



FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER  
2014-2015 NUMBER 5

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# FRIENDS OF AMERICAN WRITERS CHICAGO

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## President's Message

CHRISTINE BERN,  
*President*

Our Literature Award Committee and Young People's Award Committee, chaired by Tamie Bob, April Neuman and Tanya Klasser have put together two committees of FAW members to read and choose our award winning books for 2015. This monumental task is taken on with the enthusiasm and professionalism that you expect from FAW. These prestigious awards, given at our May meeting, are what set FAW apart from other book clubs. Thank you to the members of these committees for your dedication to FAW and commitment to promoting high standards in literature.

The Literature and Young People's Awards are funded by our membership through donations to the Patron's Fund. Please consider giving generously to the Patron's Fund.



## FEBRUARY PROGRAM An Evening with Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln Max and Donna Douglas as Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln

ROBERTA GATES  
*Program Chair*

On February 11 (just one day ahead of Abraham Lincoln's birthday), we'll be remembering him with a one-act play that recreates the last evening of his life.

Max and Donna Daniels will play the parts of President Lincoln and his wife, Mary Todd Lincoln, as they spend a few quiet hours in the White House before setting out for Ford's Theatre. The Civil War has finally ended, giving the couple time to reflect on how they met, the births of their children and Lincoln's political struggles, as well as on the personal traumas which the two of them have faced.

Mr. and Mrs. Daniels, who bear a striking resemblance to the Lincolns (especially when dressed in period costumes), have an extensive background in theater and have presented their Lincoln-themed programs to numerous audiences, including on the History Channel and C-SPAN. They have also performed at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., and at the Lincoln Home Visitor Center in Springfield, Illinois.

Lincoln is regarded by many historians as our country's finest president, so don't miss this opportunity to celebrate Illinois' favorite son with a presentation that's both educational and entertaining.



▲ Max and Donna Douglas

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Luncheon Reservations

Luncheon reservations for the February 11, 2015 meeting of the Friends of American Writers are due no later than 6:00 p.m. on Sunday,

February 8. Please note that this deadline is firm, and no reservations will be accepted following this date and time. To reserve, please call only Lorraine Campione (773-275-5118) or Vivian Mortensen (847-827-8339).

Luncheon will be served at 12:00 noon in the main floor dining room



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of the Fortnightly Club of Chicago, 120 E. Bellevue Place. The cost of the luncheon is \$40 payable by cash or check to FAW in the front lobby on the day of the luncheon. Discount parking for FAW luncheon guests is available in the lot just west of the Fortnightly at 100 E. Bellevue Place. If you are reserving for a group, we ask that only one person make the group request to avoid confusion. Please note: if you make a reservation and find you cannot attend, you must cancel no later than 6:00 p.m. on the Sunday preceding the meeting. Reservations not cancelled must be paid for by the member.

#### Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee composed of Shirley Baugher (Chair), Tammie Bob, Marti Daniel, Vivian Mortensen, and Marion Sherlock; will meet at the end of January to draw up a slate

for the 2015-16 Board of Directors. The slate will be presented to the Board at the February meeting for their consideration and to the full membership for a vote in March. The following positions are open: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Newsletter Editor, Literature Awards Chair, Young People Literature Awards Chair, Revisions, and Yearbook.

#### New Members

FAW welcomes new members to the organization. If you know of anyone who would like to become part of our group, please contact Membership Chair Sandie Weiss, 161 E. Chicago Ave. Apt 35G, Chicago IL 60611

#### Sharing FAW Information

At its January meeting, the FAW Board of Directors discussed sending information to local bookstores about our organiza-

tion: its mission, meeting times, programs, and presenters. Members thought sharing this information would inform a reading public about who we are and what we do. It might also serve to enhance sales for our presenters and attract persons who might be interested in joining our group.

#### Literature Awards

Chair Tammie Bob announced that the committee had received more than sixty entries for award consideration, and that were many wonderful submissions. They will select a winner in March.

