured, dead and their families. In our modern culture, I think that the American public has lost the closeness that we once had when it comes the injured or dead as a result of our wars. Now that religion is nota major factor in how we perceive death overall, I think that it has become easier to accept the brutalities of war, and to accept that the "good death" as described in the Then and Now page, as something that is not possible, or necessary on the battlefield. However, we still believe that a just cause is an important factor in how we perceive the death of our soldiers. The Federal Government now is doing incredibly better at treating the injured and caring for the dead. Advancements in medicine, hospitals and techniques, have reduced casualties from disease, blood loss, and dysentery to incremental amounts, compared to the civil war. The establishment of the medical corps has made battle field treatment incredibly efficient.

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Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3



Re: How the Civil War changed how we went about death during war

by Saige Sloan - Saturday, March 10, 2018, 10:09 AM

Brandon-

I think your response to the Death and the Civil War documentary was very insightful, especially considering your background with being a US Navy Corpsmen. Your familiarity with current rules and regulations involving medicine and the circumstances of dealing with the death of a lost one really highlights your comparison between then and now. There has been an incredible change in medicine, as well as formality surrounding healthcare since the time of the Civil War, and miraculously manages to grow by comparison each year. I appreciate you touching base on the impact religion has come to offer on the idea of death. We each have our beliefs on passing, as well as what happens to us after our soul has left the Earth. Religious or not, I think our beliefs and hopes for the afterlife bring us greater peace of mind than any medicine ever could. It will be interesting to see how medical advances continue throughout our own lifetime. Really good, personal, response.

Saige

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2



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Re: How the Civil War changed how we went about death during war

by Brandon Gericke - Sunday, March 11, 2018, 12:12 PM

Thank you for your reply. I would also like to add that I am grateful to know that even though the current system has many flaws and short-comings, I am confident that those issues now, will result in better care for future generations of soldiers.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1



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Re: How the Civil War changed how we went about death during war

by Jackson Peterson - Sunday, March 11, 2018, 11:12 PM

Thanks for the response Brandon! I respect your background in the service and agree that the civil wars downfall was their ability of being prepared. Everyone thought the war would be done soon and not be drug out for years and they didn't have the people, the resources, the medical equipment to account for the battle.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

0



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Civil War brings about the modern military

by Andrew Smith - Wednesday, March 7, 2018, 4:49 PM

This documentary made it very clear that the civil War showed the military what it was lacking and paved the way for modern military institutions. Death was rampant in the war and its astonishing how many unknown soldiers died and faded into history. Dog tags seem like such

an obvious thing for modern soldiers, and this war showed why they were so drastically needed. In addition to marking the bodies, the war showed that medical care was not only behind in advancement, but completely nonexistent for most men on the battle field. Again, an ambulance corps and Red Cross seem of obvious necessity now, and the civil war made that very clear. If anything, this documentary showed how the war transformed the United States army into a modern military organization.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1



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Re: Civil War brings about the modern military

by Sydney Hall - Thursday, March 8, 2018, 11:36 AM

Dog tags would have been significantly beneficial to the loved ones of those participating in the war for both sides as it would be a true form of identification in case the body was unrecognizable. With these tags, it would be a form of gathering knowledge in order to notify the deceased's family members and that way they would have a little bit of peace. Today, we have those tags for our loved ones serving in the military and they didn't. We have that blanket of comfort of knowing that no matter what happens out there on the battlefield, there's a huge probability that those dog tags will make it back to (our) loved ones. That for instance, is something that we take for granted for sure.

The civil war really did transform the United States military because with the 2.5% of losses of the total population (750,000 people), they realized structures and systems needed to be created in order to help all of the people participating, whether it be the volunteer nurses to the creation of ambulance Corps and Red Cross, and more.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2



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Re: Civil War brings about the modern military

by Jackson Peterson - Sunday, March 11, 2018, 11:30 PM

I agree, its amazing to see how the military has become more modern. I can't even imagine what war would be like today if the military was still operating the way they were during the 1800's. War would have far more casualties and last forever running in circles while slaughtering many military people.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

0



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Putting the human aspect of war front and center

by Paul Geu - Wednesday, March 7, 2018, 6:56 PM

I think that the most significant aspect of this documentary that has improved my knowledge is showing the side of the war that most history classes do not show. That is the human cost of the conflict. I knew that the Victorian age had their focuses on death but I did not know about the focus on Holy dying and the whole procedure of dying during that time. My knowledge about the US Sanitary Commission and the work of Clara Barton was bolstered but focusing on how common solders helped each other by posing the men to be at comfort with death,

writing the dying soldier's family back home and also making sure the next of kin knew where the body was if they wanted to visit is just as important to know as the timeline and important people of this war.

