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**Michael Fellman, Lesley J. Gordon, Daniel E. Sutherland**. *This Terrible War: The Civil War and its Aftermath.* New York: Longman, 2003. xvi + 496 pp. $63.80 (paper), ISBN 978-0-321-05285-8.

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**Published on** H-CivWar (May, 2005)

**A Balanced Approach**

This book is the result of a challenge from the authors' students to produce a better textbook about the Civil War Era (p. xiii). In meeting that challenge, the authors have produced a very balanced and engaging text that goes well beyond the traditional, leader-based and eastern focused approaches to presenting the war. Examining the years between 1815 and 1896, *This Terrible War* addresses not only wartime issues, but the social, political, and economic aspects of the period as well.

Especially helpful is the emphasis the authors place on post-1848 expansion and its relation to slavery as a critical factor in the coming of war. The vast gains of the Oregon Territory and the half-million square miles acquired in the war with Mexico created a great stress on Americans and their government, as everyone "wanted to know if slavery would be permitted there" (p. 40). The failures of the nation to effectively deal with this question combined with the dangerous expansion of the slavery issue into a moral and ethical debate eventually shattered the traditional issues of the two-party system and replaced them with new local and sectional alliances (p. 45). The significance of these territorial and expansion questions cannot be overstated and is often understated in many works.

Another area of the Civil War traditionally marginalized is the western campaigns. In *This Terrible War*, the authors have made great efforts to incorporate the significance of this vast and highly contested theater into the text. Of course, the major battles of the western theater, such as Forts Henry and Donaldson, Shiloh, Chattanooga, and Vicksburg are highlighted for their critical role in leading to the possession of the West's most "valuable assets," its rivers (p. 115). But the authors also pay homage to lesser known, but regionally significant, battles of the far west such as Val Verde, Apache and Glorieta Passes, and Picacho Pass. Although certainly these battles did not reach the scope or size of the battles in the east, they were instrumental, nevertheless, in preventing the South from adding the manpower and resources of the New Mexico, Utah, and Colorado territories to its cause (p. 118). Along similar lines, the authors do the same for the Trans-Mississippi theater of Missouri, Arkansas, and the Indian Territory, as well as engaging in a detailed discussion of the many forms of guerrilla warfare that both sides conducted.

One last area that I want to highlight in this book is the extensive bibliography and primary document sections. The bibliography is extremely user-friendly due to its high degree of organization. Separated into three main categories corresponding to the key periods addressed in the book–the antebellum years, the war itself, and Reconstruction–it is then further broken down into subtopics ranging from slavery and Southern politics to redeemers and war and memory. This greatly assists any undergraduate in obtaining sources for term papers. The primary document section is also a great benefit as it includes twenty-five of the most critical sources surrounding the era. Ranging from the Compromise of 1850 and John Brown's last speech to the Reconstruction Amendments and Black Codes of Mississippi, these documents enhance and bring life to the key issues presented in the text.

*This Terrible War* should be read and considered by anyone who is currently teaching or planning to teach an undergraduate American Civil War course. Additionally, Civil War enthusiasts will also find it useful. Its fair and balanced approach combined with its engaging style and prose will make it a valuable resource and asset for any type of instruction or pleasure reading. I do not hesitate to give this work my highest recommendation.

The only fault of this book is the maps and charts that are presented to support the narrative. Ironically, one of the faults the authors attribute to other Civil War texts is the confusing nature of their maps (p. xiii). Unfortunately, the authors have shifted too far in the opposite direction. Not only are the maps in black and white, they

are also overly simplistic and generally do not serve to enhance the story provided in the text. To be fair, however, the numerous pictures and illustrations from the period are quite useful and appealing. Overall, this is an excellent work that I am sure I will reference time and again.

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**Citation**: Joel Miller. Review of Fellman, Michael; Gordon, Lesley J.; Sutherland, Daniel E., *This Terrible War: The Civil War and its Aftermath*. H-CivWar, H-Net Reviews. May, 2005.
**URL**: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=10562

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