#### Young People's Literature Awards

Committee Chair, Tanya Klasser reported that her group had received more than 30 titles for consideration. They will also make their selection in March.

### FAW HONORS TWO GREAT PRESIDENTS

*Two of the greatest presidents in United States history: George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, have February birthdays. It seemed only fitting to honor both of them in this edition of the newsletter. The feature article focuses on the myths surrounding George Washington and how it is often impossible to separate the myth from the man. Abraham Lincoln's presidency is examined through a review of Gore Vidal's Lincoln, arguably one of the best books ever written on the subject. We hope you will find these articles informative.*

## FEATURE GEORGE WASHINGTON Myth and Man

BY SHIRLEY BAUGHER

*Had he lived in the days of idolatry, he had been worshipped as a god.*

PENNSYLVANIA JOURNAL, 1777

*[Washington] was... a supercilious tyrant. If ever a nation was debauched by a man, the American nation has been debauched by Washington.*

PHILADELPHIA JOURNALIST, 1796

*The first word of infancy should be mother, the second father, the third WASHINGTON.*

HORATIO HASTINGS, PICTORIAL LIFE OF GEORGE WASHINGTON, 1845



*The history of our Revolution will be one continued lie from one end to the other. The essence of the whole will be that Dr. Franklin's electric rod smote the earth and out sprang*

*George Washington. Franklin electrified him with his rod, and thenceforward these two conducted all the policy negotiations, legislatures, and war.*

JOHN ADAMS



## George Washington: Just the Facts

*A man walked, as it were, casting a shadow; and yet one could never say which was man and which was shadow; or how many the shadows that he cast.*

W. B. YEATS

George Washington was born on February 22, 1732, at Pope's Creek, Virginia. He died on December 14, 1799 at Mount Vernon, Virginia at the age of 67. He was married for forty years to Martha Dandridge Custis Washington. They had no children. He was 6'4" tall. He weighed about 200 pounds. He suffered from dental problems all his adult life. Contrary to popular belief, he never wore a wig. His hair was his own. He had no political affiliation and little formal education. He served in the Virginia House of Burgesses from 1758 to 1775. He commanded the Continental Army from 1775 to 1783. Along with Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams, he served the American people as part of the best informed, and fair-minded men of his century—arguably the greatest generation of political talent in American history. He was elected President of the United States on April 30, 1789; and he served for two terms, leaving office on March 4, 1797.

These are the facts, but the facts have been so overshadowed by the myths surrounding George Washington, it is sometimes difficult to determine which was man and which was myth.

## The Myths

Much of the Washington myth can be attributed to Mason Locke Weems—generally known as “Parson Weems”. Weems had grown up on stories of Washington’s honesty and heroism. Because his hero had been depicted by some as a “cold and colorless” person, Weems decided to make up a life for him that would make him more real to the American people.

He made up a story of George Washington chopping down a cherry tree with his little hatchet and then confessing to his father that he had done it, because he could not tell a lie.

To emphasize Washington’s great strength, Weems wrote that he once threw a stone across the Potomac River.

He didn't. He did, however, throw a stone over the Natural Bridge in the Shenandoah



◀ Father, I cannot tell a lie

Valley, which was 215 feet high.

He conjured up a scene of Washington on his knees at Valley Forge praying for God’s blessing on his troops. Never happened. Washington, though an Episcopalian, was not a particularly religious man. He did not attend church regularly, and he never knelt to pray.

Another myth is attributed to unnamed Indian warrior who swore he had fired seventeen rifle shots at him but could not bring him down because George Washington was not born to be killed by a bullet.

Alexander Lawson, an artist, added to the mythology by painting a humble Washington in civilian

clothes standing on a step below the seated form of Lady Liberty, submitting his resignation as Commander in Chief of the American Army with the American Eagle soaring above. The general tenders his resignation with his right hand and with his left points down at an idyllic countryside he had helped rescue from tyranny.

