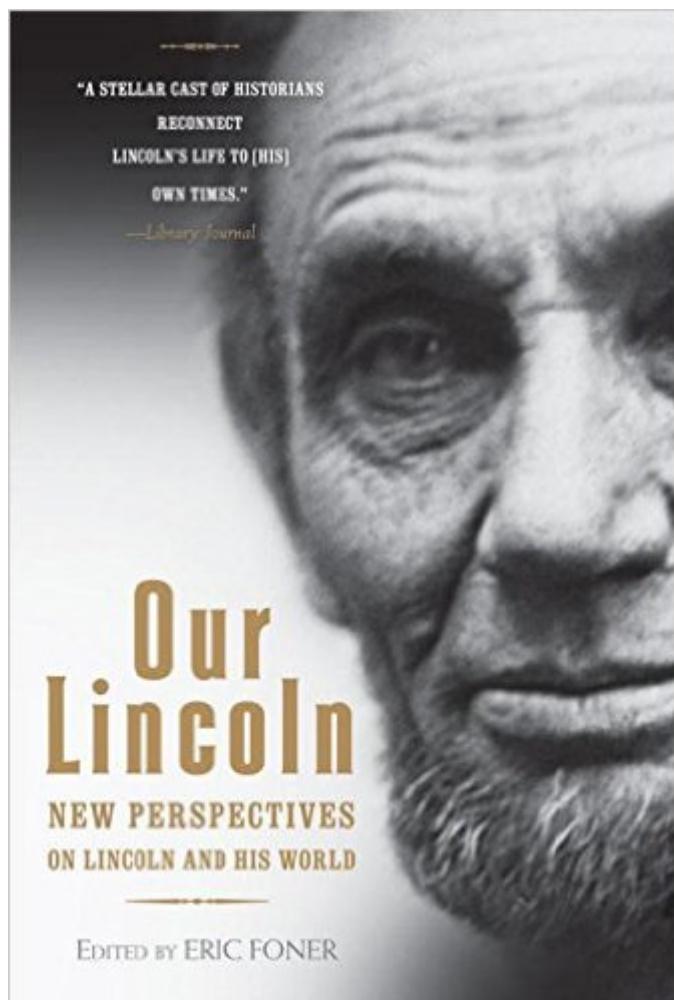


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Our Lincoln: New Perspectives On Lincoln And His World



Synopsis

"Exhilarating . . . strikes a balance between the personal and the abstract."•Edward Rothstein, *New York Times* "These eloquent, compelling essays show why Lincoln was a man of his time and a man for all time. There is no better introduction to the complexities of his life and to why he still holds a spell over America and the world."•*Library Journal* Among these original essays by prize-winning historians, James M. McPherson examines Lincoln's deft navigation of the crosscurrents of politics and wartime strategy. Sean Wilentz elegantly explores Lincoln's debt to the democratic political tradition of Jefferson and Jackson. Eric Foner examines Lincoln's controversial position on the movement to colonize emancipated slaves outside the United States. James Oakes explores Lincoln's views on the rights of African Americans. There are also brilliant essays on Lincoln and civil liberties, and on his literary style, religious beliefs, and family life. 10 illustrations

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Customer Reviews

As we approach the bicentennial of Lincoln's birth, I suppose we can expect the already busy Lincoln book industry to go into hyperdrive. That necessarily means that a lot of stuff will get recycled and called "new." For the most part, this is what's happened with *Our Lincoln: New Perspectives on Lincoln and His World*. There's very little that's new in these essays, although nearly all of them are well worth reading insofar as they offer convenient overviews of well-established theses. Mark Neely, for example, who won a Pulitzer for his booklength treatment of

Lincoln's troubled relationship with civil liberties, returns to the topic here. James Oakes, editor James Foner, and Manisha Sinha take a look at Lincoln and race. All three essays are good--particularly Oakes'--but none of them break new ground. Harold Holzer offers up yet another essay on visual images of Lincoln. James McPherson offers an essay culled from his newly-published (and quite good) book on Lincoln as commander in chief. Catherine Clinton and Richard Carwardine re-examine, respectively and rather conventionally, Lincoln's family relations and religion. Again, these essays are all solidly researched, well-written, and interesting. But they hardly offer new perspectives. Three essays in the collection, however, are especially noteworthy. Sean Wilentz really does, I think, break some new ground in his exploration of the influence of Jacksonian democracy on Lincoln the politician (a startling and therefore fascinating thesis). Andrew Delbanco's essay on Lincoln's rhetorical style--his "sacramental language" as Delbanco calls it--is also a genuine contribution.

This newest publication from the eminent Eric Foner is an early gift to avid readers of the Civil War and Lincoln. As many of us know, we are fast approaching the bicentennial of Lincoln's birth. As such this is but one of dozens of new volumes expected to arrive. Lincoln scholar Harold Holzer estimates at least 40 new works on Lincoln between November of 2008-Feb of 2009 will be published, yet this one will not get lost amongst the crowd. Foner's volume "Our Lincoln; New Perspectives on Lincoln and His World," does in fact offer new information. McPherson starts the volume off with a chapter dealing with Lincoln as Commander-in-Chief. While this is also the topic of McPherson's newest book, *Tried by War*, the topic of Lincoln as the Commander of both political and military America has been long overlooked. Mark Neely, in the subsequent chapter, returns to an old debate which Neely has dominated for years- Civil Liberties. Neely does not necessarily conclude anything startling new; however he does bring to light two obscure letters which directly lead to Civil War policy and help demonstrate Lincoln's sincerity for emancipation. James Oakes has included a beautiful essay on Lincoln and Race. This is one of three essays on the subject of 'Lincoln as Emancipator'. Oakes' essay is perhaps the most original within the entire collection. Well-conceived and stunningly convincing, Oakes demonstrates that for Lincoln, race was typically a State issue. In fact, as Oakes proves, nearly every non-egalitarian statement Lincoln made concerning jurors, education, suffrage where all State Right issues in the middle of the 19th Century. The stunning conclusions this leads us to helps exemplify why Oakes is quickly becoming one of the foremost Civil War historians.

Our Lincoln is a series of essays on the life and career of President Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) edited by Dr. Eric Foner the eminent scholar who is the DeWitt Clinton Professor of History at Columbia University. The book was published shortly before the 2009 Lincoln bicentennial. It is a book which will keep general readers apprised of the finest in Lincoln scholarship. The book is divided into three parts with eleven contributors presenting essays on some aspects of Abraham Lincoln. The essays are divided into four parts: Part I: The President: Dr. James McPherson's essay "A Lincoln Commander in Chief" shows how Lincoln became a military strategist during the war who was poorly served by his generals until the emergence of US Grant. Mark E. Neely Jr's "The Constitution and Civil Liberties under Lincoln" discusses the president's suspension of habeas corpus as the war began. Neely argues that Lincoln viewed the draconian measures he took during the war as a temporary action to be rescinded as soon as the rebellious states were quashed and civil liberties were gradually restored. This essay shows the brilliance of Neely and his wrestling with difficult legal and civil rights issues. Sean Wilentz's essay "Abraham Lincoln and Jacksonian Democracy" shows how the Whig Lincoln came to respect President Jackson's refusal to tolerate those who would tear the union asunder. Especially important was Jackson's defiance of South Carolina during the nullification crisis. Harold Holzer's "Visualizing Lincoln: Abraham Lincoln as Student, Subject and Patron of the Visual Arts" deals with Lincoln's use of photographs and artists during his public career. Holzer is an expert on these issues and the book prints photos and portraits of Lincoln.

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