

[PDF] For Cause And Comrades: Why Men Fought In The Civil War

James M. McPherson - pdf download free book

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Description:

Consider a war in which 25,000 soldiers are killed or wounded in a single battle, as they were at Gettysburg, or 16,000 in a single day, as at Antietam. The degree of suffering and hardship during the American Civil War has been well documented and analyzed in books and films from Margaret Mitchell's fictional *Gone with the Wind* to Bell Irvin Wiley's classic studies of Civil War soldiers, *The Life of Johnny Reb* and *The Life of Billy Yank*. All these sources agree on the brutality of the combat, but what motivated soldiers to continue fighting under such bitter conditions is the cause of some controversy. Until recently, the common stance has been that soldiers enlisted out of economic need and stayed out of loyalty to their comrades. The respected Civil War historian James M. McPherson weighs in with a different point of view in *For Cause and Comrades*.

Professor McPherson posits that the common rank-and-file soldiers did indeed hold political and ideological beliefs that prodded them to enlist and to fight. His research is based on letters and diaries from 1,076 Union and Confederate soldiers. These reveal many motivations, but always they lead back to duty, honor, and a cause worth dying for. *For Cause and Comrades* is a fascinating exploration of the 19th-century mind--a mind, it seems, that differs profoundly from our own. --This text refers to the edition.

From School Library Journal YA. This powerful commentary by today's premier Civil War historian is truly compelling in its depth and intensity. McPherson has extrapolated and quoted from over 25,000 letters and 249 diaries of more than 1000 Union and Confederate soldiers. The documentation is impressive and is successful in substantiating the thesis that many motivations were at work in the hearts of the Civil War fighting men; but on the whole, they were driven by noble ideals of honor; duty; and devotion to God, country, home, and family. Many of the letters tell of the loneliness, depression, discouragement, exhaustion, pain, hunger, and lack of sanitation. The written words of these young soldiers are simple in expression but poignant in emotion. Frequently, after quoting a touching passage written to a wife, mother, or other family member, McPherson comments that the aforementioned soldier was killed on the battlefield or died of disease. The book fills readers with a profound respect for the soldiers who struggled so valiantly for the cause in which they believed. Interesting appendixes on the geographical origins of soldiers and their occupations give students an illuminating view of both armies. Extensive footnotes enhance the value of the volume. Peggy Mooney, Pohick Public Library, Burke, VA
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