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HST 209

Assignment 1: McPherson Paper

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Going into this class, I knew that there would be some challenges with the material that I would be learning. I would like to think that I enjoy learning history, but being that the Civil War is such a huge subject I do have some uneasiness about being able to grasp the concepts that we will learn. In my opinion, there is not just one side or two sides to a story, but many. I know going into this class that there would be views of this subject that could be true or maybe not as true. Learning history takes an open mind, so all sides can be examined. Reading the reviews did prove to me that there are different views that people may or may not agree upon. The reviews just reminded me that I do have to keep an open mind.

The first review, "The Bloodiest Wars" demonstrated that I should pay attention to the illustrations that are in *Battle Cry of Freedom*. In the past I have learned that pictures of what I am learning do help me understand the subject more effectively. Throughout the term, I will pay attention to the illustrations because the review mentioned that they were done wonderfully and I know that I learn better this way. The review also mentions that some places that McPherson talks about are not known to the reviewer. In this particular case, I am not going to worry too much about the names because sometimes people have different names for places. By reading this review I do have more reassurance that the information is good quality material.

The second review by Dave Thomer was also a good source on what to expect from the book. Once again, the reviewer points out the excellent detail that is put into the book with footnotes that the author has provided. Since Thomer did point out the footnotes, I know that I will use these as I read the chapters to better understand the information. A negative that the reviewer did point out is that McPherson may be a little bias throughout the book. This does worry me, because I like to see all sides of a story and by being bias it could harm the other views' position. Overall the review did seem more positive than negative, so as a result I still feel hopeful that this book is going to be a great source.

The third set of reviews from Amazon definitely did worry me. It seems that everyone felt that the author did a good job leading up to the Civil War, but lacked in other departments. A positive that I read was that the reviewers felt that this was novice material. Even though it may have been meant as something bad, I see the positive side because I am a novice. It has reinforced that I can obtain a basic understanding of the material. Once again, the reviewers felt that McPherson was biased which will shut down that open mind quality that I want to keep.

After all the reviews I have read, I feel that all were helpful in detecting how I should prepare myself for the reading. The Civil War is such a huge subject; I feel that it

is impossible to learn every detail in a term, let alone in a 900 page book. In conclusion, we would not have this book if the instructor did not feel that it was a good teaching tool. Going into the term I will keep all the reviews in mind in how to approach the book, as well as keep an open mind.