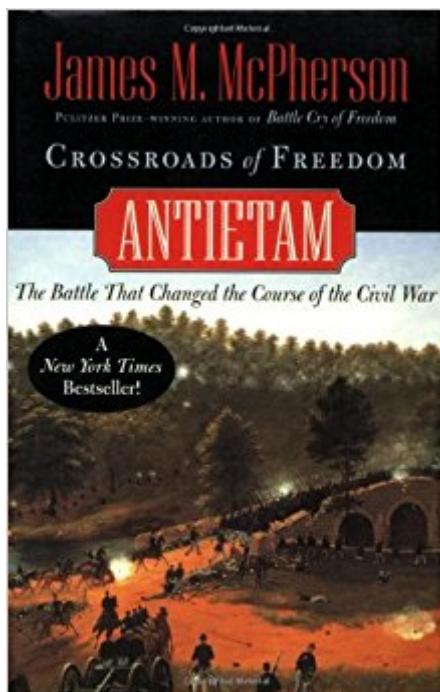


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Crossroads Of Freedom: Antietam (Pivotal Moments In American History)



Synopsis

The Battle of Antietam, fought on September 17, 1862, was the bloodiest single day in American history, with more than 6,000 soldiers killed--four times the number lost on D-Day, and twice the number killed in the September 11th terrorist attacks. In *Crossroads of Freedom*, America's most eminent Civil War historian, James M. McPherson, paints a masterful account of this pivotal battle, the events that led up to it, and its aftermath. As McPherson shows, by September 1862 the survival of the United States was in doubt. The Union had suffered a string of defeats, and Robert E. Lee's army was in Maryland, poised to threaten Washington. The British government was openly talking of recognizing the Confederacy and brokering a peace between North and South. Northern armies and voters were demoralized. And Lincoln had shelved his proposed edict of emancipation months before, waiting for a victory that had not come--that some thought would never come. Both Confederate and Union troops knew the war was at a crossroads, that they were marching toward a decisive battle. It came along the ridges and in the woods and cornfields between Antietam Creek and the Potomac River. Valor, misjudgment, and astonishing coincidence all played a role in the outcome. McPherson vividly describes a day of savage fighting in locales that became forever famous--The Cornfield, the Dunkard Church, the West Woods, and Bloody Lane. Lee's battered army escaped to fight another day, but Antietam was a critical victory for the Union. It restored morale in the North and kept Lincoln's party in control of Congress. It crushed Confederate hopes of British intervention. And it freed Lincoln to deliver the Emancipation Proclamation, which instantly changed the character of the war. McPherson brilliantly weaves these strands of diplomatic, political, and military history into a compact, swift-moving narrative that shows why America's bloodiest day is, indeed, a turning point in our history.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

On September 17, 1862, the Army of the Potomac commanded by General George B. McClellan met the Army of Northern Virginia commanded by Robert E. Lee in the fields near Sharpsburg, Maryland. The result was the Battle of Antietam, the bloodiest day in American History and a pivotal moment of the Civil War. The battle ended the Confederacy's first invasion of the North and gave President Lincoln the opportunity to issue the Emancipation Proclamation. In his short study, "Crossroads of Freedom" Professor McPherson weaves together many strands in discussing the significance of the battle. First, he places the battle against the backdrop of the prior military course of the war, both in the Eastern and the Western Theatres. He points out how Union successes in the early part of 1862 were followed by serious defeats in the Seven Days Battle and Second Manassas with the tide of the war turning to the Confederacy. Although the South would again invade the North culminating in the Battle of Gettysburg, Antietam was a clear check to Southern momentum. It gave the Union the courage, will and political force to fight on. Second, Professor McPherson emphasizes the role of the European powers -- England and France -- in the Civil War. These nations followed events in America closely and were economically at risk from the loss of Southern cotton for their textile mills. They likely would have recognized the Confederacy if the results of the first invasion of the North had favored the Confederacy. Third, and probably most importantly to his theme, Professor McPherson discusses the role of Antietam in the changing character of the Civil War. President Lincoln was opposed to slavery, but his initial war aims did not include freeing the slaves. Rather he wished to hold the Union together.

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