

Weekly Feedback

In the book, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity*, author Jill Lepore explains how accounts of a war are usually biased, based upon the ideals, beliefs, and propaganda of the victors. She argues that this was evident in all of the letters and other accounts of King Philip's War. These accounts portrayed the Algonquian Indians as beasts and savages in order to distinguish them from the dignified English. The English also applied this technique when dealing with Spain. Lepore explains how England looked down on the Spanish for their cruel treatment of the Protestants during the Spanish Inquisition and for their cruel treatment of the Indians. This technique of looking down on the enemy and competitors is a form of propaganda that serves as a rallying force to unite the British against their enemies. This was not a new technique, however, as it had been used in Rome's heyday to distinguish Roman citizens from the German "Barbarians" who were trying to conquer Rome.

These distinguishing terms were present in Mary Rowlandson's account of her captivity by the Indians, where she described with prejudice how the Indians were monsters solely because they had a different culture and lifestyle than the British. It is interesting to note how deep her religious beliefs were, while showing prejudice against the Indians, who were also God's sons and daughters. While it is true that the Indians treated her roughly, it cannot be forgotten that the English and the Algonquian Indians were at war against each other. Therefore, she was a prisoner of war. In a day and age before the Geneva Convention, there were no rules on how to treat prisoners.

King Philip's War can be described as a cultural war. The Indians did not like their land being taken away and Philip or *Metamora*, as he is also known, did not like his people to be converted to Christianity. For the English, they justified and defended their actions by writing about them. Since they were able to read and write, the English shaped accounts of the war in their favor, depicting their actions in the language of "good vs. evil," which continues to the present day. Lepore explains that "To become literate, seventeenth-century Indians had first to make a graduated succession of cultural concessions-adopting English ways and English dress, living in towns, learning to speak English, [and] converting to Christianity."

If these were the guidelines for becoming literate, it is very easy to see why so many Indians rejected literacy. Here were a strange people to the Indians, who invaded their lands, and told them that their way of life was completely wrong. For centuries, the Indians had been getting by without being literate, and most of Western Civilization occurred before the advent of writing. Therefore, the Indians had no motivation to want to assimilate unless they were militarily forced to. The Indians were more simplistic people in comparison to the norms of Europe and of the British colonists. Nevertheless, Lepore believes that the Indians would have written an account favorable to themselves if their society had won the war, but that is not necessarily true, as history may not have been as important to them as it was to the Europeans. After all, the Indians moved around from village to village every season to meet their basic life needs and therefore, did not have many possessions. With this nomadic lifestyle, documenting history was probably the least of their concerns. Later on, in the 1830s and 1840s, Lepore explains that Americans reversed course from their colonial days and now desired to be more Indian because they were in search of a national identity. However, this was short lived, as Americans began to feel closer to the British again after the US Civil War.