



This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War (Vintage Civil War Library)

By Drew Gilpin Faust

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More than 600,000 soldiers lost their lives in the American Civil War. An equivalent proportion of today's population would be six million. In *This Republic of Suffering*, Drew Gilpin Faust reveals the ways that death on such a scale changed not only individual lives but the life of the nation, describing how the survivors managed on a practical level and how a deeply religious culture struggled to reconcile the unprecedented carnage with its belief in a benevolent God. Throughout, the voices of soldiers and their families, of statesmen, generals, preachers, poets, surgeons, nurses, northerners and southerners come together to give us a vivid understanding of the Civil War's most fundamental and widely shared reality.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Battle is the dramatic centerpiece of Civil War history; this penetrating study looks instead at the somber aftermath. Historian Faust (*Mothers of Invention*) notes that the Civil War introduced America to death on an unprecedented scale and of an unnatural kind—grisly, random and often ending in an unmarked grave far from home. She surveys the many ways the Civil War generation coped with the trauma: the concept of the Good Death—conscious, composed and at peace with God; the rise of the embalming industry; the sad attempts of the bereaved to get confirmation of a soldier's death, sometimes years after war's end; the swelling national movement to recover soldiers' remains and give them decent burials; the intellectual quest to find meaning—or its absence—in the war's carnage. In the process, she contends, the nation invented the modern culture of reverence for military death and used the fallen to elaborate its new concern for individual rights. Faust exhumes a wealth of material—condolence letters, funeral sermons, ads for mourning dresses, poems and stories from Civil War-era writers—to flesh out her lucid account. The result is an insightful, often moving portrait of a people torn by grief. Photos. (*Jan. 10*)

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From Bookmarks Magazine

Those who fret over the state of American universities will embrace this history by Drew Gilpin Faust. Academics appreciate how Faust explains so many social and cultural changes by recentering the story of the war on its massive toll in lives: the estimated 2 percent who died, or 620,000, would be equivalent to 6 million today. She also breaks new ground by reexamining the relationship of the war to modern institutions like the welfare state. Yet Faust constructs *This Republic of Suffering* in a way that will appeal to every reader—from the Civil War buff to the casual nonfiction reader. Some critics were a little queasy about the book's level of detail, both in describing death and the lives of its victims. But as more than one reviewer pointed out, for a nation at war, such writing and such reading are a duty.

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Review

“Extraordinary . . . profoundly moving.” —Geoffrey C. Ward, *The New York Times Book Review*

“**This Republic of Suffering** is one of those groundbreaking histories in which a crucial piece of the past, previously overlooked or misunderstood, suddenly clicks into focus.” —*Newsweek*

“A shattering history of the war, focusing exclusively on death and dying—how Americans prepared for death, imagined it, risked it, endured it and worked to understand it.” —*Los Angeles Times Book Review*

“Faust yanks aside the usual veil of history to look narrowly at life's intimate level for new perspectives from the past. She focuses on ordinary lives under extreme duress, which makes for compelling reading.” —*USA Today*

“Faust is particularly qualified to identify and explain the complex social and political implications of the changing nature of death as America’s internecine conflict attained its full dimensions.” —Ian Garrick Mason, *San Francisco Chronicle*

“Faust excels in explaining the era’s violent rhetoric and what went on in people’s heads.” —David Waldstreicher, *The Boston Globe*

“The beauty and originality of Faust’s book is that it shows how thoroughly the work of mourning became the business of capitalism, merchandised throughout a society.” —Adam Gopnik, *The New Yorker*

“Fascinating, innovative . . . Faust returns to the task of stripping from war any lingering romanticism, nobility or social purpose.” —Eric Foner, *The Nation*

“Eloquent and imaginative, Ms. Faust’s book takes a grim topic—how America coped with the massive death toll from the Civil War—and makes it fresh and exciting. . . . [A] widely and justly praised scholarly history.” —Adam Begley, *New York Observer*

“This Republic of Suffering is a harrowing but fascinating read.” —Marjorie Kehe, *The Christian Science Monitor*

“If you read only one book on the Civil War this year, make it this one.” —Kevin M. Levin, *American History*

“Having always kept the war in her own scholarly sights, Faust offers a compelling reassertion of its basic importance in society and politics alike.” —Richard Wrightman Fox, *Slate*