I believe that modern Americans have lost the ability to know the true cost of war and might be weaker because of it. Due to the sheer amount of death that was seen in the war, every family was affected by the loss of someone but today, with most conflicts being less bloody, most families do not know the suffering that the families of the civil war time endured. However, I do not believe that the decline of religious devotion to death has made our culture lose something mainly because the civil war culture put a lot of focus on death. During the documentary at times I felt there was a cult around death and by focusing on it, I feel they might have overlooked the joys of life.

When comparing what the federal government does today as compared to the government in the war can not be any more different. The system that we enjoy today was built on the mistakes of the war. From not having any federal hospital system or cemeteries for those killed the progress the government made was paid by all the unnecessary suffering of those poor wounded, dying men, and their families. However, I think the main mistake by both sides was the assumption that the war was going to be bloodless and short. If they trying knew the cost that the war would have I think they would have been better abled to prepare if they even fought to begin with. But one can truly know the horrors of war and there is no true was to be prepared for it. I am glad that our servicemen and women get the care that they deserve for all the sacrifices they make for our freedom today.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3



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Re: Putting the human aspect of war front and center

by Sydney Hall - Thursday, March 8, 2018, 12:02 PM

It almost seems as if war is a series of trials and tribulations. There's always lessons to be learned, things that could've went differently, and so forth. I'm sure that the grief and pandemonium that the people experienced during that time would have been very different compared to what we experience now. It seems like a huge possibility that both the Union and the Confederates were not prepared for the war lasting as long as it did. From all of the documentaries we have watched and the chapters we have read in *Battle Cry of Freedom*, it makes me think that even if one side, the Union, had more resources available, they still weren't physically or mentally prepared for the outcome or the war itself. The sheer amount of casualties was staggering and I can guarantee you that that fact right there overwhelmed both sides and they were lost in what to do in order to improve things. During the Civil War, we had the Red Cross because of Clara Barton. We also had the USSC and volunteer nurses. So although they didn't have much technological advances that we have and the systems in place, they were leaning towards it and making modifications as they went, even if it meant at a slow pace.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2



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Trials and Tribulations of war

by Paul Geu - Thursday, March 8, 2018, 8:38 PM

I agree with you that war certainly is a series of trials and tribulations. Throughout this course and all our sources we have seen both sides get the upper hand and also both sides at their lowest points during their campaigns. Now one thing that both sides had in common is how to deal with all the death and suffering that happened. The Union did have more resources and like you said with the USSC and red cross had better non-government organizations to help better the care of the troops and help those that have already died. I found it interesting how the Confederacy was able to cope at times with much less resources at their disposal. The civilians that helped care for their wounded worked just as hard as those in the North with much less.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Modern day War

by Jackson Peterson - Wednesday, March 7, 2018, 10:24 PM

I believe that now and days, soldiers are much more appreciated for their services then they were at the time of the Civil War. With modern technology it is more seen in the media if a soldier loses their life or suffers injury. Back then they didn't have the kind of reach we do today with television, social media etc. Today with war we also don't have the mass killings that were as frequent as the civil war. And if such a mass event happens the soldiers that were affected are shown respect and everyone that watches televisions, reads a newspaper, or has a forum of social media can see their faces and names in respect.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Modern day War

by Rose Thomas - Thursday, March 8, 2018, 9:20 AM

Media has really affected the way war is treated in the modern era. You are right, if there is a mass killing it would be talked about in the media and those soldiers would be shown a lot of respect and love. TV, and the internet, have changed the way we get our news. Everything is in the moment and talked about almost immediately after it happens. During the civil war they did not have that so people had to wait weeks, some times even years to find out what happened to their loved ones- if they ever did find out.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Modern day War

