Academic Institution

‘WHAT THEY FOUGHT FOR’

Book Review

By

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What They Fought For

**Introduction**

The book ‘What They Fought For’ is written by James Mcpherson in1994. The book is divided into three chapters. It revolves around the notion of civil war. Although it does incorporate that why the war was fought, it is a comprehensive account of the soldiers who fought from the Confederate and Union States. The author infers the conclusions by a comprehensive study of personal accounts of soldiers. The book emphasizes the reasons which led the soldiers to the Civil War. Mcpherson’scuriosity to find what led the soldiers to war reflects if the soldiers were not well acquainted by their motivation for war, or what cause were they fighting for. Years after the Declaration of independence was achieved, it was held that the legacy of democracy shall be upheld either by succession or by the union of both the Northern and the Southern states.

**Thesis Statement**

The paper explores a comprehensive analysis of the book ‘What They Fought For’ by James Mcpherson.

**Discussion**

The book highlights that the prime notion that the southern were indulging the war was that they believed that North was a tyrant and suppressed the South. The civil war could end the tyrannical North. The Union soldiers believed that they were contributing to the holy war which could end in a revolutionary sense. The Confederation soldiers believed that they were fighting for the cause of freedom and liberty which was basic to the existence of the Americas. Both the soldiers according to their letters wanted to the war to end. In the end, the author highlights one of the causes of the war as the single cause of the Civil war, as slavery. Both the north and the south believed that war shall be over either in succession or union. North wanted slavery to be abolished as it was against the constitution. However, southern were of the view that Gods will to have slaves.

Hence the book aids in the understanding civil war, the ultimate notions of freedom and the revolutionalizing the course of history since then. The book is based upon evidence from the letters of the soldiers from the US military Institute in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, Huntington Library, San Marino and Duke University. These letters were thoroughly studied by James Mcpherson and then moulded in this inclusive study of the events of the wars and how they were comprehended by the soldiers.

The book is precise and an expression of passionate work towards his work. Although no historical account is accurate however in order to do justice to the history, valid and keen research is required, which can do justice to the people of the era

**Criticism**

The book is widely criticized for his emotional account, which loses the validity and authenticity of the work due to over exaggeration of events by the soldiers. The enthusiasm, the motivation or conversely the disheartenment of soldiers from the war can all lead to un-authenticity of the whole book. Critics also target the book for its ignorance of causes of civil war which had roots in the economic disparities, expansionism and an uneven balance of power between the Confederation and the union other than just slavery.

**Conclusion**

The book provides a comprehensive insight into the emotions and sentiments of the soldiers from the North and the South during the civil war. It also comprehends the motivations and the ignorance both sides felt in their war behaviors. The book also mirrors the ideological differences between the Confederation and the Union and the extents they were going to protect these ideologies. Although the account of the soldier s letter on which the book is firmly based upon may be true to its nature however the authenticity and the validity of the letter can also be prejudiced and encircled around emotional narratives of the soldiers. Lastly, only a single cause of civil war is discussed in comparison to many which led to the occurrence of war, which largely questions the credibility of the book.