Interestingly, some of the incredible stories circulated about Washington were true. During General Braddock’s expedition against the French outside Pittsburgh in 1755, a young George Washington actually joined with Daniel Boone to rally the troops, despite having two horses shot out from under him and multiple bullet holes piercing his coat.

At Yorktown in 1781, while aides tried to pull him down, he insisted on standing atop a parapet for fifteen minutes during an artillery attack with bullets and shrapnel flying all about him.

Washington never bought into the mythology surrounding him. He saw himself as a mere mortal, not a man of destiny; caught up in a bewildering



▲ Washington in civilian clothes standing on a step below the seated form of Lady Liberty

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time that was hungry for heroes. History happened to him—he did not go looking for it.

### **Unraveling the Myth**

Though the Washingtons were among Virginia's elite, they were not in the top tier of Virginia society. George's father, Augustine Washington, was a landowner, but his holdings were modest compared with those of the great Virginia landowners. He also owned an iron foundry. His mother brought a small inheritance to the marriage. They owned about 50 slaves. When George was eleven, Augustine died, leaving the bulk of his estate to George's brother Lawrence.

George Washington was not well educated. He got some tutoring in math, Latin, and literature, between the ages of seven and eleven. He did not, like Jefferson and Madison, go on to attend the College of William and Mary. This was not unusual in colonial Virginia. Washington's interest lay in the land. Most of the great men of Virginia reckoned their wealth in land and in the crops they grew, especially tobacco, and Washington wanted to join them.

What he lacked in education, George made up in gentlemanly pursuits. He was an excellent marksman and the best horseman in Virginia. He worked on the plantation with his brother and accompanied him on a trip to Barbados where he contracted smallpox. Miraculously, he survived. When they returned to Virginia, George worked as a surveyor until his brother died and left Mount Vernon to him.

Even as a young man, Washington was a commanding figure. He stood nearly 6'4" tall, a full head taller than most of his contemporaries. John Adams once remarked that it was no wonder Washington was selected to lead every national effort. He was always the tallest man in the room. But he was not a handsome man. Taken individually, his features were ugly: a pockmarked face, decayed teeth, a huge nose, heavy hips, and enormous hands and feet. But put together, they became majestic. One of his biographers observed that his body did not just occupy a space, it organized the space around him. Benjamin Rush remarked, "He has so much martial dignity in his deportment there is not a king in Europe but would look like a valet by his side."

### **A Career in the Military**

As an officer in the Virginia regiment, George Washington led a force into the backwoods of the Ohio country in April of 1754. His mission was to dispel the French forces there and lay claim to the land for Virginia. It was not a successful mission. Although

George won his first skirmish, he lost the second at Fort Necessity badly. Luckily, the French allowed him to march out with his men. It was not until Britain sent troops to claim the Ohio valley in 1758 that the French ceded the territory. By then, Washington was ready to retire from the military and go home to Mount Vernon.

### **Washington the Virginian**

Washington became a significant figure in Virginia society. He was fond of clothes and knew he cut a fine figure in his military uniform. He presided over Mount Vernon and acquired 15,000 additional acres of land. He attended sessions of the House of Burgesses, and served as a vestryman of Truro Parish. When he was ready to marry, he pursued Sally Cary, daughter of one of the wealthiest Virginia families. Sally was a good choice for George Washington. She guided him through the pitfalls of Tidewater society, she helped fill in the gaps of his education, and she was a lively companion. But Sally's father would only allow her to marry someone of equal rank. That person turned out to be William Fairfax, a landowner so wealthy George couldn't compete.

After Sally married Fairfax, George became engaged to Martha Custis, a widow with two children. Though more a marriage of convenience than a love match, the union turned out to be a good thing for both of them. George gained a fortune because Martha owned substantial property. And Martha got a distinguished husband as well as an excellent administrator for her lands. He wisely switched to wheat production because tobacco was depleting the soil. He constructed a flourmill to grind the wheat, and he started exporting fish. Since slavery was not a moral issue for him, he was comfortable using slave labor; although he did provide for their manumission in his will. We have no idea what their relationship was really like because Martha destroyed all correspondence between them.

