

The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery Study Guide

The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery by Eric Foner

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Plot Summary

The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery is a nonfiction book by writer Eric Foner. In this book, Foner examines Lincoln's thoughts and attitudes toward slavery from early in his life up to the moment he signed the Emancipation Proclamation and beyond. While this book is not a biography, it takes a close look at Lincoln's career, specifically at his public life and the speeches he made concerning slavery throughout his career. The Fiery Trial is an interesting look at Lincoln's personal views and the difficult political position he found himself in as president during the Civil War.

This book takes a close look at the relationship between Abraham Lincoln and slavery. The author begins with Lincoln's early life, examining his home life and his home states and discusses how slavery was viewed in these states and how it most likely impacted Lincoln's views on slavery later in his life. Lincoln was born in Kentucky and would later marry a Kentucky-born woman. Kentucky would be considered a border state during the Civil War, a state where slavery was a way of life for many years. Due to the state's attitude toward slavery, Lincoln's father moved the family to Illinois, a state that was considered free of slavery. However, although the purchase of slaves in Illinois was illegal, it still existed in the state in a simpler form during Lincoln's childhood, and the Black Laws of the state created a social atmosphere that also would have impacted Lincoln's opinions on the institution.

In Lincoln's early political career he voiced a distaste for slavery, but in his law career he is known to have represented slave owners and to have been party in at least one case that forced a woman once held in slavery to be returned to her owner. As Lincoln's career expanded and public sentiment against slavery grew, Lincoln became more vocal about slavery. Lincoln entered into debates against political rival Stephen A. Douglas in the 1850s in regards to slavery, often voicing the opinion that slavery should not be legal in new territories and that an expansion of slavery throughout the nation would be a mistake.

Lincoln was a loyal Whig during the majority of his political career, but found the Whig party changing in the 1850s. In time, Lincoln began to align himself with the new Republican party because their values were more like his own. This included the belief that slavery was wrong and should not be allowed to continue. Lincoln quickly became a leader in the new party, accepting the presidential nomination in 1860.

As he ran for president, Lincoln continued to voice his opinions against slavery. These opinions included the fact that slavery should be abolished, but Lincoln proposed that the end of slavery should come slowly. Lincoln also embraced the idea of colonization, the idea of sending freed slaves to other countries where they would be given land on which to make a new life for themselves. This controversial, but popular, solution to the question of the mixing of races in the aftermath of emancipation grew out of Lincoln's admiration of politician Henry Clay and stayed with him even in the White House.

Lincoln never wanted to abolish slavery with one stroke of the pen, but believed that it was an institution that should be phased out slowly. However, the Civil War and events surrounding it pushed Lincoln's hand and set the stage for him to sign the Emancipation Proclamation.



Preface and Chapter 1

Preface and Chapter 1 Summary and Analysis

The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery is a nonfiction book by historical writer Eric Foner. Foner has written extensively on history, including a focus on the history of black people in America as well as the Civil War.

Preface. In the preface, the author expresses his intention with this book. Rather than write a biography of Lincoln, a man most Americans believe they know well, the author's intention is to show the reader Lincoln's growing and changing opinions of slavery throughout his life.

Chapter one shows that Lincoln was born in Kentucky in 1809. When Lincoln was seven, his family moved to southwestern Indiana, where he would live until he was twenty-one. The family would then move to northern Illinois where Lincoln would live until he assumed the presidency in 1861. Slavery was legal in Kentucky. Slavery had been prohibited in Indiana and Illinois since 1787, due to the Northwestern Ordinance. However, slaves often crossed into these states looking to escape from their owners. It is unknown how often or in what capacity Lincoln came into contact with the institution of slavery as a child. However, there are well documented trips Lincoln made down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers in both 1828 and 1831, during which he saw and commented on slaves.

In the late 1700s and early 1800s, slavery ended in many countries around the world including Great Britain, although it continued to exist in smaller territories such as Brazil and Puerto Rico. In the United States, most of the northern states outlawed slavery in their own states, although some of them limited this abolition of slavery to slaves born after a certain date, not to living slaves, which caused slavery to linger in some of these states. It was hoped that slavery would slowly die out throughout the United States. Despite this, the Constitution itself was written in such a way that it gave certain rights to slave states that did not exist in other states. This includes the Fugitive Slave Laws. As the United States began to grow, slavery grew as well, and more slave territories were admitted into the Union. However, with the abolition of slavery in the north, a line was drawn between the slave and free states. In time, abolitionist began to appear and begin fighting for the emancipation of all slaves, including those in states where slavery continued to be legal. This gave rise to a group of abolitionists known as colonization: abolitionists who believed that blacks should be freed and then relocated to another place where they could live in their own ways and own traditions apart from the white society of America.

