



# Lincoln

*By David Herbert Donald*

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## **Lincoln** By David Herbert Donald

Destined to become a classic in American history and biography, David Herbert Donald's *Lincoln* is a masterly account of how one man's extraordinary political acumen steered the Union to victory in the Civil War, and of how his soaring rhetoric gave meaning to that agonizing struggle for nationhood and equality. This fully rounded biography of America's sixteenth President is the product of Donald's half-century of study of Lincoln and his times. In preparing it, Donald has drawn more extensively than any previous writer on Lincoln's personal papers and those of his contemporaries, and he has taken full advantage of the voluminous newly discovered records of Lincoln's legal practice. He presents his findings with the same literary skill and psychological understanding exhibited in his previous biographies, which have received two Pulitzer Prizes. Donald brilliantly traces Lincoln's rise from humble origins in Kentucky to prominent positions in legal and political circles in Illinois, and then to the pinnacle of the presidency. He shows how, in all these roles, Lincoln repeatedly demonstrated his enormous capacity for growth, which enabled one of the least experienced and most poorly prepared men ever elected to high office to become a giant in the annals of American politics. Much more than a political biography, Donald's *Lincoln* reveals the development of the future President's character and shows how his private life helped to shape his public career. Donald's biography is written from Lincoln's point of view. Donald seats us behind the President's desk, where we read the papers and reports he received and wrote, meet the politicians and generals and ordinary citizens who visited his office, and observe him evaluating the evidence before him and making the decisions that shaped modern America.

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## **Lincoln** By David Herbert Donald Bibliography

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## **Editorial Review**

From Publishers Weekly

Donald, a two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning author and distinguished scholar of the Civil War era (Charles Sumner), offers here a provocative reinterpretation of Abraham Lincoln's career and character. Donald presents Lincoln's nature as essentially passive. Throughout his life, according to Donald, Lincoln believed his destiny was controlled by some larger force or "higher power." This conviction generated both an underlying fatalism and a pragmatic approach to problem-solving. If one approach?or one general?failed, another could be tried. Although the information available to Lincoln was often significantly limited by modern standards, bold plans based on a priori reasoning were foreign to his thought process. Instead, it was Lincoln's ability to respond to events and actions that brought the U.S. through its greatest crisis and established the matrix for successful, if imperfect, reunification. BOMC split main selection; History Book Club main selection.

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From Library Journal

Winner of two Pulitzer Prizes, most recently for *Homeward: A Life of Thomas Wolfe* (LJ 12/86), Donald proves himself the superb biographer of Lincoln, though two recent biographies, Michael Burlingame's *The Inner World of Abraham Lincoln* (LJ 4/1/94) and Merrill Peterson's *Lincoln in American Memory* (LJ 10/1/94), are both important studies. Donald's profile of the 16th president focuses entirely on Lincoln, seldom straying from the subject. It looks primarily at what Lincoln "knew, when he knew it, and why he made his decisions." Donald's Lincoln emerges as ambitious, often defeated, tormented by his married life, but with a remarkable capacity for growth?and the nation's greatest president. What really stands out in a lively narrative are Lincoln's abilities to hold together a nation of vastly diverse regional interests during the turmoil and tragedy of the Civil War. Donald's biography will appeal to all readers and will undoubtedly corral its share of book awards. Highly recommended for all libraries.?Boyd Childress, Auburn Univ. Lib., Ala.

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From [Booklist](#)

The man who became our greatest president seems, from our vantage point, to have been an obvious choice for the job. But as esteemed Lincoln scholar Donald indicates in this magisterial yet intimate new biography, when people first began discussing the idea of Lincoln for president in 1860, the prairie lawyer had few of the usual qualifications for the office. There was no inevitability about his progress from Springfield, Illinois, to Washington, D.C., a path Donald nonetheless follows in luxuriant detail. Writing as complete and as believable a psychological portrait as possible from this distance, the author tells of a man who started with few advantages but spent his whole life learning and growing. Ironically, Lincoln was by nature a reactor, not an instigator; he believed his existence was controlled by a higher authority. From the deprivations of his frontier childhood, Lincoln "carried away from his brief schooling the self-confidence of a man who has never met his intellectual equal." Lincoln took considerable time, though, finding the niche whereby he could support himself; the legal field eventually drew him, and drew out his talents, as did his interest in politics. How he eventually became the leading Republican in Illinois, then president, and then successful commander-in-chief is a wondrous story, and it is brilliantly interpreted here. *Brad Hooper*

## **Users Review**

**From reader reviews:**

**Lorenzo Logan:**

Have you spare time for just a day? What do you do when you have far more or little spare time? That's why, you can choose the suitable activity regarding spend your time. Any person spent all their spare time to take a move, shopping, or went to often the Mall. How about open or maybe read a book allowed Lincoln? Maybe it is for being best activity for you. You understand beside you can spend your time along with your favorite's book, you can more intelligent than before. Do you agree with the opinion or you have various other opinion?

**Carlos Vickers:**

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**Nicholas Buchanan:**

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**Elizabeth Rogers:**

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