by Hannah Cartwright - Friday, March 9, 2018, 4:49 PM

I definitely agree. So weird to compare the way soldiers are treated back then versus now. During the Civil War, they didn't even have tags or any form of self-identity once they had entered the war. If a soldier had fallen on the battle field, their family was lucky to even be notified of their death, though they usually were not because those who found the body had no way of even knowing their name, let alone finding their family. It is so sad to think of how these soldiers would be buried at a random location, away from their home and away from their family. I feel that now with cemeteries, families are able to gain more closure with

their loved ones death by knowing where they are buried and knowing that they can go visit their grave whenever they can. Now, as you had said, soldiers are honored through military ceremonies, funerals, cemeteries, television, social media, etc.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Then and Now

by Saige Sloan - Wednesday, March 7, 2018, 10:38 PM

Week 9 Forum- Death and the Civil War

Compared to both James McPherson's Battle Cry of Freedom and Ken Burns Civil War episodes, the documentary "Death and the Civil War" was incredibly overwhelming. Within the first two minutes, the narrator read a commentary on behalf of James Montgomery, a dying soldier shot through the soldier. As he was passing, Montgomery wrote his final farewell to his father, with directions as to how he would like to be handles after he was gone, which truly broke my heart. I think this documentary offered viewers a much more emotional appeal surrounding the true heartache around the war, rather than factual evidence about the timeline and events that took place.

Ric Burns, the director who wrote Death and the Civil War, described the loss of the war to be "on a scale and manner no one had ever imagines possible." Placing a strong emphasis on the mess the was truly was, the documentary highlighted a strong death undertone. Already knowing the death toll was high, it was jaw dropping to learn that roughly 750,000 lost their lives, nearly 2% of the total population. At the time this video was created, that translated to nearly 7 million people in today's time (I believe the video was created in 2012). The video later goes in depth to say that the Civil War was the worst and bloodiest battle America had ever seen, and has yet to see. With the photo and evident portray of the death truly involved, the Death and the Civil War video raised much more emotion than any other documentary we have yet to see.

At the time, our country lacked an incredible infrastructure, ambulance availability, proper death burial, and many more contributing factors that would have benefited the people more at the time surrounding good healthcare and proper community structure. Central reconstruction was the core effort, yet seemed far fetched at the time. No one could have handled nor predicted the outcome the war had to bring. As of now, our country has manifested a stronger healthcare system. With expansion on technology, formal tributaries to our fallen soldiers, and identifying the strong suits within the government, we have managed to create a stronger sense of appreciation for the effort behind battle. Unlike other wars, the Civil War has desensitized the idea of death amongst other wars. Being the most gut wrenching, it's hard to compare to other wars. With better education on the matter, I think we do a much better job regarding the loss and death that comes with war.

As for understanding the magnitude of the war for what it was, I think that comes alongside learning more information. Through different textbooks, documentaries, and various resources, a better understanding comes with better information. Going into this term, I already knew the basics of the Civil War, the cut and dry. It wasn't until the Death and the Civil War documentary, as well as another alternative documentary, that I had a genuine sense of

understanding regarding the heartache and brokenness that went alongside each battle. As Ric Burns explains himself, his understanding of the Civil War was “more distant [20 years ago] than it [was] now...”

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Then and Now

by Brandon Gericke - Sunday, March 11, 2018, 12:26 PM

Saige-

Your reply was spot on. What stuck with me most, was when you said that you understood the heartache of the war better, when read from the soldiers letter to his mother. It is almost impossible to comprehend the loss, and suffering that the soldiers and families endure during war. Letters and word of mouth often can help us come to a closer understanding of what the war cost our soldiers on a personal level. Having a little bit of medical experience in the military, has left me questioning if some of the wars we have fought, were worth the loss of life and love that were the result of it. With every death that occurred, there was a family, love, stories and potential that were left behind, cut short. The belief that God was on their side, would have dulled that pain a little, perhaps.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Evolution of the understanding of a "good death"

by Kishahn Fellows - Wednesday, March 7, 2018, 11:01 PM

I would say the most significant parts of "Death and the civil war" were the focus on the societal strain the war put on our nation, the death letters to families that would never see their sons, fathers, and brothers again and the evolving idea of a "good death". From a comfortable bed surrounded by friends and family, to making do with a letter that may or may not make it to its destination, lying in mud, surrounded by relative strangers. all of this, this as well as what seemed to me, a more significant focus on facts and numbers when compared to the Ken Burns documentary series. The parallel nature of the statistics and the emotional death letters in "Death and the civil war" present an emotional pull i personally found almost entirely absent from Ken Burns "The civil war"