Abolitionists began their fight against slavery as a propaganda campaign, hoping to end slavery by changing public opinion in regards of it. In this way, they published pamphlets, gave speeches, and spread the word any way they could. Not only did this opinion include the argument against holding human beings in bondage, but it also



promoted free labor as an alternative source of labor in areas where slavery was the only source of labor on large plantations and farms. Abolitionists also attempted to fight the thoughts of all Americans who had the opinion that blacks were of a lesser form of human. Despite this propaganda campaign, colonization would remain a strong movement throughout the abolitionist movement.

Early in his political career, Lincoln would remain distant from the abolitionist movement. However, during his tenure with the Illinois legislature, Lincoln would bring forward a motion to amend a resolution restricting the rights of abolitionists in Illinois. Lincoln's motion failed, but he was one of six who voted against the resolution. A year later, Lincoln would make a speech at the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield—a speech that would include a discussion on the violence that surrounded the abolitionist movement.

In the prologue of this book, the author makes it clear that this book is not a biography of Lincoln, but an analysis of his changing views toward slavery from the beginning of his life, through his political career, and to his death. The author is clear on this point and continues to stay true to his intentions as the book progresses.

In the first chapter of the book, the author introduces Lincoln's birthplace and how the political atmosphere of the area as well as his family's beliefs might have influenced his opinions. Lincoln grew up in several states where slavery was common, even though he moved to a state that outlawed slavery when he was still a young child. Lincoln's parents did not believe in slavery, and this perhaps is part of the reason Lincoln appears to have an aversion to slavery early in his life. There are letters Lincoln wrote during two trips down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers in which he describes seeing slaves chained and sold, a description of which Lincoln shows that he dislikes what he sees, but is somewhat ambivalent to it as well. Later, as the political atmosphere of Illinois changes in the early years of Lincoln's political career, he makes halfhearted attempts to stand up for the rights of slaves but is easily defeated and stopped.

During Lincoln's lifetime, slavery changed significantly in the United States. Even as the northern states were abolishing slavery and hoping it would die a quiet death in the South, the South became more dependent on slave labor. Slavery continued to spread through the United States as new territories entered the union as slave states. With these differing attitudes toward slavery came the growth of two different groups looking to abolish slavery. The first was a group of people who believed slaves should be freed and sent to a new colony elsewhere, away from the white society of America. The other was the abolitionist who believed the blacks should be freed and welcomed into white society. While time would show that Lincoln was against slavery and embraced some of the beliefs of colonization, he disliked the overhanded and violent ways of the abolitionists and resented the violence that seemed to surround them.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary and Analysis

Chapter two shows that while Lincoln's ideals might have fit the Democratic Party better, he was a member of the Whig party from the early part of his career until its demise in the 1850s. The Whigs supported the ideals of Henry Clay, which included the ideas of abolishing slavery and colonization. The author suggests that a great many of Lincoln's ideals were born from his childhood with a father he resented, a father who often sent him off as a laborer to pay off debts, treating his child almost like a slave. Lincoln later married into a well-respected family and built a prosperous career, but he knew struggle and poverty early in life. Perhaps this allowed Lincoln to be more open to the ideals of the Whigs as well as the struggle of the blacks, both in slavery and out.

In the 1840s, slavery moved from the wings into the forefront of American politics. Lincoln came to recognize it as a threat to the sovereignty of the United States. The focus in the 1840s was not the abolition of slavery, but curbing the spread of slavery into new territories admitted to the union. The Liberty party, a party consisting of abolitionists, was formed during this time period. Like most other politicians, the Liberty party believed that the Constitution left the ultimate decision of slavery to the individual states, but a few party members attempted to challenge this to little success.

In the 1840s, most of Lincoln's income was derived from his law practice. During this time, Lincoln represented few black litigants, but did represent several whites in cases having to do with libel in regards to their relations with black people and several cases regarding the right of selling blacks in Illinois. One of Lincoln's most controversial cases took place during this time. Lincoln helped represent a slave owner whose slave and four children claimed to be free when the owner transported them from Kentucky into Illinois. Lincoln won the case, forcing the woman and her children to be returned into slavery in Kentucky.

In the late 1840s, Lincoln served in the Congress. During this time slavery dominated much of the debate. In early 1848, the presidential elections dominated much of the political atmosphere. In January of that year Lincoln delivered a speech against the current president, criticizing his policy regarding Mexico and the struggle that was taking place between the United States and Mexico at the time. Lincoln's main aim was to point out that attaining land was Polk's only consideration, although no policy had been established as to whether the land would come into the union as a slave holding territory or not. This would remain a hot issue, dominating many speeches Lincoln would give over the following year.

