Book Review

What They Fought For

Name

Affiliation

Date

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“What they fought for” is a book based on the letters and diaries of the soldiers, who took part in the American civil war. The book has been authored by James M. McPherson, who is a civil war scholar. The book was published in the year 1994. The author has analyzed the point of view of the confederate, as well as the union soldiers for taking part in the deadly war. In his book “What they fought for,” Pulitzer Prize-winning author, McPherson has successfully explored the motives of the soldiers’ contribution to the war from both sides, which was the support of their ideologies of promoting or opposing slavery.

The book has been published by collecting the letters, journals, and diaries of the American civil war veterans and analyzing their point of view of supporting the war and sacrificing their lives for the sake of it. The most important issue covered in the book is the conflict on the promotion and opposition of slavery in the United States of America. The book has covered the theme quite effectively and has explored the reasons of southerners and the northerners as well, of not only supporting the war verbally but sacrificing their peaceful lives and entering the battlefield to defend their ideologies. The author has provided the analysis that the southern soldiers were trying to defend their culture and lifestyle by opposing the abolition of slavery. On the other hand, the northern soldiers were supporting the chants of humanity and abolition of slavery from the society to keep the northern and southern states united. They did not want to let the southern states establish their separate ideology and culture from the mainstream United States of America.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The most important thing about the author is that he is a war historian, who has specifically, written a number of other books on the American civil war. One of his most famous books is “Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era,” for which he also won the Pulitzer Prize. The books of this author shed light on his interest in the American civil war, as he tries to explore the impacts, reasons, and strategies of the two sides of the participants of war. The book is specifically for the audience who is interested in history, war as well as social and political aspects of the United States of America, during the civil war era.[[2]](#footnote-2)

The book fits the genre of history and war and the author has utilized the methodology of analysis and comparison to shed light on the motives and aspirations of the civil war soldiers of either side to take part in the war. The author’s approach is not biased and he has presented the analysis quite efficiently. The evidence used by the author in the book is primary in the way that it were the letters, journal entries of the soldiers talking about their experiences and motives, which the author has discussed in the book. Moreover, the book has been presented in quite an organized and well-structured manner. The evaluation of the book reveals that it is one of the best books on the topic of American civil war. The book does not have any weakness and its most remarkable strength is that it helps to know the view of the people who actually fought in the war, which had continued for four years.

“What they fought for” is one of the most impressive and interesting books about the American civil war. It helps to explore the motives of the soldiers of northern and southern sides. The author has described that the southern side was not in favor of the abolition of slavery from their states, while the northern side considered it against humanity and fought for it. The book has been presented quite effectively, due to which it has also won the Pulitzer Prize.

Bibliography

McPherson, James M. *What they fought for 1861-1865*. Louisiana State University Press, 1994.

1. McPherson, James M. *What they fought for 1861-1865*. Louisiana State University Press, 1994 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. McPherson, James M. *What they fought for 1861-1865*. Louisiana State University Press, 1994 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)