



# Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction

*James M. McPherson , James K. Hogue*

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## Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction Details

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Author : James M. McPherson , James K. Hogue

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# From Reader Review Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction for online ebook

## Justin says

We used this as a text book in college for a history class called "Civil War and Reconstruction". It was a fantastic starting point for the class and the conversations that we had in telling the story of the Civil War.

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## Nate says

Pretty solid history. Long and detailed. It reads like a text book and weighs just as much too. A very matter of fact style (which I like)...I abhor historical fiction, fiction set in certain time periods is fine but history doesn't need dressing up or dumbing down. This is a good book for both Civil War and Reconstruction, that is if you want to read just one book on these topics...otherwise go to Eric Foner's "Reconstruction". That's the 'money'. I don't know the best purely Civil War book, besides this one...This also covers the Antebellum, and early 19th century industry. Great for research but not poetic.

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## Randall Harrison says

I picked this up at a college bookstore in 1983; I read it shortly after graduating from college; soon thereafter, Battle Cry of Freedom appeared which I devoured and enjoyed as well. It is less-scholarly and thus more appealing to a wider audience.

Ken Burns say Battle Cry of Freedom was the inspiration for his Civil War series. Can't say I learned anything from that wonderful series, which I enjoyed nonetheless, that McPherson didn't cover in either of these two books.

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## Poland says

4 stars. Battle Cry of Freedom is the longer more detailed book, and this is more of a textbook version of it with some chapters devoted to Reconstruction.

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## Mason Neil says

This is a textbook I read for class, but if I read it cover to cover why should I not add it to my Goodreads list?

As far as textbooks go, Ordeal by Fire was very readable. The chapters are constructed with enough narrative that you're able to follow along well with the events McPherson is describing, and eventually you find yourself constructing your own workable knowledge of the Civil War and Reconstruction.

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### **Suzanne says**

Jimmie Mac is a fabulous professor. But this is of course a textbook so I did fall asleep quite a bit. Good for Civil War buffs. I enjoyed reading the diaries of a bunch of Civil War women spies a little bit better.

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### **Carolyn says**

As part of our Humanities series this fall at the Library, We read this one, and learned that it is considered the definitive text about the Civil War. Written with so much information, in fact, that it is often divided in three parts, called Vol I, II or III. Our book group met to discuss the Volume II part. Much good information, and it is written in an easy to understand form. Includes some some maps, diagrams, and photos.

The author James McPherson has taught on the Civil War history since the 1960s. Since he carries the name of a Civil War era general, I wondered if he is a descendant of that man. If you must read about the un Civil War of American history, then read McPherson and Catton.

For the amount of lives lost, I had to consider whether I could give those five stars, but I think the writing deserves them, if not the subject matter.

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### **Heather says**

This book is incredible. Outstanding background on the history leading into the civil war, the war itself, and reconstruction. It is done in a more traditional style, i.e. less journalistic in nature than many of today's history books. I would recommend it to anyone wanting detailed, yet approachable material on the time period.

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### **Michael says**

I really enjoyed Battle Cry for Freedom until I read McPherson's book on the causes and results of the Civil War. This is probably my favorite general history on the Civil War. His explanation of the economic aspects and separation is superb.

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### **Colin says**

Ordeal by Fire was the last of my 4000-page foray into American Civil War history in celebration of its sesquicentennial. It was also the most "textbook-y," which I suppose makes sense because it actually was the textbook for my Civil War history class in college. Still, I had hoped it would be a little more like Battle Cry of Freedom, but was so much drier.

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## Joe N. says

This was a very well researched book for what was included. This was the "textbook" for my 4730 History class. I have never liked textbooks so this one was nice because it is in normal book form. Although like most history books that cover the Civil War it failed to include many of the historical facts leading up to the firing upon Fort Sumter by the south. To fill in this gap I would recommend "A Century of War" by John V. Denson.