“[An] astonishing new book.” —Adam Kirsch, *The New York Sun*

“A moving work of social history, detailing how the Civil War changed perceptions and behaviors about death. . . . An illuminating study.” —*Kirkus*

“Penetrating . . . Faust exhumes a wealth of material . . . to flesh out her lucid account. The result is an

insightful, often moving portrait of a people torn by grief.” —*Publishers Weekly*

“No other generation of Americans has encountered death on the scale of the Civil War generation. **This Republic of Suffering** is the first study of how people in both North and South coped with this uniquely devastating experience. How did they mourn the dead, honor their sacrifice, commemorate their memory, and help their families? Drew Gilpin Faust’s powerful and moving answers to these questions provide an important new dimension to our understanding of the Civil War.”

—James M. McPherson, author of **This Mighty Scourge: Perspectives on the Civil War**

“During the Civil War, death reached into the world of the living in ways unknown to Americans before or since. Drew Gilpin Faust follows the carnage in all its aspects, on and off the battlefield. Timely, poignant, and profound, **This Republic of Suffering** does the real work of history, taking us beyond the statistics until we see the faces of the fallen and understand what it was to live amid such loss and pain.”

—Tony Horowitz, **Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War**

“Drew Gilpin Faust has used her analytical and descriptive gifts to explore how men and women of the Civil War generation came to terms with the conflict’s staggering human toll. Everyone who reads this book will come away with a far better understanding of why the war profoundly affected those who lived through it.”

—Gary W. Gallagher, author of **The Confederate War**

“Drew Faust’s brilliant new book, **This Republic of Suffering**, builds profoundly from the opening discussion of the Christian ideal of the good death to the last harrowing chapters on the exhumation, partial identification, reburial and counting of the Union dead. In the end one can only conclude, as the author does, that the meaning of the Civil War lies in death itself: in its scale, relentlessness, and enduring cultural effects. This is a powerful and moving book about our nation’s defining historical encounter with the universal human experience of death.”

—Stephanie McCurry, author of **Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the political culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country**

“Whitman was wrong; the real war did get into the books. This is a wise, informed, troubling book. **This Republic of Suffering** demolishes sentimentalism for the Civil War in a masterpiece of research, realism, and originality.”

—David W. Blight, author of **Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory**

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Elmer August:

Have you spare time to get a day? What do you do when you have a lot more or little spare time? That's why, you can choose the suitable activity to get spend your time. Any person spent all their spare time to take a walk, shopping, or went to the actual Mall. How about open as well as read a book entitled This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War (Vintage Civil War Library)? Maybe it is to become best activity for you. You already know beside you can spend your time with your favorite's book, you can more intelligent than before. Do you agree with its opinion or you have additional opinion?

Debra Shortt:

Book is to be different for each grade. Book for children until eventually adult are different content. We all know that that book is very important for us. The book This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War (Vintage Civil War Library) seemed to be making you to know about other expertise and of course you can take more information. It is extremely advantages for you. The reserve This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War (Vintage Civil War Library) is not only giving you a lot more new information but also to get your friend when you experience bored. You can spend your spend time to read your reserve. Try to make relationship with all the book This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War (Vintage Civil War Library). You never really feel lose out for everything when you read some books.

April Baker:

As people who live in the actual modest era should be up-date about what going on or info even knowledge to make them keep up with the era which can be always change and progress. Some of you maybe may update themselves by examining books. It is a good choice for you personally but the problems coming to a person is you don't know what kind you should start with. This This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War (Vintage Civil War Library) is our recommendation to help you keep up with the world. Why, since this book serves what you want and need in this era.

Pauline Browne:

Reading a reserve tends to be new life style on this era globalization. With studying you can get a lot of information that could give you benefit in your life. Using book everyone in this world can easily share their idea. Books can also inspire a lot of people. A great deal of author can inspire their own reader with their story as well as their experience. Not only situation that share in the books. But also they write about the knowledge about something that you need illustration. How to get the good score toefl, or how to teach your children, there are many kinds of book that you can get now. The authors these days always try to improve their expertise in writing, they also doing some investigation before they write to the book. One of them is this This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War (Vintage Civil War Library).

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