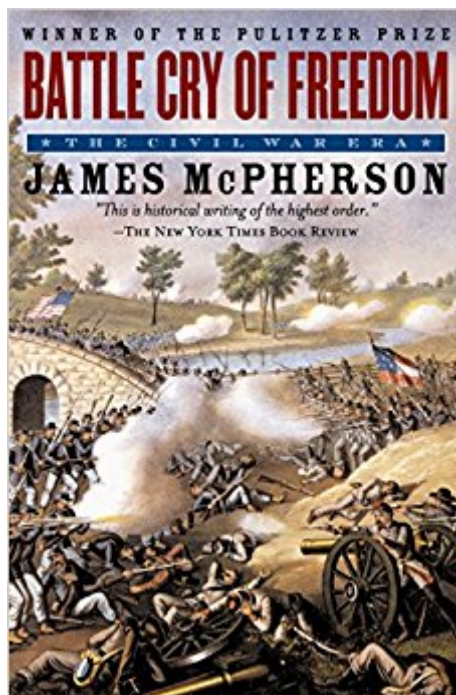




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Battle Cry Of Freedom: The Civil War Era (Oxford History Of The United States Book 6)



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

Great book. Justifiably famous short history of the Civil War and its era (only 900 pages!). It starts at colonial times, but gets serious around the time of Andrew Jackson. Manages to be scholarly while maintaining a narrative and even having time for modest campaign details and human interest.

Really excels however on the politics and economics and thinking of the time. For me, this was the perfect book on the subject, since I already know well the facts of the period. Some things stand out.

One is that for this period the weaving of the narrative with scholarship (as the author says) is the ideal format. If only because in this way it is possible to capture the most important of all factors – the thinking of the people and how it evolved over the decades and years and even months. This is especially critical for that most critical of people, Abraham Lincoln; he apparently changes his mind on fundamental issues from month to month. Here it is clear just how reasonable that is.

Another thing that stands out: there are few apologies here for the South as a civilization and the maniacal attachment to slavery (often under the guise of honor). The parallels to modern issues are incredible: oil companies more worried about a few percent change in value than the destruction of the planet; gun nuts all about ego and honor and freedom. Another: just how young America was then, and how noble and novel the experiment the government of, by, and for the people. But perhaps most of all there is the knowledge that for millions of Americans during these few years things happen to them – every day that would be the event of the year, if not the decade or lifetime.

This is an incredibly thorough account of the Civil War...the economics involved throughout its course including the growth of the 'new' US leading up through recessions etc; the politics of the times, again not just the Civil War period but prior and after...fascinating. The author does a nice job sharing the account often giving you a sense like you are there....experiencing it. My only 'knock' is at times it is a wee-bit too thorough and seems somewhat redundant, however I've just skimmed briefly and continued. Overall very happy to have selected this book on others' recommendations as 'the' Civil War book to read if you are reading one.

Battle Cry of Freedom has been described as the "finest single volume of the Civil War"(Washington Post Book World), and "Historical writing of the highest order"(NYT Book Review), and not to mention its garnering of the Pulitzer Prize. Upon completion of this massive, but compelling book I can add to its already numerous accolades. I had been waiting to read "Battle Cry" for quite awhile, but either school or life got in the way. Since this year marks the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Civil War i decided to take the plunge. McPherson throughout the more than 800 pages reconstructs the life and times of the Civil War period. In order to fully realize the Civil War and its impact and legacy in American history he starts not at Fort Sumter, or the election of Abraham Lincoln, but during the Mexican War in the 1840s. As the narrative breezes along the once foggy threat of Civil War in the 1840s becomes clearer as the Union begins to unravel. There are countless history's of the Civil War, both before McPherson and after him. Some merit mentioning while others are thrown on the pile of ever accumulating Civil War books. McPherson's "Battle Cry of Freedom" is one of the greatest on the Civil War. McPherson combs through the turbulent Civil War years and uncovers familiar territory such as the Battles of Shiloh, Antietam, and Gettysburg and their respective generals. Interspersed throughout this work are interesting nuggets of knowledge that go often unrecorded in the annals of history. Take for instance Britain and France's role throughout the war. More than just innocent bystanders these two countries actively watched the war many times going back and forth on the question of whether or not to help the Confederacy. These historical nuggets would be nothing if not for McPherson's impressive writing ability. Major characters like Lincoln, Grant, Lee, Sherman, and Davis are brought to life on the page thanks to McPherson's sparkling prose. Many history books are often labeled dry or dull due to the author's lack of writing ability. McPherson on the other hand weaves an impressive tale of war and peace that propels the reader to turn the page, all while keeping the narrative firmly grounded in its time period. It is a rare thing to find a book so important to history, while being such a pleasure to read. "Battle Cry of Freedom" succeeds on both counts.

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