

In my experience, history textbooks tend to provide a broad overview of a large period of time. They gloss over political, military and social aspects of the given time period. Because *Battle Cry of Freedom* is focused solely on the Civil War, I inclined to believe that it is a more in-depth study than most textbooks. Initially, I'm expecting that the book will be more interesting than the standard textbook. I do think that many prejudices about the Civil War are still alive and well. Before I've read any of the textbook, I think it's important to remember that the author may be biased to one side or the other. As such, my early conclusion is that *Battle Cry of Freedom* can be a valuable resource but not the ultimate of knowledge about the Civil War.

The biggest issue that I have with historical accuracy is the author's biases. In my opinion, great pieces of historical pieces treat a subject fairly- both sides are represented in a neutral light; facts, not opinions, are the basis of information provided; and, the author's biases/prejudices/opinions are not worked into the work. Essentially, it shouldn't be a piece that is written from the viewpoint of the "winner." There are always two (or, more) sides to a story. When not all sides are presented in a neutral way, the history loses its accuracy.

Before reading the reviews, I assumed that I would agree with the *New York Times* reviewer because the *New York Times* is a big deal. When an author makes the *New York Times* Bestseller's List, it's a bragging right. One would assume that their reviewers know what they're talking about. But, after reading his review, I was unimpressed. I felt that he was over zealous: "It is the best one-volume treatment of its subject I have ever come across. It may actually be the best ever published." That is a bold statement! And, it's hard for me to believe. I'm inclined to believe that it's probably not the "best ever."

On the opposite end of the spectrum, I wasn't expecting to be impressed by the Amazon reviews. I don't know anything about these anonymous reviewers. What's their educational background? What authority do they have to judge a history textbook? But, I found their reviews to have some valuable insight. A common thread in the reviews was that McPherson was biased, painting Northerners as the good guys and Southerners as the bad guys. While I'm hesitant to believe that the book is a biased piece of garbage, I was intrigued by one reviewer's comment. They wrote, "The Civil War was in the 1860's, and not the 1990's, but McPherson judges the conflict by today's standards." I think that this will be something to think about while I read. Is the history presented judged on the standards of the time? Or, today's standards? I think this will be especially interesting when reading about African Americans. What were consider facts about African Americans in 1860 will be very different from what we believe to be facts in 2015.

After reading the reviews, both positive and negative, I'm confident that *Battle Cry for Freedom* will be a well-researched text. With all the negative reviews, I'm sure that there'll be biases and prejudices present in the book. I also believe that an historian with McPherson's credentials would not publish a book that isn't accurate. In my experience, people tend to write reviews when they're incredibly pleased or incredibly angry. Often the truth lies somewhere in the middle. At the end of the day, the blogger's review is probably the most accurate- "...*Battle Cry of Freedom* is, however, fair and extremely informative... and well worth the investment of time for anyone who seeks to understand

this turning point in American history.” I think that the book will provide a valuable resource to learning about the Civil War.