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Evolution of the understanding of a "good death"

by Kyle McDaniel - Thursday, March 8, 2018, 3:15 PM

I totally agree. Even from the much smaller amount of footage we watched from the Ric Burns documentary, it has a totally different feeling that is completely absent from the Ken Burns documentary. Ken Burns' film focuses more on the leaders, the battles, and Lincoln, whereas right off the bat in the Ric Burn's film we are shown this emotional letter, written by a dying soldier.

It is a feeling that is absent in Ken Burns' feeling for sure. This new documentary carries a much more emotional punch that could have elevated the other documentary even more. As close as we got in the Ken Burns' film was the slightly controversial story of the Ballou letter that we previously had discussions about.

Two very different documentaries going for two different feelings and I must say they succeeded from what I have seen. I would prefer the way the Ric Burns documentary is told over the Ken Burns film. I think it resonates more hearing the more personal, emotional stories of the war.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1



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Video presenting the emotional side of war

by Paul Geu - Sunday, March 11, 2018, 9:39 PM

I completely agree that the use of the letters added with the statistics painted an emotional picture of the true cost of this war. When the video presented the major battles with the casualties of each one I began to realize how even though it was a number on the screen, it was really another life cut short, a family that lost a loved one and in a way that was not how anyone deserved to die. This tone is completely missing in the Ken Burns documentary and I am glad that we use other materials to give up a more rounded presentation of this war.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1



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The Most Significant Parts of the Documentary

by Zach Haxby - Wednesday, March 7, 2018, 11:33 PM

For me the most significant parts for me in the documentary were probably the details of the specific wars and that more in depth look into President Lincoln in the Civil War. I really enjoyed learning so many great facts that I never knew like how the Battle of Shiloh had the single bloodiest battle in U.S history. When the film talks about Lincoln I never really knew how much of an influence he really had in the war, I mean I know he was really involved, but I never knew he was so influential to the troops to make so many reenlist after he was re-elected. I learned so many new things from this film that I will not soon forget, but I still recognize the weaknesses in some of the areas such as the lack of true info about African Americans in this time.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1



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Re: The Most Significant Parts of the Documentary

by Leah Livesay - Thursday, March 8, 2018, 7:14 PM

Hi Zach,

I also felt that some of the most significant parts of the video were details pertaining to each different battle of the war. Seeing the actual number of casualties for only a day or two of battle is shocking. It's crazy to think that this one single war of Americans against

Americans holds more deaths than any other, that a country would go to war with itself, losing hundreds of thousands of it's citizens. I felt that this documentary did a great job of really getting the viewers attention and keeping it.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

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Re: The Most Significant Parts of the Documentary

by Saige Sloan - Saturday, March 10, 2018, 10:45 AM

Zach,

Between our weekly Civil War episodes, our Battle Cry of Freedom textbook, and each of the alternative documentaries, I found the Death and the Civil War film to be most profound. This documentary was sincerely emotional in the sense that it highlighted the true magnitude of loss and sadness on behalf of the American people. It was appalling to learn that an estimated 2% of the population was lost, a true devastation. In the beginning of the term, we learned in-depth about the Battle of Shiloh, so it was nice to have the film offer a slight recap. There were a lot of emotional attributes in the film, beginning with the opening letter read from Montgomery to his father. I would suggest re-watching the film in order to understand the full effect and loss that took place, as well as the lack of governmental funding/equipment available at the time. There were not enough ambulances, personnel, nor government funding to provide for the people of the Unites States. Interesting film, worth the watch.

