



# Beyond the Battlefield: Race, Memory, and the American Civil War

*David Blight*

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During the past decade and a half, scholars have increasingly addressed the relationship of history and memory. Among American historians, David W. Blight has been a pioneer in the field of memory studies, especially on the problems of slavery, race, and the Civil War. In this collection of essays, Blight examines the meanings embedded in the causes, course, and consequences of the Civil War, the nature of changing approaches to African American history, and the significance of race in the ways Americans, North and South, black and white, developed historical memories of the nation's most divisive event.

The book as a whole demonstrates several ways to probe the history of memory, to understand how and why groups of Americans have constructed versions of the past in the service of contemporary social needs. Topics range from the writing and thought of Frederick Douglass and W.E.B. Du Bois to a comparison of Abraham Lincoln and Douglass on the level of language and memory. The volume also includes a compelling study of the values of a single Union soldier, an analysis of Ken Burns's PBS series *The Civil War*, and a retrospective treatment of the distinguished African American historian Nathan I. Huggins.

Taken together, these lucidly written pieces offer a thoroughgoing assessment of the stakes of Civil War memory and their consequences for American race relations. *Beyond the Battlefield* demonstrates not only why we should preserve and study our Civil War battlefields, but also why we should lift our vision above those landscapes and ponder all the unfinished questions of healing and justice, of racial harmony and disharmony, that still bedevil our society and our historical imagination.

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