

version was ok, I still prefer proper books though. Although many books have been written on the Civil War itself, finding a good, current, readable book on Reconstruction is a challenge I feel. And while the heroism and "glory" of the 4 year Civil War provides an excellent backdrop for narratives, understanding its devastating consequences that still resonate 150 years later, somehow proves a less attractive topic. Overall, I liked this book and for me it gives a contemporary account of the Reconstruction period and beyond in a single volume. I think it started well and ended well but I got a bit lost in the middle with lots of political details from the various different States that I found hard to follow. I need to re-read some of these chapters. I liked the overall tone of the book, as typified by the great title. It is telling for me that for all the romance of the American West and the many Hollywood films and books about this period of history, few address the Reconstruction head on that was shaping the country for decades. I have recently bought Foner's abridged history of Reconstruction, it will be interesting to compare the two books. Foner's seminal multi-volume book on the topic is a bit beyond my level of interest. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Four Stars By Justin Easy to read and very informative. 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Pretty Good By Curtis Hice Fitzgerald throws his hat in the ring with many others who have tackled the Reconstruction topic. Reconstruction, the Civil War, and the emancipation of so many slaves, were all things that were unprecedented, at least in American history. Neither our legislative branch or the executive branch (the presidency) knew quite how to handle such a task. Couple with that, the incredible tensions created by race and class differences that had existed, not only in the South, but the North as well, for centuries. To try to just undo that, won't be easy. Fitzgerald address all of these issues in his book. Although the book is not exactly chronological, he does start out with an explanation of how slavery has shaped the South, leading up to the Civil War and subsequently, emancipation and Reconstruction. He does this as a way to set the stage for the events to come. In the next chapters he dives right in to the issues of Reconstruction and the challenges that were unique with each issue. So, instead of treating each chapter as a chronological timeline, he lets each chapter discuss a certain dynamic of Reconstruction, like politics, race and gender, economy, etc. Many historians have classified Reconstruction as a failure and Fitzgerald is no exception. However, instead of putting the blame squarely on the Southern Democrats as most would do, he assigns blame to Republicans from the North and South. In the North, particularly because they lost heart when it seemed like the South was a lost cause. The book is a fairly easy read. It's one that the average person would have no problems with and enjoy. But it could also be appreciated by more serious historical scholars. If I had to knock it anything, I would have to point out the lack of endnotes/footnotes or parenthetical citations. Fitzgerald uses a lot of quotes and undoubtedly some paraphrasing too, but he doesn't cite any of them. While the average reader probably wouldn't mind this, more serious scholars will find it troubling.

Michael W. Fitzgerald's new interpretation of Reconstruction shows how the internal dynamics of this first freedom movement played into the hands of white racist reactionaries in the South. *Splendid Failure* recounts how postwar financial missteps and other governance problems quickly soured idealistic Northerners on the practical consequences of the Radical Republican plan, and set the stage for the explosion that swept Southern Republicans from power and resulted in Northern acquiescence to the bloody repression of voting rights. The failed strategy offers a chastening example to present-day proponents of racial equality.

A useful introduction to the dramatic and bloody tragedy of Reconstruction. (Christopher Waldrep, author of *Jury Discrimination*) Fitzgerald . . . has pulled off the enormously difficult task of writing a short, clear, analytically distinctive history of Reconstruction. (Thomas Pegrum, author of *Battling Demon Rum*) Engagingly written . . . can be read with profit by students, general readers, and specialists. (John C. Rodrigue, author of *Reconstruction in the Cane Fields*) Humane, temperate, and succinct . . . *Splendid Failure* may be the best short introduction to Southern Reconstruction we're likely to get. (Mark Wahlgren Summers, author of *The Era of Good Stealings*) An engaging and crisply-written overview. . . . Sure to become a fixture in college classrooms and on scholars' shelves. (Susan O'Donovan, author of *Becoming Free in the Cotton South*) Fitzgerald offers a solid understanding of the intricacy of social relationships . . . dense, thoughtful reconsideration of these turbulent events and their results. (Foreword s) The author excels. . . . The bibliographic essay also provides an invaluable service in its discussion of the massive literature on the era. The work is well written and will serve as an excellent supplement to any collection on Reconstruction. . . . Highly Recommended. Upper-division undergraduates and above. (CHOICE) Excellent survey . . . offers depth and detail especially suitable for classroom debate and discussion. . . . Recommended for any college-level collection. (Midwest Book) Eminently readable analysis. . . . Concern with . . . the possibility of establishing democracy amid postwar violence make[s] the book especially timely. (Virginia Quarterly) Reading *Splendid Failure* was splendid. The prose is quick, at times witty, and always readable. It reminded me of why I not only love to research in the period, but teach it as well. (H-Net: Humanities and Social Science s Online) *Splendid Failure* pulls the last two decades of Reconstruction scholarship into an effective single volume on the subject. . . . Fitzgerald has produced a readable and concise volume that will work effectively in an undergraduate classroom and sit comfortably on a lay reader's bookshelf. (The Alabama) "Fitzgerald's deep learning and distinctive interpretation make this a book for the seasoned

professional as well."About the AuthorMichael W. Fitzgerald teaches American history at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, where he lives. He is the author of prizewinning articles on aspects of Reconstruction and in two other books has written on the politics of emancipation and of agricultural change in the postCivil War period.