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## Mark Bowles says

A. Synopsis: This is a synthesis of the Civil War and Reconstruction. Three tenants underlie his argument.

(1) The War and Reconstruction are best explained as important stages in America's modernization. (2) The locus of America's modernizing impulse lay in New England. (3) The Republican party became the political expression of this modernization impulse. The forces of modernization spread South and West. The Republicans achieved what they hoped to in political and economic realms, and more than most of them anticipated in their racial policy. Only the last 1/5 of the book covers Reconstruction (and that is the part that the following notes apply)

B. The problems of peace

1. The aftermath of war: The South was an area of destruction and desolation after the war. 200,000 Yankee troops remained in the South to keep order under martial law.

a) Attitudes of Southern whites: The reports of the attitude of the Southern whites were contradictory--defiance toward Yankees and reports of submission.

b) Attitudes of Northern whites: The Northern whites could not agree on the terms they wanted to impose on the South.

2. Presidential Reconstruction, 1865: Johnson clashes with the Radicals in 2 critical ways. (1) He was a Jacksonian and thus hostile to the use of government to promote economic development. (2) Johnson was hostile to the Radicals view of the Freedmen in society. He issued 2 proclamation on 29 May 1865. (1) Amnesty and restoration of all property (except slaves) to those who would take an oath of allegiance to the union. Exceptions included high-ranking officials. (2) Named a provisional governor for North Carolina and directed him to call an election of delegates to frame a new state constitution. He issued similar proclamations for 6 other Southern states.

a) Republican responses to Presidential Reconstruction: Most supported it but abolitionists and Radicals immediately criticized it. Other Republicans became discouraged with his stance on suffrage.

b) The black suffrage issue in the North: The legislatures of Connecticut, Wisconsin, and Minnesota placed on the ballot an amendment to enfranchise the few blacks in the states. Democrats mounted an anti-suffrage campaign. The ballots were overturned by a narrow margin. Thus, moderate Republicans were unwilling to force a showdown on this issue with the President.

c) Revival of Southern defiance: But, a growing number of assaults on freedmen in the South began to convince the moderates that Johnson's plan was not working. Ex-Confederates were beginning to hold office again.

d) Johnson and the South: In September 1865 Johnson began to speak of forgiveness for the acts of treason. He gave out 13,500 pardons out of 15,000 that were requested.

3. Land and labor in the post-war South: Some of the freed slaves stayed on the plantations to work for wages. Others left to find family, or just to get away. This created a labor shortage. Many blacks were forced

to sign one year work contracts.

a) The issue of land: The slaves wanted their own land. But, this did not happen as the land was returned to the Confederates. Land reform did not become a part of Reconstruction. Emphasis was placed on the free-labor ideology than envisaged upward mobility through hard work, and Protestant ethic values. This was an unattainable goal.

b) The 'labor question' and the Freedmen's Bureau: Once it was clear that not land would be given the slaves, the FB tried to patch new relationships between slaves and plantation owners. They tried to regulate wages to keep the Freedmen from being exploited. Southern whites denounced the Bureau

c) Black Codes: The FB also suspended these oppressive codes the Southern states adopted in 1865-66. These codes related to vagrancy, labor, etc and created a virtual new slavery.

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### **Richard Garcia says**

I have a BA in world history and a MA in American History and i have yet to find a Civil War book as good as Ordeal by Fire. If you believe you know of a better American Civil War book, then please let me know.

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### **Fergie says**

After reading a goodreads friend's review of another McPherson book, I remembered I had read Ordeal By Fire during my undergrad studies at the University of Scranton. This is the definitive text on the Civil War (I read this book over the span of a semester when I took a course entitled "Civil War & Reconstruction"). McPherson writes clearly and concisely without glossing over any key facts or points. After all these years, I still have this book on my bookshelf.

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### **Joey Titus says**

Ordeal by Fire is a great book about the strategies and battles of the Civil War. It shows throughout the civil war, everything from view of the North and the South and the breakdown of the war. It is a very interesting book and I would recommend it to anyone into the Civil War as much as I am. Spoiler: The North wins the war!

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