

Based on these reviews and reading chapters eight and nine, I think I will have to approach this book, knowing that author has his own opinions on the subject and takes that into account in his telling of the events. Even if I share his opinions, it's still important to me, as a lover of history, that when studying history, I get the full unbiased story.

The New York Times review and the review by Dave Thomer both say that the book is very complete and accurate, so in terms of historical accuracy, I'm not very worried about omissions. I'm more concerned about things being colored a certain way that may not be totally true so that the reader interprets events or the words or actions of historical figures in a way that fits with the individual perspective of the author.

I generally trust bad reviews the most. Anyone can write a good review; people even get paid to do just that. Quality is subjective and nothing is going to be perfect in the eyes of everyone, so usually when something has a majority of 5 stars or 10/10 reviews, it's suspicious. Reviews that say something was perfect, are usually fake or exaggerated because the person really liked it and went overboard. In the New York Times review, it's clear that the author shares the views of McPherson, for example "the story has often been perverted to teach other lessons (the wickedness of capitalists or damyankees, the righteousness of the Southern cause)" (2). Because of this, their review endlessly praises the book for its perfection and when they do touch on the issues with it, they never mention anything about bias. However, bad reviews can also have this same problem. In the case of this book, a lot of the bad reviews are from people who clearly have their own bias. For example this Amazon review, "'Battle Cry of Freedom' is revisionist history told through the prism of the Civil Rights struggle of the 1960s... If you are among the 'politically correct' you should enjoy this book (11). Or even more obvious proof, "the scholarship often gets lost in left-leaning ideological distortions (6).

I feel pretty confident in this book despite the bias of the author. The reviews say that there are a lot of sources for everything "His language and tone are measured and reasonable, and his claims are supported by extensive citations and evidence, including many quotations from the personal papers of the principals involved (Thomer). That makes me a lot more confident in the accuracy, so I'll just have to be sure to take anything that sounds like an opinion with a grain of salt and consider it objectively.