



## Manassas

*James Reasoner*

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## Manassas James Reasoner

Manassas,"" by James Reasoner, is the first novel in The Civil War Battles series based on the Brannon family of Culpeper County, Virginia. This initial volume describes the mood in the South prior to the outbreak of hostilities and follows one of the Brannon sons into the army and onto the scene of the first major battle of the war.""

## Manassas Details

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Author : James Reasoner

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## From Reader Review Manassas for online ebook

### **Joe Stack says**

An enjoyable, fast-paced story. I was pleasantly surprised that this story was not focused on the first big battle of the Civil War. Instead, the author focused on the family that I surmise will provide the main characters that will anchor this series. For much of the story, the beginning of the Civil War is just a backdrop to the development of the family saga. I'd call the story a Western set in the South in the months leading up to the start of the Civil War. The author has enough hooks that he kept me wanting to start the next chapter, and how & why the main character ends up as an officer in the Confederate army was a surprise that I did not see coming. The author does a good job in setting up the characters, good and bad, and doesn't rush getting the family into the war. The story ends with some conflicts resolved and other conflicts set up for the books that follow in this series. The story is from the the southern point of view, but unlike many novels of the Civil War period the story is told from a family that does not own a plantation or slaves.

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### **Linda says**

*Manassas* is the introductory volume of an 8 part Civil War series, built around the Brannon family of Culpeper, VA. Their scion died several years earlier, leaving Will, the eldest of 4 brothers and a sister, to keep the farm running and the family prospering. Will is also the county sheriff, a position that his dour, Bible-toting-and-quoting mother, Abigail, abhors. Will has his hands full trying to stop the ne'er do well Fogarty clan from tearing up the county, and they've responded by inciting a blood feud against the Brannons. After they shoot younger brother Titus, Abigail holds Will accountable, a stance that her other children cannot understand. When war breaks out, Will chooses to enlist on the Southern side.

While the first half of the novel focuses on the Brannons' domestic life, the second part deals mostly with Will's experiences as new recruit who is quickly promoted to officer status. He gains firsthand knowledge of new General Thomas Jackson, before he became known as "Stonewall".

*Manassas* is an uneven novel. While the characters are likable, some of them, especially Abigail, are mere caricatures. Reasoner's writing is simplistic, repetitive, and, at times, banal. When the battle of Manassas finally is joined, he fails to illustrate the devastation that befell soldiers on both sides. But he handles well the generalized naivete and idealism that propelled the many thousands of young men who enlisted with the belief that they could readily beat the "damn Yankees". It will be interesting to read the next few volumes to see how those fantasies were dashed.

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### **Josh says**

I'm a new fan of historical fiction. When I first downloaded this book, I was under the impression it would be everything you wanted to know about the battle of Manassas. I suppose I read nothing in the description!

I won't give anything away, but the book does end in the battle...yet picks up again in the next book of the

series..Shiloh.

Kept my interest every day and finished it quickly. I eagerly anticipate finding out what happens to the remainder of the ol' Virginia family. Well done Mr. Reasoner.

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### **Robbin says**

I really enjoyed this book. I like the fact that it is centered around a family during the war. I can hardly wait to read the next book.

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### **Mark Nenadov says**

Part of me likes this story and another part isn't very impressed. What other readers have been saying is at least partially true. The Civil War is a very rich period to write historical fiction on, and the author seems to stumble and doesn't handle this task so gracefully. The characters aren't particularly deep and it reads a bit more like a Western than a Civil War story. But, I'm not so quick to dismiss the story. It is compelling in its own way. The flow and character of the story command themselves to me in a way that I refuse to give this anything lower than three stars.

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### **R. says**

The good thing about discovering a great series late in its life cycle, is not being forced to wait for the release of the remaining books. That is the justification I will hold on to in waiting 16 years to discover and read the talented James Reasoner. Given the recent collective resurgence of interest in Confederacy symbolism, secessionism, and some things Civil War-ish, there may be no better time to pick up this series.

Told from the perspective of a simple family of Southern farmers, "Manassas" is the first in a 10 book series that plumbs the impacts of the War of Northern Aggression on the men and women that witnessed it first hand. As all epics must, "Manassas" starts slowly. In fact, the first half of the book is written in a deceptively plain-spoken, simple goodness reflective of the Brannon family itself. Towards the end, Reasoner really ramps up the action. The last 50 pages had me spellbound, drawing hard on my cigar and flipping pages as quickly as I could; my hand trembled as I drained the last of the suds accompanying the pool-side conclusion of the first book of this series.

The search is on now as I begin the process of gathering up the remaining books in this series!

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### **Matthew Main says**

Not quite what I was expecting, more of a drama than a war novel. Still, a good read if you like the time period.

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### **Mary Mathews says**

I have always enjoyed historical fiction. This series is a win/win for me since I have long been a student of the Civil War, among other parts of American History.

