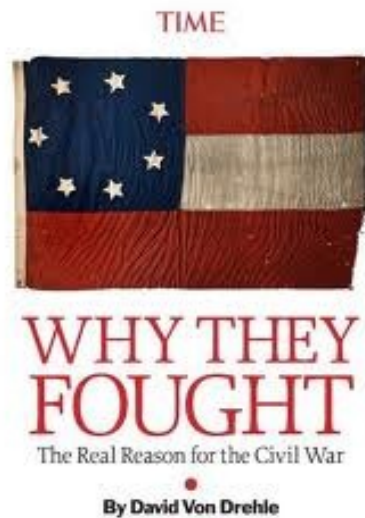




Why They Fought: The Real Reason for the Civil War

David von Drehle

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History textbooks say that the Civil War began with the shelling of Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861. What followed is the American epic, written in blue and gray and gore. So how is that 150 years later, we are still fighting over why the war was fought? Few historical questions stir up as much passionate confusion as that one—even though scholars consider it a settled question. In this ebook, veteran TIME writer, David Von Drehle explores process of forgetting, denying, and rediscovering the meaning of the Civil War.

Why They Fought: The Real Reason for the Civil War Details

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From Reader Review Why They Fought: The Real Reason for the Civil War for online ebook

Kristin says

Not terribly gripping, but easy to read.

Teri says

A good reminder of the origins of slavery and the reason behind the Civil War.

Jean says

Very interesting, albeit narrow perspective of the American Civil War focusing on the point of view that slavery was the primary factor. Highly recommend this worthwhile read, a composition that can be completed in about two hours.

Jennifer says

Very interesting look at the Civil War; not the typical take. I really enjoy the Kindle Singles series that this is a part of; I've always been a fan of long form articles and now I can take them with me.

Jim says

Kindle EBook so only about 25 pages long.

A good synopsis of the historiography of the Civil War's place in our collective memory. The author does a nice job summarizing the current consensus of scholars as to its catalyst (slavery), as well as the history of how a Southern "lost cause" narrative gained a foothold not only with a reconstruction weary public, but with scholars - both north and south - which lasted into the mid-twentieth century.

Though no serious student of this era would now claim the war was about anything other than slavery (as opposed to abolition), there remains a sector of the population who wish to retain a belief in the "lost cause" myth. The author does a good job of describing this dissonance.

No original research really. Written in a journalistic style. Well worth an hour of your time!

Marvin says

I'm really getting to like these Kindle Singles. I've read about three and they are all brief books that expertly examine their subjects in a no-frills but interesting way. And at 2 to 3 dollars a pop the price is right.

Why They Fought is by Times journalist David von Drehle. He addresses the troubling issue regarding why the American Civil War was fought. It is troubling because of the many revisionist histories that wish to disguise the primary cause: Slavery. This issue is the conservative right's political correct issue to the point that Texas attempted to remove the word slavery from its textbooks and Southern politicians still attempt to defend the Confederate flag, a symbol that is as offensive to some Americans as the swastika. He addresses various myths such as the myth that the war was over state rights (only in the sense that the right the states were fighting for was the right to own slaves), that slavery was not an important part of the economy of the South, and that slave ownership was only a Southern problem. His research is quite amazing for such a small book. This book is the clear thinking tome we need, for as the author states, if we are ever to solve our problems as a country we need to address them with honesty.

Rob McFarren says

good essay

David Bradley says

This short book (I read it in two hours, distracted while my fellow students were giving some painfully boring presentations in class) presents the argument that the South in the American Civil War was motivated primarily by a desire to extend and maintain slavery. My main criticism is that the author relied on public documents: public speeches and documents made by Southern and Northern political leaders. I would argue that these sources fail to present a true picture of the real reason the South went to war against the North. More likely, the Southern leaders realized that their business interests were threatened in several ways, and one of which was the threat against slavery. Racism -- the fear of miscegenation, etc. -- played a part in the public support for the war in the South, and a desire of poor Whites in the South to be higher in the social ladder than slaves also played a role.

This book gets 4 stars because it provides a clear, succinct explanation of the "slavery caused the War" argument, the best presentation of the evidence I've seen considering the length. I recommend it.

Jim Welsh says

I have often wondered why the post Civil War narrative was so pro-Southern. This is a very readable and succinct account of how history can be manipulated.

Bekah Porter-Sandy says

If you think David von Drehle's book is irrelevant, please consider these two anecdotes witnessed by me, a new resident to the South, only a few mere weeks ago.

1) When touring Georgia's State Capitol, I was horrified when the government-paid tour guide pointed to a

large picture of Alexander Stephens, who was governor of Georgia at the outbreak of the Civil War and the eventual vice president of the Confederacy, and told the group of elementary students also on the tour that Mr. Stephens "didn't like the North telling him what to do, so he decided to fight to protect the good people of Georgia." She went on to talk about the War of Northern Aggression like it was fact.

2) The next day, I toured a nearby plantation-turned-historical-landmark. There was a video, several reading materials and a state park employee acting as a guide, and not ONE of these avenues mentioned the slaves that ran the plantation. Once, on the video, it was said that Sherman burned the plantation, and that the plantation owner lost "his property." When I asked the state park employee how the plantation owner treated his slaves, she crinkled her nose in disgust and avoided the conversation.

So, when Time ran a condensed version of David von Drehle's book as its cover story to mark the 150th anniversary of the start of the Civil War, I found the topic exceptionally intriguing.

I've lived in the South a mere matter of months, and I've been left with no doubt that the reasons America fought this war are clouded to the people who live in the areas where the war hurt most.

This book gave me the perspective I desperately need before I go on anymore local sightseeing adventures =D

Stephen Kiger says

Great short read and perspective on the Civil War - good reminder - good recommendation
