

Expectations of a Battle Cry of Freedom

By Trenton Bieker

Being a novice Civil War observer, I have mostly been presented the Good vs Evil aspect of “it was about slavery”. I have grown since most of my studies in history and have come to a curiosity of that time once again. Here I will try to answer the question of what my approach will be to the scholarly work “Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era” by James M. McPherson. I will also cite some sources that help me make an educated approach to this work. I will explain my reasons behind my thoughts and choices as well. With that, lets dig in shall we?

A good place to start would be a little bit of where I stand on the event prior to hearing the reviews and opinions of others. I for most of my life had thought that the north had won a righteous victory and established true freedom to the country by getting rid of the slavery. To be honest this is the most I had ever really summed up the Civil War to be. Now in my late twenty's I have an urge to know more about the whole picture of what these two sides really stood for. I want to know motives and desires, the good, bad, and ugly so to speak. I hope to experience a well round depiction of the civil war. I know in my life politics is a messy place and life is not what any politician says it is, so I could see where history can be distorted or manipulated. Hopefully these reviews can shed some light on what to expect from this work.

When it comes to the negative reviews I agree with Andrea Simpson's(1) review stating “As far as I can tell, pretty much all the people who don't like the book object to its political position“. Most of the reviews that didn't like the book stated this in one way or another. Another negative is that it's “Too much,too small” stated by Christopher K(1). The view here is simply that there is too much information crammed into too small of text. Overall, it comes down to claims of bias and too much information as the brunt of the negative reviews. I don't trust any one review but come to that conclusion on the amount of consistency among negative reviews with such a small pool comparatively to the positive pool. Also, there are positive reviews that state the same thing. This makes me confident that I should keep this in mind

moving forward with this work.

For positive reviews the numbers are great. Though the quality of the reviews aren't so great. You get a lot of "Great work, Must read"(2) and no highlight to what was great or why. There are however some great reviews done that paint a positive picture. Dave Thomer(3) for example, states that "The Civil War is such a complex event that comprehensive treatments of it tend to be multi-volume affairs." saying what the negative reviews were stating, that there is so much information to cover. Thomer goes further stating "Battle Cry of Freedom nevertheless manages to cover all those themes over the course of its 900-page narrative" turning what some would say is negative into a positive. He goes further on to say that even though he is bias, he does a good job painting a balanced picture. Other positive reviews went into great detail about events I had no idea about, therefore I could not weigh the review either way due to ignorance. Overwhelmingly positive reviews stated that there was a lot of information that was beautifully narrated and was a great overall study that would be the spring board to jump head first into the Civil War era.

After all those reviews, I will simply approach this work with an open mind aware that some bias may be in play. I will also be aware that there is a lot of information in such a small amount of text. I feel confident that I have gained a well balance perspective to confidently approach this work ready to experience a little history.

1. http://www.amazon.com/Battle-Cry-Freedom-Oxford-History/product-reviews/019516895X/ref=cm_cr_pr_hist_2?ie=UTF8&filterBy=addTwoStar&showViewpoints=0&sortBy=bySubmissionDateDescending
2. http://www.amazon.com/Battle-Cry-Freedom-Oxford-History/product-reviews/019516895X/ref=cm_cr_pr_hist_5?ie=UTF8&filterBy=addFiveStar&showViewpoints=0&sortBy=bySubmissionDateDescending
3. <http://www.notnews.org/ubb/Forum4/HTML/000020.html>