Saige

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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A nice recap

by Paul Geu - Sunday, March 11, 2018, 9:44 PM

Saige,

I agree with you that this new video provides a slight recap of the previous battles that we have read about. I also liked how the video showed how truly unprepared both sides were in regards to caring for the wounded and what to do with the dead. The materials that we have used in the class has tied into each other pretty well allowing us to learn this topic from different angles.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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So much death, so little resources

by Leah Livesay - Thursday, March 8, 2018, 7:07 PM

After watching the documentary, Death and the Civil War, I feel like they really did center in on the whole "death" part, understandably. 750,000 casualties during the entire Civil War, unbelievable. Seeing the number of casualties for different battles throughout the video really just made it sink in. Death and the Civil War also really focused on the limited resources that were available to the soldiers. Having so few resources available, it's no wonder why there were so many casualties and still so many unanswered questions. I feel like this documentary

really highlights the significance of so much and so many that were lost in the Civil War. Knowing what we know about the war, it's hard to imagine that in the beginning everyone thought the war would be "quick" and "easy", but is war ever actually quick and easy?

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: So much death, so little resources

by Kyle McDaniel - Friday, March 9, 2018, 1:50 PM

That is very true! I have been wondering that for weeks, how they thought a WAR would be quick and easy. I guess prior to that, Americans had not seen many wars, that's the only answer I could come with for that. It is very sad how ill prepared our government of the past was for how huge this war turned out to be.

The emphasis definitely was on the death of the civil war and how it affected everyone. It was a very interesting, tragic look at the more intimate stories of the civil war. The fact that really jumped out at me was the fact that if applied to our population today, we would lose 7 million people. That is darn near unimaginable to think of. The entire state of Oregon only has 4 million people in it. That would be losing more than a whole state of people over one conflict that was originally thought to be brief. Very sad.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Wars and Their Loses

by Nicholas Bates - Sunday, March 11, 2018, 5:05 PM

What isn't looked at very heavily when people consider this is that America had been in battles and wars since even before its own independence.

The American War of Independence lasted 8 years with a total of 25,000 deaths. That is less then 4% of the amount of deaths caused in the Civil War and it took twice as long to get that many.

The War of 1812 lasted 3 years a time frame much more similar to the Civil War but it only incurred 15,000 deaths.

The Mexican-American War which was only 15 years before and had many people who served in it as leader in the Civil War to include General Robert E. Lee as well as General Ulysses S. Grant. This war lasted 2 years and totaled a little over 13,000 deaths.

With this being the way and expected casualties of wars fought in the past it is easy to see why most people were appalled by the large numbers of deaths that came back even after single battles. And to top this all off the people we were fighting were our own family, neighbors, and countrymen so that no one thought that we would have stuck with killing each other for so long and so hard.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Veteran Benifits: Now and Then

by Nicholas Bates - Thursday, March 8, 2018, 11:42 PM

Many things were discovered during the civil war that most people wouldn't have thought about beforehand in regards to survivors and dependents. In the past we had small battles with others but had yet to really have a full scale war of this magnitude. After the civil war Congress and other departments of the government both newly made and older started to realize that returning soldiers had been through a lot and that those who had fallen should be honored. Later on as each war came more things were discovered that could help those veterans and their families but often these would be discovered after the war and would take some time to be put into action. I feel lucky today as a veteran myself that I don't have to wait years to find out if I will even get any benefits at all because of the service of those before me.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Veteran Benifits: Now and Then

by Brandon Gericke - Sunday, March 11, 2018, 12:09 PM

I agree, as a veteran it is nice knowing that the services I am eligible to receive after serving, are so much better than previous wars. However there are also a ton of improvements needed in our current system. It is also good knowing that future generation of veterans and service members, will benefit from our systems failures.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

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A look at human life

by Miles Arnold - Saturday, March 10, 2018, 1:12 PM

More than anything, this documentary examines how the Civil War affected human lives and society during war. Most of the sources we have seen and read this class all examine the amount of lives that were lost and what rate and by different causes etc. But none of them really look at it like this one does. Its puts aside North and South and looks at it from a "human lives" standpoint.

