

Matthew Wymore

HST 209

Based off of the reviews I read about the book, my approach will probably be the same that I have had with my previous history textbooks. History textbooks have and will always be a subject that can be tainted by the bias opinions of the author. When I read a textbook for a class I expect the author's bias opinion to be a slight undertone in the book. Therefore, when I read a historically based textbook, I keep my own personal bias out of the equation. If I allow myself own opinions and thoughts to influence my readings then I find myself being distracted from the true purpose of the readings, which is to learn about the events in which we are studying.

I know that history is something that is well documented and researched by professionals in the field, but one problem I have with several textbooks is how this information is relayed to students. I feel that there is an inconsistency in the way that history is taught. Depending on the author's stance on certain topics, they might choose to spend a few pages on a topic, or perhaps to them a simple paragraph is sufficient. From reading the reviews it seems that the author skipped over certain events, such as the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, perhaps to focus primarily on the war aspects of the time.

Being a student I am more inclined to trust the Amazon book reviews, since most if not all of the reviews come primarily from other students. While the New York Times review is coming from a well-respected source, I felt like the person reviewing was there to stroke his and his fellow colleagues egos. At the end of his review he states, "The notes at the bottom of the page (hooray!) will help explain to scholars why Mr. McPherson is so often able to make fresh sense of old puzzles. The bibliographical note at the end will provide the novice with an excellent guide to further reading." To me this is sort of a pompous remark towards history buffs and students who would be using this book.

For the most part the reviewers gave this book an excellent review. What I look for in a history book is one that can hold my attention, and deliver the content in a non-dry manner. Hopefully this book can deliver such an expectation and provide more than enough information on the subject.