

Playgrounds And Battlegrounds: Children In The North Performed Their Part For The War Effort

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Review

PLAYGROUNDS AND BATTLEGROUNDS

Children in the North performed their part for the war effort

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Marten, James *Lessons of War: The Civil War in Children's Magazines*. SR Books, ISBN 842026541

Lessons of War is a must read for anyone with even the slightest inclination to understand and appreciate our history. Too often, we forget that while the politicians and armies were maneuvering, real battles were a daily part of home-front life. To survive, both mentally and physically, the families left behind worked very hard within and outside the circle of their address. The Civil War was taking place on American soil -- for some, in their back yard. The reality of the conflict could not be put out of mind. The reminders were everywhere.

James Marten has honored us with unique research that brings, to one volume, the special, necessary attention given to children by writers and publishers during the years of the war. While reading this logical and complete presentation, the reader is taken by not only the literature presented to the children, but also the reaction and heroics that resulted.

The strengths learned and character practiced by children at home was in all areas of our country a foundation for the enormous growth of the United States that followed 1865.

The sum and substance of the work can be best described by a soldier's reminder to his son: "Fate has ordained that we should be actors in this dark chapter of the World's history -- you and I -- Ma' and sister . . . perhaps the little ones -- all are actors -- all have some part to perform."

The children, indeed, had new parts to perform on a stage quite unfamiliar. Their roles were guided by family training, neighbors, their church, and by the

publications available to them. The war was not glamorous for either side, and the harsh realities were not hidden from their eyes and developing minds.

Lessons of War takes the reader on a sound path through subject matter significant to Civil War-era children. We are introduced to the writers and publications of the time. Through these works, we are able to appreciate subjects such as: patriotism; perseverance; loss; sacrifice; relationships with soldiers (be they family, friends, or strangers); mourning; the war effort; and, ultimately, celebrating the end of the conflict. The work is, itself, a celebration and serves as a modern reference.

Today's technology has the power to bring all aspects of our country and the world to a personal computer screen. It cannot, however, give us the needed incentive to become involved and, perhaps, inspire our children to react and take a stand. Adult readers of **Lessons of War** will be amazed. Children will be encouraged.

George McNamara is editor and publisher of The Children's Chronicle and the Dr. Samuel A. Mudd Newsletter.