

Abraham Lincoln: A Life

By Michael Burlingame

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Abraham Lincoln scholar Michael Burlingame offers a fresh look at the life of one of America's greatest presidents. The text incorporates the field notes of earlier biographers, along with decades of research in multiple manuscript archives and long-neglected newspapers.

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Abraham Lincoln: A Life By Michael Burlingame Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
Signature*Reviewed by* James L. SwansonBetween this fall and the bicentennial of Lincoln's birth in February 2009, publishers will overwhelm bookstores and readers alike with a flood of more than 60 titles on the ever-popular president. One can hardly keep track of them all: one certainly cannot read them all. Of the dozens of these books competing for attention, a few stand out, foremost among them this title. The trend in Lincoln scholarship has been away from the magisterial narrative comprehensiveness of Carl Sandburg in favor of a narrow, deep dive resulting in the so-called slice book: thus entire volumes about one magnificent speech; a key incident; the deepest crisis; the most pivotal year; and so on. A number of these works have merit, but have failed to capture a wide, popular audience.*Abraham Lincoln: A Life* is the antithesis of a thin slice from the Lincoln pie. In the sweeping style of Doris Kearns Goodwin's *Team of Rivals*, Burlingame has produced the finest Lincoln biography in more than 60 years and one of the two or three best Lincoln books on any subject in a generation. A distinguished scholar who probably knows more about Abraham Lincoln and his world than anyone else alive, Burlingame has devoted the last quarter century to editing 11 books on the Lincoln primary sources, including the writings of the president's secretaries John Hay, John Nicolay and William Stoddard. Now Burlingame has produced the most meticulously researched Lincoln biography ever written. He resurrected Lincoln's lost early journalism, when the young prairie politician—little more than an immature, unscrupulous hack—wrote more than 200 anonymous op-eds; Burlingame scoured thousands of 19th-century newspapers and discovered hitherto unknown stories; he read hundreds of oral histories, unpublished letters, and journals from Lincoln's contemporaries; and he re-examined the vast manuscript collections at the Library of Congress and National Archives. Burlingame's astonishing chapters covering Lincoln's hard early years and his difficult marriage, and his fresh insights on the profound crisis that made Lincoln great, are worth the price of the book. Do not let the intimidating length or the formidable price deter you. The book need not be read in one sitting. Each part stands alone. Burlingame's Lincoln comes alive as the author unfolds vast amounts of new research while breathing new life into familiar stories. This is a critical, skeptical, loving but never fawning tribute to the man Burlingame praises for achiev[ing] a level of psychological maturity unmatched in the history of American public life. This book supplants Sandburg and supersedes all other biographies. Future Lincoln books cannot be written without it, and from no other book can a general reader learn so much about Abraham Lincoln. It is the essential title for the bicentennial. *(Nov.)James L. Swanson is the author of* Manhunt: The 12-Day Chase for Lincoln's Killer. *His next book is* Chasing Lincoln's Killer *(Scholastic, Feb. 2009).*
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Review

"This book supplants [Carl] Sandburg and supersedes all other biographies. Future Lincoln books cannot be written without it, and from no other book can a general reader learn so much about Abraham Lincoln. It is the essential title for the bicentennial." -- James L. Swanson, Publishers Weekly

"A complete view of Lincoln's life... thorough." -- Diane Cole, U.S. News & World Report

"A monumental boxed effort that weighs in at 10 pounds... The result is a picture of Lincoln from all sides, in a style that is relentless but not daunting." -- Bloomberg News

"A magisterial enterprise." -- William Safire, New York Times

"If you aspire to Ultimate Lincoln Knowledge this is a must-read." -- Chicago Tribune

"These monumental volumes deserve a wide readership." -- St. Louis Post-Dispatch

"Burlingame is a towering figure in Lincoln scholarship, and students of the 16th president have been waiting for this book for years. For all his learning -- Burlingame may know more about Lincoln and his era than anyone in the world -- his take on his subject is fresh, and he doesn't gloss over Lincoln's less appealing attributes. Abraham Lincoln comes as close to being the definitive biography as anything the world has seen in decades." -- Time.com