### **The Road to War**

Like most colonists, George Washington did not anticipate secession from Great Britain. Although he protested the Stamp Act and the Townshend Acts, he occupied a middle ground between firebrands like Patrick Henry and the more conservative colonists. But when he had to choose, he stood with the colonials. He was the unanimous choice to lead the Revolutionary army: he was wealthy, well respected, capable, sympathetic to the colonial cause, and had military experience.



When Washington took command of the army on July 3, 1775, he faced nearly insurmountable obstacles. It was difficult to get recruits. There was often no money to pay his men. Conditions were deplorable, and the Americans were usually outnumbered by the British forces. The General and his army had to endure, as Thomas Paine put it, “the times that try men’s souls.”

But the Americans did have some advantages. They knew the terrain, and they could fight the kind of guerilla warfare required on that terrain. Most importantly, they were fighting for a cause.

The British, on the other hand, had greater numbers, adequate supplies, and were better trained. Their officers were far superior to those of the Americans. They won most of the early battles and had no doubt they would win the war. But they, too, faced disadvantages. They underestimated their colonial adversaries, regarding them as ragtag upstarts. They were unaccustomed to both the terrain and the kind of fighting at which the Americans excelled. They tried to follow the rules of war conducted by Europeans for generations: each side lining up on an open plain and rushing each other at an appointed hour. That did not work in America. Communication with the homeland was difficult, and supplies were slow to arrive. They were trying to fight on too many fronts at once, and could not possibly occupy every port on the American coast. In addition the war was costly and unpopular at home.

The tide turned for the Americans in December of 1776 when Washington outmaneuvered the British at Boston, and executed a brilliant surprise attack at Trenton on Christmas Eve. With the entry of the French on the side of the Americans the British were doomed. The coup de grace came at Yorktown in October 1781. Outnumbered two to one and prevented by a storm from escaping across the York River, Lord Cornwallis sent a note to General Washington:

▼ Cornwallis surrenders at Yorktown



*Sir, I propose a cessation of hostilities for twenty-four hours, and that two officers may be appointed by each side...so to settle terms for the surrender of the posts at York and Gloucester.*

Though a formal ending did not come for two more years, there was no more serious fighting, and the center of interest shifted to Paris where the American commissioners negotiated a brilliant peace treaty that recognized the independence of the colonists and defined her territories as stretching from the Atlantic seaboard to the Mississippi and from the Great Lakes to Spanish Florida. The Continental Congress ratified the treaty in September 1783.

### **The Road to the Presidency**

When the Constitutional Convention met in Philadelphia in 1787, delegates chose George Washington to chair the proceedings.. The only other person they could have considered was Benjamin Franklin, but he was past 80 and ill. Washington not only presided over the meetings, he circulated among the delegates and voiced his opinions on key matters. He was instrumental in creating a strong, bicameral federal government with a separate judiciary that still recognized states’ rights. Virginia would have considerable influence in the new government because of its size and wealth.

### **Politics and the Presidency**

Despite some opposition, the Constitution was ratified. There was no question that George Washington would become the first President of the United States. His unique standing in the nation was a big asset. Though he was not a financial expert, political tactician, constitutional theorist, or diplomat; he had become familiar with all of these as Chairman of the Constitutional Convention and as a member of the House of Burgesses. He was an honest, astute, and methodical administrator, and he had a certain majesty that Americans wanted in their leader. This last quality was evident when it came to determining what to call him. John Adams and the Senate suggested “His Highness the President of the United States of America and Protector of Their Liberties.” The House opted for “President of the United States.” Washington preferred “His Mightiness, the President of the United States.” The House prevailed.