When you hear the letter at the beginning you begin to feel sympathy for the south and the confederates. That's something that I have not yet done since studying the topic. It sort of hypnotizes you.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: A look at human life

by Nicholas Bates - Sunday, March 11, 2018, 5:17 PM

I agree that the film did a great job of showing us not just a war of North vs. South, but of a loss of lives from human beings. The people on both sides of this war were fighting fiercely for what they believed to be right and it is part of that reason that they were able to respect each other and to even reform the United States after the war was over. I do slightly feel that as one of the articles wrote that it was purely about number of deaths and the horrible toll of the war as opposed to also including the meaning that the soldiers on both sides had when fighting to such extremes. No one felt the death toll more then the soldiers out there on the battlefield witnessing this all first hand and having brothers, in both arms and birth, die around them.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Life and Death Now vs. Then

by Zach Haxby - Saturday, March 10, 2018, 4:41 PM

Thinking about death is always an extremely complex and hard topic, wondering what is after death and this has changed a lot from the Civil war to now. Back then almost everyone believed in God and Heaven as there was no reason to disbelieve as there was no science that could disprove it. Now many other theories about evolution and the afterlife have risen because of the cutting edge science we have at our disposal today. Even with all of the "facts" that science has provided us many of the population still chooses to believe in God or Gods depending on what religion and while this isn't because of the Civil war necessarily they still carried on believing in God.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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Re: Life and Death Now vs. Then

by Brandon Gericke - Sunday, March 11, 2018, 12:04 PM

I believe that their belief that God was on their side, made it easier for them to suffer the losses. I know that a lot of wars were fought with the belief that God was on one side or another, and this allowed for these wars to be fought with a brutality necessary to claim victory at any cost.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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A Selfish Life and a Selfless Death

by Nicholas Bates - Sunday, March 11, 2018, 4:19 PM

In this documentary it really shows how much times have changed, even from the Civil War to World War 1 entire ways in which we looked at life and death began to have drastic differences. With the religious devotion changing over the many years we lost a large part of what it meant to live in a way that was considered honorable for both the family and the religion. Death is now something that is always someone's fault. If you die of a disease its because of the company who made it regardless of whether it was being used in the wrong way. Don't get me wrong people and companies need to be held accountable for their actions or inaction but everything that doesn't go well is treated as someone else's fault. I know this got away from death a bit but it follows a lot of the same logic. People's outlook on death prior to the Civil War was generally along the lines of, "If it is my time to go may it be peaceful and look after the ones I leave behind." Now I feel the thoughts are, "Don't let me die no matter what I have to do." I understand not wanting to die but it has become very much a I don't want to die for me as opposed to the I don't want to die for my loved ones and myself like it was in the past.

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Federal Power Pro's and Con's

by Nicholas Bates - Sunday, March 11, 2018, 4:40 PM

The Civil War brought about a lot of change that was needed at the time because of the war. Some of those changes were part of the reason the south had wanted to leave in the first place. When the Confederacy was forming a large portion of the reason these states wanted to leave is so they could have their individual state rights very separated from the federal governments. They were afraid of the power that the federal government would have even beyond slavery which is an issue to this day. However, the federal government had no choice but to get heavily involved after the war in order to keep people sane and for life in general society to move on. Many programs came during and after the civil war from the Sanitary Commission to the Veterans Assistance programs that got started. The government has done many great things but it often overrides states laws and regulations whenever it deems it convenient. I agree that especially during times of war it is needed but I also think that during times of peace some of that can be drawn back to leave room for states to have more power over themselves and their people.

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Changes in treatment of dead or injured soldiers

by Desiree Mantey - Sunday, March 11, 2018, 5:54 PM

On the evening of May 10th 1864 Private James Robert Montgomery wrote a letter to his father from a battle field while blood dripped on the paper from a shoulder wound he had sustained hours earlier, "Dear father, this is my last letter to you, I have been struck by a piece of shell and my right shoulder is horribly mangled and i know death is inevitable (1 min Death and the Civil War, Ric Burns)." Although Private Montgomery's grave was marked and his family was informed of where it was they were never able to locate his remains and really say goodbye. There are many aspects of this letter and tale that would not happen in this day and age. Number one, it is not likely that someone who had been wounded in the shoulder would die from that injury. Medical care has come a long way in the last 150 years and it is extremely unlikely that a shoulder wound would lead to death. Secondly, if there is someone in the armed services that dies the family is immediately informed of where, when, and even how in some cases this occurred. Then they are buried in a special service at which the family is honored. This shows just how far the United States has come since the Civil War in medical care and the treatment of deceased members of the military and their families.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Religion and the "good death"

by Desiree Mantey - Sunday, March 11, 2018, 6:24 PM

On the eve of the Civil war the United States was a profoundly religious place- there were universally held beliefs about the nature of death and dying, the after life, the good death, and the right way to die (10 min, Death and the Civil War, Ric Burns)." There were certain "transitional practices that brought comfort to all those involved, and perhaps a conviction that the process of dying itself could be conquered (A Worthy Death, Kevin Levin)." These practices included being surrounded by loved ones, being in a comfortable place at home, having time to prepare and be ready to die, and knowing that death was simply another part of life.