"An exhaustive and stylishly written biography." -- Greg Rienzi, Gazette

"A stunning feat of research." -- Michael Bishop, Publishers Weekly

"The two-volume set is being heralded as the ultimate new biography of Lincoln, an essential work to be used by all future biographers of the 16th president." -- Anne Byle, Grand Rapids Press

"The granddaddy of all the recent books [on Lincoln] is Michael Burlingame's Abraham Lincoln: A Life... monumental in size, depth and scholarship, this is the new standard biography of our time and surpasses all other life portraits of our 16th president, and is the most important book of the bicentennial." -- James L. Swanson, Washington Times

"Lincoln scholars have waited anxiously for this book for decades. Its triumphant publication proves it was well worth the wait. Few scholars have written with greater insight about the psychology of Lincoln. No one in recent history has uncovered more fresh sources than Michael Burlingame. This profound and masterful portrait will be read and studied for years to come." -- Doris Kearns Goodwin

"The remarkable breadth of Burlingame's research has resulted in a book unlike anything else written about Lincoln. It will be a major contribution to the field." -- Gerald J. Prokopowicz, East Carolina University

"Burlingame has developed a familiarity with the details of Lincoln's life that is truly authoritative, even definitive, and he has genuinely earned his reputation for knowing more about Lincoln than just about anyone who has ever studied him." -- Kenneth J. Winkle, University of Nebraska--Lincoln

"No review could do complete justice to the magnificent two-volume biography that has been so well-wrought by Michael Burlingame." -- Christopher Hitchens, Atlantic Monthly

"The bicentennial of Abraham Lincoln's birth has generated a plethora of Lincoln-related items, but none impresses more than this two-volume biography... Essential." -- Choice

"The author knows more about Lincoln than any other living person." -- New York Review of Books

"Most thorough account of the development of Lincoln as a man and politician against the backdrop of America's struggle to mature as an idea and a nation... Not a Lincoln for our times, but the Lincoln of his times, and future biographers would do well to take note(s)." -- Books and Culture: A Christian Review

From the Back Cover

Lincoln Prize, Civil War Institute at Gettysburg College

PROSE Award for Best Book in U.S. History and Biography/Autobiography, Professional and Scholarly Publishing Division, Association of American Publishers

Named One of the 5 Best Books of 2009 by "The Atlantic"

Named One of the 10 Top Lincoln Books by "Chicago Tribune

"In the first multi-volume biography of Abraham Lincoln to be published in decades, Lincoln scholar Michael Burlingame offers a fresh look at the life of one of America's greatest presidents. Incorporating the field notes of earlier biographers, along with decades of research in multiple manuscript archives and long-neglected newspapers, this remarkable work will both alter and reinforce current understanding of America's sixteenth president.

"A magisterial enterprise."--William Safire, "New York Times"

"No review could do complete justice to the magnificent two-volume biography that has been so well-wrought by Michael Burlingame."--Christopher Hitchens, "Atlantic Monthly

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Junior Price:

Reading can called imagination hangout, why? Because if you find yourself reading a book specifically book entitled Abraham Lincoln: A Life the mind will drift away trough every dimension, wandering in every aspect that maybe unidentified for but surely will end up your mind friends. Imaging each word written in a book then become one type conclusion and explanation that will maybe you never get previous to. The Abraham Lincoln: A Life giving you one more experience more than blown away your mind but also giving you useful details for your better life with this era. So now let us explain to you the relaxing pattern is your body and mind is going to be pleased when you are finished studying it, like winning a. Do you want to try this extraordinary shelling out spare time activity?

Joseph Yancey:

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you so why you have to listening to an additional sixth sense.

Dianne Haire:

Is it a person who having spare time and then spend it whole day by watching television programs or just lying down on the bed? Do you need something totally new? This Abraham Lincoln: A Life can be the response, oh how comes? The new book you know. You are consequently out of date, spending your free time by reading in this fresh era is common not a nerd activity. So what these textbooks have than the others?

Alicia Cain:

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