Washington’s reactions to becoming President were mixed. He knew he would have to accept, but it meant spending four more years in the public eye; worse yet, he would have to spend those years map-

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ping unexplored territory. There was no precedent for the office he was about to assume; it was a territory he had to define for the American people.

Although there were no political parties in George Washington's time, the government and the nation quickly divided into two factions. There were the so-called Federalists led by Alexander Hamilton who advocated a strong executive, creation of a National Bank, assumption of war debts, and gravitation away from a dependence on an agrarian society toward manufacturing and urban development. Then there were the Anti-Federalists led by Thomas Jefferson who insisted on state's rights, an agrarian society, and a central government that governed as little as possible. Washington supported the Federalist position and, for the first time in his long career, became the target of open criticism. An Anti-Federalist faction that had sung "God save the great Washington" to the tune of "God Save the King" at his first inauguration, changed their tune during his second term. Opposition newspapers printed that Washington was not a demi-god but a "supercilious tyrant in his political dotage."

He had troubles in foreign policy as well. France had beheaded their king and gone to war with Great Britain. They expected American support both for their revolution and their conflict. While many Americans sympathized, others realized the bulk of American foreign trade was with the British. If that were suspended because the United States sided with the French, Hamilton's revenue system and the new economy would fail. Washington chose the only course he could have—Americans would remain neutral.

### The End of It All

Washington was 65 when he left office. He gladly turned over the reins of government to John Adams who had always considered himself Washington's superior. In 1777, as a member of the Continental Congress he wrote: *I have been distressed to see some members of this house disposed to idolize an image which their own hands have molten. I speak here of the superstitious veneration that is sometimes paid to General Washington. Altho' I honor him for his good qualities, yet in this House I feel myself his superior.*

At last, George Washington could go home. He felt old and his health was deteriorating. For most of his life, he had seemed immune to disease or injury, but by 1794, his body began to defy him. Once the finest horseman in Virginia, he fell from his horse and wrenched his back so badly he was never able to sit in the saddle with the same confidence again. He developed a paunch, and started to lean forward

as he walked. By the end of the day, he had lost his energy. To make matters worse, his mind had started to wander. He was willing to sit back and let others act, or even think for him. Adams described him as an aging athlete going through the motions.

On December 13, 1799, George Washington came down with a severe chill. When he did not improve, doctors were summoned. Following the practice of the time, they bled him, and bled him, and bled him. It is possible they literally bled him to death. He died on December 14, 1799, his century over. But he died leaving an America that was intact, thanks, in large part to his service.

### Man or Monument

"Was he man, or was he monument?" As a man of his time and place, he had the tastes of a squire. He liked good food, a game of cards, the theatre, racing, and hunting. He had a sense of humor, though not a great one. He was brave, but he was not a daredevil. He knew the frontier and could dress like a frontiersman, but he was no Davy Crockett. He was a rebel, but did not consider himself a revolutionary. Though not an intellectual, he respected the intellect of others. He was genial, but not outgoing. He would never, as did President Obama following his State of the Union Address, go out among the crowd hugging and kissing his supporters. No one even dared pat him on the back. He had no close friends, though he did confide in Lafayette and John Laurens, a young Carolina officer who was killed in the war. He was respected by his officers but from a distance. He was no one's buddy, and he was not "just folks."

It is impossible to "humanize" Washington too much. He was not like anyone else. His face was on everything from currency to household bric-a-brac. He was the horseman on the Confederate seal. He was the Colossus steering his boat through the icy waters of the Delaware and the man no bullet could kill. He was the commander of the Continental Army, the anchor that kept the American Revolution from flying off in all directions. He was the presiding officer of the Continental Congress, and the first President of the United States. He was the father of his country: a symbol of America, but real—both man and monument.