However when at war the majority of these traditions were challenged. There was a swift and tragic undoing of these practices during the Civil War. There was no longer time to ready oneself for death, these soldiers were not surrounded by family, or in a comfortable place at home. The focus was no longer on the right way to die but on trying at all costs to stay alive.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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New things created by Civil War

by Desiree Mantey - Sunday, March 11, 2018, 7:12 PM

After watching Death and the Civil War by Ric Burns there were a number of things that I appreciated that were different from the Civil War series by Ken Burns. Unlike the military type focus of the Civil War series, Death and the Civil war focused more on what the government owes it's citizens. This made me look at the Civil War in a very different way. When viewing Ken Burn's production the main thing that was highlighted appeared to be the major losses, but Death and the Civil War examined the positive things that came out of the conflict. For example in 2018 we take for granted things like national cemeteries, systems of identifying the dead and notifying families, military hospitals and advanced medical care, and agencies that help families w/ the loss of their loved ones. But in 1860 when the Civil War began none of these things existed. The war created new things with heroic effort by individuals, groups, and the government that worked to improvise new solutions, new institutions, and new ways of coping with death (8:13 mark, Death and the Civil War, Ric Burns)." Some of these new institutions created by the war were the U.S. Sanitary Commission and the U.S. Christian Commission. Both of these organizations worked to improve wartime conditions in hospitals and camps for soldiers like nobody had before.

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Then vs. Now

by Andrew Smith - Sunday, March 11, 2018, 8:45 PM

The article on caring for the wounded and dead throughout the civil war showed how the federal government became aware of what it was lacking in many areas. The article makes it pretty clear that this war began the creation of a modern military organization. The list included: ambulance corps, federal hospitals, the beginning of dog tags, death notification to family, preservation and transportation of bodies, veterans affairs, and national cemeteries. Obviously all of these institutions listed have evolved in many ways and the care for soldiers during and after battle has advanced a long way since the civil war. In fact, I would argue that every war since has advanced battlefield technology, military institutions, and veteran care. Regarding mental health care for veterans, I think each war made the public and government more aware of the traumas that soldiers bring home with them.

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mental health care missing

by Paul Geu - Sunday, March 11, 2018, 9:57 PM

I agree with you that with each war there have been advances in both technology and caring for those that fought in the war. When you talked about mental health care for veterans it made me think about how they did care for civil war veterans. In all our materials we have not really learned about how the veterans coped with the combat and how their lives changed. We have gotten better as a nation with helping modern veterans get the care then deserve when compared to back then but I know that there is much more that needs to be done. I am sure that there was a lot of soldiers suffering from PTSD after the war but during that time there was no knowledge of how to do to help these men. I wonder if there is any material out there that talks about this subject in more detail?

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Modern understanding and experience of Death

by Andrew Smith - Sunday, March 11, 2018, 9:03 PM

I don't believe our modern culture has lost anything in the decline of religious devotion, and I don't believe that loss has anything to do with our understanding and experience of death. Clearly things were much different back then when people died at home and the general public witnessed death more commonly. But that doesn't mean our modern culture understands or experiences death any less. Seventy one percent of the US population still believes in Christianity, so the religious devotion is still alive and well in many believers. In addition, believing in Christianity has nothing to do with understanding death. Many different people have many different beliefs and understanding of death, especially those who have experienced a loss firsthand. I would say that our understanding and experience of death has evolved a long way since the civil war era because we as a people have evolved a long way since then in our understanding of life and the world.