The book seemed slow-moving at first, but that was due to getting acquainted with the characters. Once the excitement began, it really moved. Ever since I read the Kent Family Chronicles by John Jakes, I have wished for someone to give the Civil War a similar treatment.

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### **Linda Munro says**

The first of a ten book Civil War historical fiction series; concerning the fictional Culpepper, Virginia Brennan family. This is one of the few historical fictions concerning the Civil War which is told from a Southern perspective; allowing the reader to visualize the events of secession, battles and skirmishes from a differing view point.

In this first novel, the reader is introduced to the Brennan family. The now deceased father, John Brennan; lover of the arts, especially the plays of William Shakespear. A dreamer, a person who seemingly lived in a fantasy world refusing to live up to the responsibilities of a family. The widowed mother Abigail is a self-righteous, hypocritical Christian; a hell bent Southern sympathizer eager for war, while turning out her eldest son after he kills a man in self-defense, because he had broken the fifth commandment: Thou Shalt not kill! William Brennan, Sheriff of Culpepper County and chief support of the Brennan family, who joins the Confederate Army after his mother forces him from the family home after he shoots a murder suspect in self-defense. Cory Brennan, the wanderer, who set out to see the world, leaving his family behind. Titus Brennan, the hot-tempered, irresponsible drunk who is infatuated by a near-by plantation owner's daughter. Easy going Henry, the youngest male Brennan, who seems to simply go along with whatever he's told to do. Finally, the only Brennan daughter and youngest Brennan child, Cordelia.

This tells the story of southern family and the Civil War in the Eastern Theater through the eyes of Will, who is presently under the command of 'Stonewall' Jackson.

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### **Dana says**

I have been researching my southern ancestors who all fought for the Confederates during the Civil War. I love how this book is bringing that time period 'alive' to me.

"Manassas" is the first book in this series and it sets the stage for the 10 book series. We meet the Brannons, a family living in Culpepper County, Virginia. Four sons and one daughter live with their mother, Abigail, as their father has passed away. Another son has already left the clan and is somewhere to the west. The eldest son, Will, serves as the sheriff.

The second book, "Shiloh", is particularly of interest to me as a brother of my great, great grandfather fought there! My great, great grandfather might have, too, but I'm still researching.

A very enjoyable book! I can't wait to read more!

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### **Hank Pharis says**

I don't know how I never heard of an author from Fort Worth who has written over 200 books but I'm glad I finally found out about him.

This is the first of ten novels tracing the history of a single family in the South during the civil war. The characters etc. are good enough

that I may listen to all ten of them. (I also discovered that he created the Walker Texas Ranger books which became a TV series.)

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### **Michael says**

People are mostly content with their lives in Culpepper, Virginia in January 1861. However, Lincoln has been elected and the inhabitants feel that once he's inaugurated, their lives will change. They worry that it won't be for the better.

Will Brannon, age thirty, is the sheriff of Culpepper County. He has four brothers and one younger sister. In the time before the war began, the family reminded me of the 1965 movie, *Shenandoah*, with Jimmy Stewart. That family was also peaceful and God fearing. They also attempted to stay away from the war.

The three Fogarty brothers are low-life criminals. They are a particular thorn in the side of Will as he attempts to get enough evidence to arrest them for their crimes.

When the war begins, Will's mother makes a statement and Will becomes apart from the family. He becomes one of the first to enlist and is made a captain.

The book tells of the universal enthusiasm and optimism for the war, even from the local preacher. None of the hardships or terrible days ahead are even imagined.

We follow Will and his men as they come under Brigadier General Stonewall Jackson and the first action nears.

I enjoyed the story and remembering the days that led up to the start of the war. Will Bannon is an easy character to follow and the book provided an entertaining and easy read, it would be particularly enjoyable for historical fiction fans and those who enjoy Civil War books.

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### **sandy says**

A great start to a civil war tale and it's very realistic in how things might go for one family in the south.

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## **Cristobal says**

See if it gets any better...

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## **T.S. Folke says**

Reasoner's prose flows like slurpies in a suburban 7-11. It's sugary, abundant, tasty, and yet really underwhelming in value and payoff. That's not to suggest the story is disposable and belongs in the unread trashbin. Actually the read is pleasantly informative of base history, providing a reliable overview of Bull Run, including the major players involved. Do not expect detailed replays of the battle, this is not in Shara or Cornwell league. It's a Simple read and an ideal slump buster for those looking to ease back into a reading rhythm before tackling more challenging work. The enveloped fictional family of the Brannon's is the glue AND the fuel that drives the story . And yet the weakness of this prose is on full display by the tawdry and cheap character development of these people. Ma is ridiculous and Henry's smitten virginity are the tip of the absurd stereotypes Reasoner employs. Again, I read it in 3 days making this as easy a read since my prepubescent Edgar rice Burroughs days of yore. When I'm in a read rut I will snag book 2 of this series.

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