*Oh Washington! How do I love thy name! How have I often adored and blessed thy God for creating and forming thee, the great ornament of human kind!*

EZRA STILES OF YALE IN A SERMON 1783



## The Reading Corner

### Lincoln Gore Vidal

Reviewed by NORMAN BAUGHER

Looking back I remember three exceptional books about human endurance: *Endurance: Shackleton's Incredible Voyage*, by Alfred Lansing; *Unbroken*, by Laura Hillenbrand; and *Lincoln*, by Gore Vidal. In *Endurance* Sir Ernest Shackleton struggled against ice, sea, and cold to save his crew. In *Unbroken* Louis Zamperini survived a plane crash, weeks in a life raft in a shark infested ocean, and unimaginable torture in a Japanese prison camp. In *Lincoln* President Abraham Lincoln struggled to save a nation while enduring strife within his administration. He had to deal with a troubled wife and the death of two sons. As commander-in-chief during a civil war, he contended with incompetent generals and agonized constantly over the human slaughter brought on by the war. Physical endurance characterized first two books. Psychological pain dominated the Lincoln book. That pain is evident in the photos of Lincoln at the beginning and end of his presidency.

Abraham Lincoln was born 206 years ago on February 12. April 15th marks the 150th anniversary of his assassination. Thus, it seemed appropriate to revisit Gore Vidal's 1984 novel, *Lincoln*, the book that aroused my interest in nonfiction. Reading it in the 1980s, I wondered how accurately it reflected Lincoln's presidency. I knew that Gore Vidal had public appeal as a writer; but he had a reputation for being cynical, quarrelsome, patrician, and

political. He was not an historian, but a novelist, playwright, actor and pop culture figure. Would these occupations interfere with the accuracy of his historical observations?

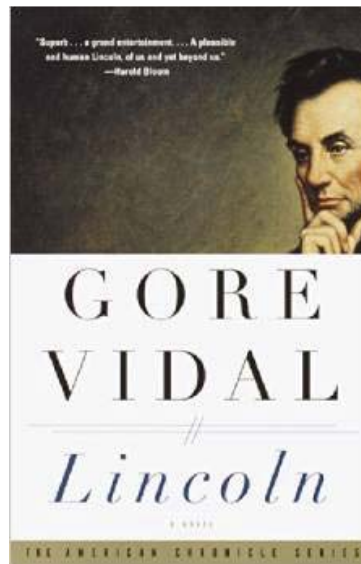
To check Vidal's Lincoln against those of established historians, I read a couple of books by Lincoln scholars.

These two grew to become a small library of Lincoln books, all confirming Gore Vidal's accuracy and pulling me into the world of nonfiction.

Vidal enhanced history by introducing fictional characters into *Lincoln*. These characters enabled him to add background details that make time and place more vibrant and the people "seem immediate and real." Besides setting the tone for life in mid-nineteenth century Washington, D.C., the fictions gave me an insight into the fears, hopes, and misunderstandings of that time better than any of the other Lincoln books I read.

The author also constructed fictional, though plausible lives, for actual persons in the Lincoln story—the Surratts and David Herold in particular, who were known mainly for their roles in the Booth Conspiracy. He did not, however, create fictional situations for the principle historical figures. Their actions are drawn from letters, diaries, newspapers, and the works of historians.

Lincoln rarely appears in the first half of the book. We meet him through the voices of his antagonists: those who are unhappy that a stranger and a Midwestern country bumpkin defeated them, sophisticated easterners



who were far more politically astute. As the book progresses, we arrive at a more complete understanding of Lincoln that is shaped both by his own thoughts and statements as well as the impressions of the people surrounding him. As Lincoln becomes the predominate figure, many of the disgruntled come to

recognize that he is not so ignorant as they thought.

