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*Maurice Isserman, Michael Kazin*  
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### AMERICA DIVIDED The Civil War of the 1960s FIFTH EDITION

MAURICE ISSERMAN | MICHAEL KAZIN



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**Maurice Isserman, Michael Kazin : America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s:

38 of 42 people found the following review helpful. Accurate, Comprehensive, masterful Overview of the 1960s!By Barron LaycockIt is often said that history is written by the victors, meaning, I suppose, that the particular interpretation recorded for posterity reflects the ideology and perspective of those dominating forces successful in the particular struggle a particular historical treatment covers. Of course, such a self-serving interpretation may in fact

vary wildly from anything like an accurate accounting of the actual unfolding of events and issues. Nowhere in contemporary society is such an inaccurate, disingenuous, and self-serving revisionist tendency likely as in the coverage and reflection on the events and issues of the sixties counterculture. Many recent tomes purport the times in such a solipsistic and self-serving fashion as to turn the truth on its very head. Yet all that is corrected in this wonderful overview of the momentous events and social, economic, and political issues as characterized the sixties. In "America Divided", a fascinating work comparing the deep and dangerous divisions within American society to those of the Civil War a hundred years before, authors Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin accurately describe and explain the complex forces that seemed to strain the social fabric to the point of near-revolution and widespread violence in the streets. The authors carefully avoid the twin mistakes of either overly romanticizing the perspectives, ideas, and issues of the youthful counter culturists to epic proportions on the one hand, or of summarily dismissing them as silly and superficial on the other hand, as is often the case with neo-conservative revisionists who would have us believe the manifest troubles of contemporary America stem primarily from the permissiveness of the counterculture rather than admit it is much more likely the result of massive and constant dislocations associated with scientific and technological change that is threatening the core values and mores of American culture. This book faithfully retraces and integrates the various strands running through the sixties into a seamless historical narrative that renders one of the most sophisticated, articulate, and accurate interpretations of a decade that left those of us who lived through it breathless and yet strangely unable to describe it to anyone who had not shared the experience. After reading the book, one remembers that those times were indeed characterized by great complexity, diversity, and incredible intellectual ferment and debate. Other recent accounts that blame the counterculture for the contemporary cultural malaise overlook the amazing diversity and intense ongoing dialogue that often degenerated into violent confrontation, whether it be over free speech, civil rights, Vietnam, or the perfidy of the power elite comprised of multinational corporations and big government. This book is a compelling, immensely readable, and quite entertaining work, and one that brilliantly achieves its objective by accurately describing, explaining, and integrating the intricate patchwork of events, issues, and perspectives that made the sixties decade so vital and so unique on recent American history. As with the Civil War, we are unlikely to see its like again. Those of us who remember it as a time of pitch and moment regret it, though clearly other more constipated and conservative voices hardly agree. Read this one before the nattering nabobs of negativity at the helm of the media succeed in explaining it all away. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By T. Honeycutt Good book with accurate information 3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. IMPORTANT DOCUMENT By RJM402I believe that this book is an important historical document of the events, people, and trends of the late 1950s and 1960s. I am using this book as my main text for a course on the cultural changes that occurred in America from 1955 through 1972. In comparison to Todd Gitlin's "The Sixties," this book is far and away the preferred source. The authors present a balanced, scientific, and yet aesthetic account of that paradigmatic time in our history. Not only is the text readable, but the authors provide a great deal of information in such a concise, incisive manner, that we cannot classify it as a 'history text,' but rather more like a gripping journal of that time era. If your interest is the Sixties - read this book - you won't be disappointed.

America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s, Fifth Edition, is the definitive interpretive survey of the political, social, and cultural history of 1960s America. Written by two top experts on the era--Maurice Isserman, a historian of American radicalism, and Michael Kazin, a specialist in social movements--this book provides a compelling tale of this tumultuous era filled with fresh and persuasive insights.

From Publishers Weekly Historians (and former 1960s radicals) Isserman (If I Had a Hammer) and Kazin (The Populist Persuasion) mount an intermittently convincing reinterpretation of the 1960s. They start off strong with the Civil War Centennial Commission's remarkable decision to avoid any mention of slavery or emancipation in its five-year-long celebration. A vividly illustrating America's forced "normalcy" as the decade began. But they go on to present an erratic vision of the decade. For instance, they inexplicably relegate the huge 1963 March on Washington to a brief mention. And the popular song "Louie Louie" merits a longer discussion than such critical texts and events as SDS's Port Huron statement and the Supreme Court's Griswold decision. Further, they artificially separate their discussion of politics, culture and spirituality. Three strands that were intimately linked in the era. The authors' revisionist take does offer some useful correctives, for instance, to the false notions that the War on Poverty was a massive giveaway program and that in the '60s liberalism held sway ("Of the three main branches of the federal government, liberals held the commanding heights... in only one branch, the judiciary... liberalism was neither sufficiently coherent as a political philosophy nor sufficiently well organized as a political movement, to realize many ambitions"). But the dearth of historical analysis of the "why" of this situation will leave many readers unsatisfied. In short, this is a sometimes useful if tepid and occasionally odd corrective to more lopsided views of the '60s. Photos. (Nov.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Isserman (If I Had a Hammer) and Kazin (The Populist Persuasion) are two of the keenest practitioners of the history of American people's politics. Both came of age in the 1960s, and each has a genetic link, respectively, to the Old Left and the grand liberal tradition of the 1930s. No better-suited

collaborators could join to offer a history of the American Sixties. But while the book they offer is commendably balanced, the authors have not written a definitive text. Oddly, they cover most penetratingly terrain already well trod by more staid scholars: conventional electoral politics, Vietnam, the four presidencies, the assassinations. Their most important contribution comes in demonstrating the rise not only of a New Left but a new and persistent Right. By contrast, their writing on the advent of the counterculture, movement politics, and especially urban black nationalism is familiar and too brief. The authors seem to be aiming this book at the undergraduate survey-course market—each reference to Jim Crow is accompanied by a parenthetical definition—and apparently decided to economize on the very subjects still most unsettled by conventional wisdom. Nevertheless, this is recommended for academic, secondary school, and public libraries.

Scott H. Silverman, Bryn Mawr Coll. Lib., PA Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist

Your shelves may already have a book or two by Kazin (of Georgetown University) and Isserman (from Hamilton College); both have authored several thoughtful historical studies. Here, they address the "civil war" they participated in: the 1960s. Their volume is a solid survey, with chapters devoted to obvious subjects (the civil rights movement, the Great Society, Vietnam and the antiwar movement, the New Left, youth culture, other liberation movements), but also several chapters on particular years (1963, 1965, 1968) that dramatize the multiple events Americans had to deal with almost simultaneously. One major focus of Isserman and Kazin's book is demonstrating that the era's notable political developments included activism among young people on both the right and the left; another is an exploration of the search many Americans undertook for a more authentic spirituality: a search that led seekers to every form of religion, from fundamental Christianity to liberation theology to Eastern religions and New Age belief. *America Divided* thus resists easy generalizations, elucidating a confusing time in all its complexity. Mary Carroll