Sum of ratings:1 (1) 1

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Benefits of Subject Based Documentary

by Dakota Brotherton - Sunday, March 11, 2018, 9:24 PM

As weird as it sounds after all the time I've invested watching the Ken Burns Civil War documentary for this class, I am sort of impartial when it comes to comparing it to other civil war documentaries. That's not to say that others out there aren't any good or beneficial to watch from an educational stand-point, but I feel as if the way that Burn's documentary captures an audience while educating is pretty incredible. I have mentioned it in previous forum posts but the way that he makes learning about war interesting is a powerful thing that can turn certain people onto learning something that previously may have never interested them enough to learn about. For example, since my roommates walked in to me watching the 4th episode, they have requested to watch every week following out of pure intrigue. One thing that takes away from this beneficial aspect however; with the length of Ken Burns series, it is easy to forget certain facts or dates or names with the way that they present more along with exaggerated/dramatized renditions of a soldier's personal experience. Because of this, I find some of the shorter segments of videos that have been included in forum posts as well as for weekly viewing contain a vast amount of information that may have been overlooked or completely forgotten about during Ken Burns documentary.

One such example comes from this week's forum video titled, *Death and The Civil War*; during about the 8th minute, the narrator informs us that before the civil war there were no provisions for identifying the dead nor were there any national cemeteries or protocols set in place to notify next-of-kin. He also goes on to inform us that there was no federal relief organizations or adequate federal hospitals and that Memorial Day in America wasn't even a thing previously. These were a few things that I had completely forgotten about on top of all the battle scenarios and letters to loved ones that so frequent the episodes from Ken Burn's series and in this sense this video certainly bolstered my knowledge in regard to some of the significances regarding death throughout the war. As the video mentions, this war completely reshaped America's relationship with death.

Overall, this video segment gives a much more in depth look at some of the challenges that were faced by both sides of the war when it came to caring for the dead in just about every aspect; identification, notification, care for family members and even burials. One thing that is mentioned in the 24th minute of the segment *Death and The Civil War*, is the improvisation of soldiers during this time and I feel as if this was overlooked at portions of Ken Burn's series. The narrator speaks on the fact that soldiers would make pacts with their tent mates and fellow soldiers after seeing some of the nameless dead remain so, to notify each other's families in case one of them had fallen during battle. Due to advancements of photography, some soldiers were lucky enough to carry portraits of loved ones to seek comfort in during their last dying moments. Other soldiers were lucky enough to have last words recorded prior to death whether through their own means or even in some cases by the doctor amputating the limbs that resulted in their death. These are just some of the things that I can personally attest to overlooking/forgetting about during Ken Burns lengthy series but have been thankfully highlighted to me in a more subject oriented documentary (in this case it was death throughout the civil war).

Sum of ratings:3 (1) 3

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What we have lost

by Kishahn Fellows - Sunday, March 11, 2018, 10:13 PM

I would say with the decline in religious devotion since the civil war, we have also lost our more intimate understanding of death. the more we learn about it in a factual and scientific sense, the farther removed from it in an intimate an emotional sense as society in my opinion. A key aspect of the decline in religious devotion is an evolution of how Americans understand and deal with death. A good example would be the evolution of military cadences, such as the USMC's "If I Die" : "If I die bury me deep, two m-16's beneath my feet, and by my side combat wear, but don't you forget now to pack my P.T. gear, the earth is gonna shake there'll be lightning in the sky, but don't you worry don't come undone, it's just me and chesty puller (famous dead marine) on our P.T. run" sung with vim and vigor these cadences show not only a willingness but a readiness for death in service, a far cry from the mentioning of "pleasure excursions" at the beginning of the civil war. To me this portrays a fuller understanding and accepting of the fact that with war comes death, and that if it can be avoided it should be, but there is not much sense in worrying about it otherwise. Perhaps we have become more apathetic to death to a degree.

Sum of ratings:2 (1) 2

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Improving Federal aid

by Kishahn Fellows - Sunday, March 11, 2018, 11:01 PM

I think it is hard to argue that the Federal government is certainly doing much better now at dealing with all of the aspects dealing with veterans from care after service, to laying the troops to rest. The implementation of national cemeteries, national holidays, care for veterans families, ambulance corps, federal hospitals and even additions as simple as issuing every troop some dog tags, has gone a long way to improve the handling of active duty and veteran troops. Although, that is not to say that there is not still much room for improvement. Care at V.A. hospitals is notoriously abysmal and often, getting the government to admit the disabilities troops come home with are, in fact, from their time in the service.

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1



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