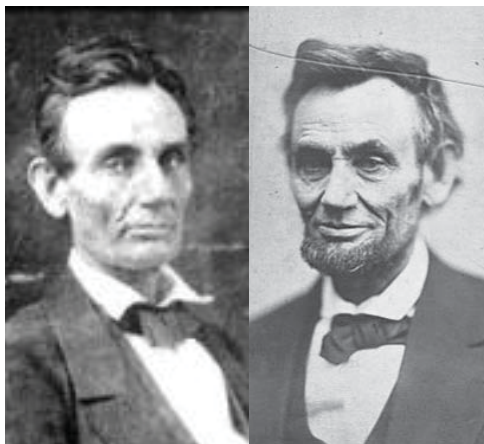
*But when it comes to a great mysterious figure like Lincoln, I do not enter his mind. I only show him as those around him saw him at specific times. This rules out hindsight, which is all that a historian, by definition, has; and which people in real life, or in its imitation the novel, can never have.*

GORE VIDAL, NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS, APRIL 28, 1988.

*Lincoln* begins like a mystery. *Elihu B. Washburn opened his gold watch. The spidery hands showed five minutes to six.* A disguised Lincoln is sneaking into Washington in the middle of the night, a few days before his inauguration. Because of the fear that Lincoln would be assassinated, Allen Pinkerton, founder of Pinkerton's National Detective Agency, had devised the plan to get Lincoln into the city and ensconced safely in Willard's Hotel before any plot could be executed.

Vidal shows how circumstances forced Lincoln to be an instant president. During Buchanan's final days as President, seven slave states had seceded. In short order Fort Sumter was fired on, Lincoln suspended the writ of habeas corpus, and there was a mad scramble to assemble troops to protect Washington from secessionists. The best military leaders deserted to the South. He had to find the means to finance the war. Rumors of assassination plots abounded, and there was fear of an attack on the capitol.

▼ Abraham Lincoln: the beginning and the end



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CHRISTINE BERN  
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Rebels inhibited transportation into Washington in an effort to prevent Union troops from entering the city.

Through it all, Lincoln emerged as a masterful leader. He maneuvered the Easterners in his cabinet like pieces on a chess board, outfoxing those who believed they were his superiors and foiling their plans to usurp his presidential powers. He crafted a controversial inaugural address he hoped would keep additional slave states from leaving the union by promising “. . . preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States.” Reading it, his secretary exclaimed, “My God, it is going to be war!” Four years later, Lincoln wrote in his Second Inaugural: “. . . the war came”. Despite the promises of the inaugural address, five more states did secede; but four crucial border slave states, including Maryland, remained in the union.

The war years were chaotic for Lincoln. Willie and Tad created havoc in the White House and were not

disciplined by their doting parents. Mary Todd Lincoln became even more troubling. Job seekers traipsed through at all hours. Secessionists left DC, and Union troops finally arrived. Amid all of this there was gossip, romantic intrigue, and business growth. Everyone knows how the story ends, but the story leading to that inevitable end is so powerful, I almost forgot the terrible conclusion until the moment it happened. When it did, I felt the shock as though it were today’s headline.

Vidal disliked other biographies of Lincoln, particularly Sandburg’s monumental *Lincoln*, about which he said, “Well, it’s a monument all right, to a plaster saint . . . .” He wrote about a Lincoln, warts and all, whom he clearly respected and admired.

*Nothing that Shakespeare ever invented was to equal Lincoln’s invention of himself and, in the process, us. What the Trojan War was to the Greeks, the Civil War is to us. What the wily Ulysses was to the Greeks, the wily*

*Lincoln is to us. I am neither Homer nor Virgil. But it is of those arms that I have tried to sing, and of that man—not plaster saint but towering genius, our nation’s haunted and haunting re-creator.*

GORE VIDAL, NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS”, APRIL 28, 1988.

Re-reading *Lincoln* after 30 years, I was afraid my earlier enthusiasm might have faded. It hadn’t. I strongly recommend this book to anyone who is interested in Lincoln’s presidency and hope that reading it will inspire you, as it did me, to read other Lincoln books, specifically: *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, *The Words that Remade America* in which Garry Wills shows the mastery of Lincoln as a writer and a student of classical funerary writing; and Doris Kearns Goodwin’s *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, which became the basis for the award-winning Steven Spielberg movie.

