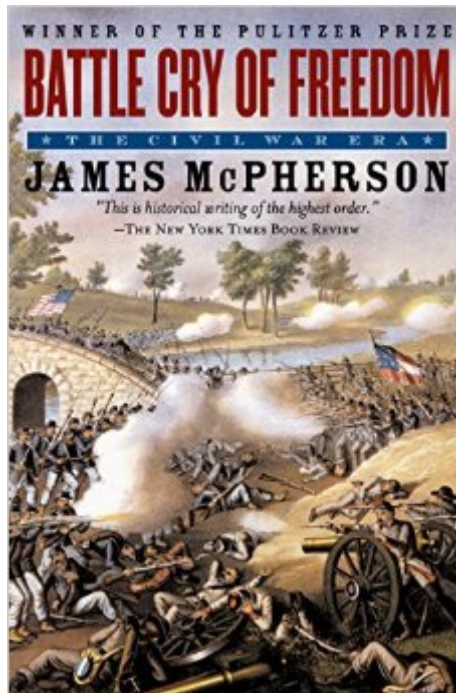


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Battle Cry Of Freedom: The Civil War Era (Oxford History Of The United States Book 6)



Synopsis

Filled with fresh interpretations and information, puncturing old myths and challenging new ones, *Battle Cry of Freedom* will unquestionably become the standard one-volume history of the Civil War. James McPherson's fast-paced narrative fully integrates the political, social, and military events that crowded the two decades from the outbreak of one war in Mexico to the ending of another at Appomattox. Packed with drama and analytical insight, the book vividly recounts the momentous episodes that preceded the Civil War--the Dred Scott decision, the Lincoln-Douglas debates, John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry--and then moves into a masterful chronicle of the war itself--the battles, the strategic maneuvering on both sides, the politics, and the personalities. Particularly notable are McPherson's new views on such matters as the slavery expansion issue in the 1850s, the origins of the Republican Party, the causes of secession, internal dissent and anti-war opposition in the North and the South, and the reasons for the Union's victory. The book's title refers to the sentiments that informed both the Northern and Southern views of the conflict: the South seceded in the name of that freedom of self-determination and self-government for which their fathers had fought in 1776, while the North stood fast in defense of the Union founded by those fathers as the bulwark of American liberty. Eventually, the North had to grapple with the underlying cause of the war--slavery--and adopt a policy of emancipation as a second war aim. This "new birth of freedom," as Lincoln called it, constitutes the proudest legacy of America's bloodiest conflict. This authoritative volume makes sense of that vast and confusing "second American Revolution" we call the Civil War, a war that transformed a nation and expanded our heritage of liberty.

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Customer Reviews

make it this one. I read this book after having read two other books on the Battle of Gettysburg. I found that I wanted to know more about the circumstances surrounding that battle, the situation of the two armies, the generals, the politicians, and the state of the economies of the two sides engaged. But I was daunted by the plethora of information on the American Civil War. I had no desire to immerse myself in some three or four volume 2000-page work because, aside from believing myself unable to keep everything in perspective and not to get bogged down in minutiae, I reasoned that plain laziness and attention span problems would keep me from ever finishing anything like that. Plus I had to admit that it was the battles that interested me the most, and I despaired of having to read a separate book or two on each of the dozens of battles that are considered "major" during those four years. Then I found this book: a single volume that encompasses the entire conflict from its military and political antecedents to the economic and sociological ingredients that forced the Union to enter into a war that would change forever the face of democracy. And this book did not give short shrift to the battles. To the contrary, the battles remain central and are accompanied by helpful maps. I took a chance on this book and now that I have finished it I have to say that it is all that I could have hoped for. *Battle Cry of Freedom* does what would appear to be the impossible: it includes virtually everything of consequence about the war and continues to hold the reader's interest. There are periods, especially when delving into some of the voting and politicking, the changes of party affiliations, voting data, etc., that get somewhat tedious.

As a British reader, McPherson's book was an introduction to Civil War history for the purposes of coursework, and I found it superb. The initial three hundred pages provide a sweeping overview of the social and political pressures that led to war. There is then a hundred or so pages that vividly paints the attitudes of a nation faced with war, and finally the military narrative kicks in. McPherson writes with exceptional poise, balancing the chronological and thematic threads of his work to near perfection. Events in the west, east and political spheres of the war are detailed with the intricate

interconnections intact due to excellent arrangement. This narrative is well scattered with analysis and presentation of different viewpoints, as well as sections of broad thematic interest eg. POW camps. There are more than enough quotations, both from primary and secondary sources. As for bias, I happened to think the bravery of the Southern soldiers, and the pride of the Southern people, came across well. Some reviewer's comments lead me to believe they had read a different book to me! "nothern soldiers...had no love for slavery. They fought for the Union and against treason...whilst some Yanks treated contrabands with a degree of equity...the more typical response was indifference, contempt or cruelty." The reader is constantly reminded of the vein of racism of Northern society, ranging from the poorest immigrant fearing for his job, to the Democrat politicians who persisted in playing the 'race' card until the very end. The leftward shift of Lincoln is also noted.

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