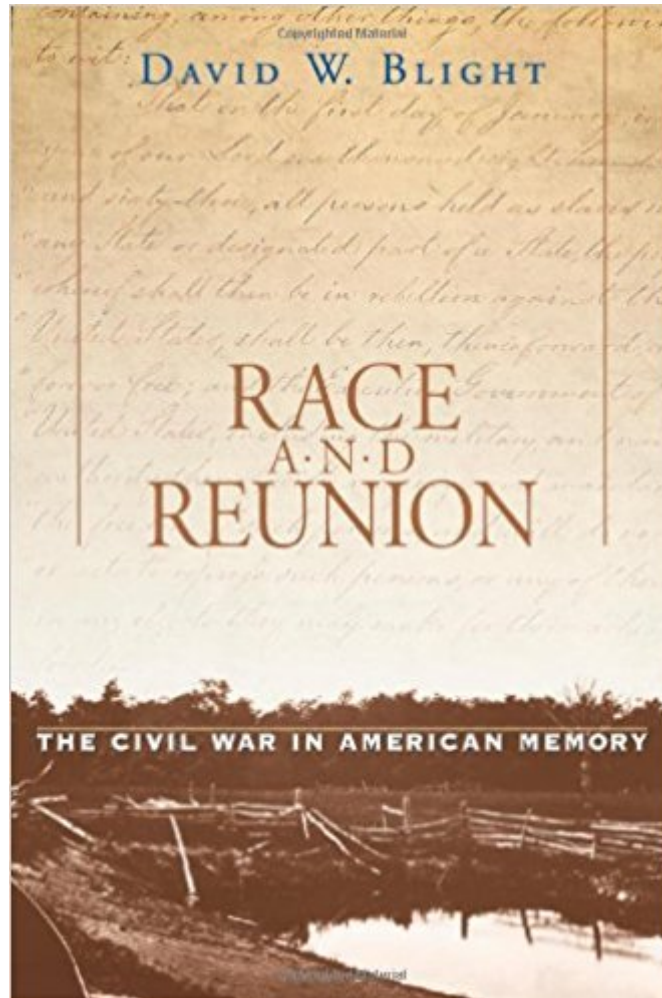


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# Race And Reunion: The Civil War In American Memory



## Synopsis

No historical event has left as deep an imprint on America's collective memory as the Civil War. In the war's aftermath, Americans had to embrace and cast off a traumatic past. David Blight explores the perilous path of remembering and forgetting, and reveals its tragic costs to race relations and America's national reunion. In 1865, confronted with a ravaged landscape and a torn America, the North and South began a slow and painful process of reconciliation. The ensuing decades witnessed the triumph of a culture of reunion, which downplayed sectional division and emphasized the heroics of a battle between noble men of the Blue and the Gray. Nearly lost in national culture were the moral crusades over slavery that ignited the war, the presence and participation of African Americans throughout the war, and the promise of emancipation that emerged from the war. *Race and Reunion* is a history of how the unity of white America was purchased through the increasing segregation of black and white memory of the Civil War. Blight delves deeply into the shifting meanings of death and sacrifice, Reconstruction, the romanticized South of literature, soldiers' reminiscences of battle, the idea of the Lost Cause, and the ritual of Memorial Day. He resurrects the variety of African-American voices and memories of the war and the efforts to preserve the emancipationist legacy in the midst of a culture built on its denial. Blight's sweeping narrative of triumph and tragedy, romance and realism, is a compelling tale of the politics of memory, of how a nation healed from civil war without justice. By the early twentieth century, the problems of race and reunion were locked in mutual dependence, a painful legacy that continues to haunt us today.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Almost all the dominant views of the Civil War and its aftermath, including Reconstruction and "reunion," prevalent in this country until the coming of the civil rights movement, were the direct result of an extensive Southern propaganda war, argues Blight (Amherst College professor of history and black studies), remnants of which are still flourishing in various racist subcultures. As W.E.B. Du Bois noted a century ago, shortly after the war, the North was tacitly willing to accept the South's representation of the conflict in exchange for an opening of new economic frontiers. Blight sets out to prove this thesis, surveying a mass of information (the end notes run to almost 100 pages) clearly and synthetically, detailing the mechanics of mythmaking: how the rebels were recast as not actually rebelling, how the South had been unjustly invaded, and how, most fabulously of all, the South had fought to end slavery which had been imposed upon it by the North. His argument that this "memory war" was conducted on a conscious level is supported by the Reconstruction-era evidence of protest, by blacks and whites alike, that he unearths. Yet these voices failed to dissuade the vast majority of Americans both North and South who internalized some version of the story. This book effectively traces both the growth and development of what became, by the turn of the 20th century and the debut of *The Birth of a Nation*, the dominant racist representation of the Civil War. A major work of American history, this volume's documentation of the active and exceedingly articulate voices of protest against this inaccurate and unjust imagining of history is just one of its accomplishments. (Feb. 19) Forecast: This book will be the standard for how public perceptions of the Civil War were formed and propagated in a manner directly analogous to today's doublespeak and spin control. It will be a regular on course syllabi, and will be glowingly reviewed, but the wealth and diversity of sources may keep some general readers away. Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The year 1913 saw two separate ceremonies commemorating great events 50 years previously: elderly Union and Confederate veterans shook hands at the Gettysburg battlefield, and W.E.B. DuBois staged an elaborate "National Emancipation Exposition." Together they struck discordant chords of memory about the Civil War, which Blight examines in this incisive discussion of how the conflict was popularly remembered in the half-century following Appomattox. He closely examines the types of memorializations of the war, such as the creation and observance of Memorial Day, the erection of statues to Robert E. Lee and Robert Gould Shaw, soldiers' reunions, soldiers' memoirs, popular literature, and anniversary orations by such figures as Frederick Douglass. Within these modes of expression Blight recounts the strong tide in the post-war years for "reunion on Southern

terms," politically by the overthrow of the Republican Reconstruction governments in the South, and ideologically in "Lost Cause" writings justifying secession and slavery. Freed blacks suffered the consequence of the ascendance of a sentimental view of the war and amnesia about its central issue. Gilbert TaylorCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A little disjointed and rather long, but interesting consideration of the reflections on the importance of racial issues following the U.S. Civil War. A beginning study of people's impressions of the war and how this resonates with people's consciousness.

Very clear and concise with the reflections of the Civil War. This is a must read for those who want the best insight about the war and race issues.

Interesting approach to a subject about which not enough is known.

Outstanding explanation of the 50 years after the Civil War and how white Southerners lost the war, but triumphed over the freed black people despite their military loss. Well-researched without being dry or dull. Helped to understand why the Civil Rights movement of the 60s was required 100 years after Appomattox.

Illuminating and relevant

Professor Blight has tremendous insight into the choices made between "healing" and "justice" that still haunt us today. If you want to better understand the cultural reasons for the racial problems in our society today, you should read this book.

An amazing book.

Excellent book for understanding the differing perspectives on the legacy of the Civil War and how they developed.

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