After Taylor's election, slavery would remain a hot issue in Washington, including a movement to abolish slavery from the nation's capital. However, this measure would fail repeatedly due to questions as to what would become of the free slaves and the expected influx of slaves from legal slave states seeking refuge.



In this chapter, the author reviews Lincoln's political affiliations and his early political career. The author notes that Lincoln was a follower of Henry Clay, a politician from his home state of Kentucky, who had strong views on the abolishment of slavery and colonization. Lincoln clearly reveals as time passes that he believes the same things Clay believed. While Lincoln fights for equality of the races in his speeches and political votes, he also appeared to have a basic belief that blacks are not equal to whites and could not live peaceably side by side. This is evident in Lincoln's legal career as he made the choice to take the case of a white slave owner in having his slave and her family returned to him after she traveled into a free state. This seems contradictory to Lincoln's later actions, but the reader must understand that Lincoln's beliefs in the abolition of slavery were radical and he had grown up in a background that made it difficult for him to be as fully enlightened as he would later become.

Slavery was a hot issue during the time period in which Lincoln was politically active and was practicing law. The majority of people in Lincoln's life were either slave owners or came from a background in which slavery was simply a way of life. The author is attempting to show the reader in this chapter that Lincoln's attitude toward slavery came slowly, that it took time for him to fully appreciate the black man's situation. While Lincoln always believed that slavery was basically wrong, his attitude toward black people in general was not as high as people might have believed knowing what he would do when he became president. Lincoln believed that blacks and whites could not live together harmoniously and adopted the idea that free blacks should be invited to start their lives over somewhere else, outside of the country, in a deal known as colonization. The author shows this through an examination of some of the cases he took as a young lawyer and through many of the speeches he made in his early political career.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary and Analysis

Chapter three shows how in October of 1854, Lincoln gave a speech denouncing America's new policy regarding slavery in new western territories. Although Lincoln no longer held, nor appeared to aspire to, any political office, he blasted the Kansas-Nebraska Act in numerous public venues in an attempt to restore the Missouri Compromise. During this time period, Lincoln used stronger language than he had ever used before to discuss his opinion that slavery was a monstrous injustice.

The Whig party began to fracture in the early 1850s, forcing Lincoln to find a new party. The emergence of the Republican party in 1856 provided Lincoln with a new party that supported his beliefs, but included a more radical faction that Lincoln would find himself attempting to both appease and calm as the party grew in the late 1850s.

The presidential election of 1856 would prove to be a pivotal point in Lincoln's career. While he was not running for office, Lincoln would all but abandon his law practice to make more than a hundred speeches for the Republican party's candidate, John C. Fremont. Buchanan would win the election, but Fremont did well enough to encourage the Republicans for future elections.

In this chapter, the author outlines the political turmoil that existed in the United States, creating new political parties and causing the demise of others. Lincoln had always been a loyal Whig party member, but in the 1850s, the Whig party began to change, adding new members with different values than those the traditional Whig party had once embraced. This divided the party and created a situation in which several elections were faced with multiple candidates from multiple parties and running independently. As a result, Lincoln found himself forced to contemplate leaving the party he so loved.

As Lincoln found himself without a party, he also found himself pushed into the political arena once more. Lincoln adopted the new Republican party as his own, finding that many of their values matched his own. However, there were members of the Republican party who were more radical in regards to the abolition of slavery, failing to heed Lincoln's message that slavery was an institution that did not grow overnight and therefore could not be destroyed overnight. This political upheaval helped reveal more of Lincoln's values as to slavery. Lincoln would preach that slavery could not be abolished with a simple act. The reader might find this ironic since it would be Lincoln a few years later who would do exactly that.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary and Analysis

In chapter four, in March of 1857, the Supreme Court handed down the Dred Scot decision, declaring that the founding fathers did not intend to include blacks in their wording of the Constitution. This decision would send a ripple through the nation. In the wake of the Dred Scot decision, President Buchanan declared that slavery existed in all states under the Constitution and tried to bring Kansas in as a slave state under the Lecompton Constitution, despite the fact that it did not support the wishes of the citizens of Kansas. Douglas and several others sided with the Republicans in an attempt to block this constitution. This caused a split in the Democratic party just before the 1860 presidential campaign. At the convention that year, Lincoln presented his House Divided speech in which he suggested that the country needed to either embrace slavery in all states, or abolish it in all states.

As they campaigned for the Senate in 1858, Lincoln found himself answering Douglas' speeches on the campaign trail, therefore he and his supporters decide to invite Douglas to debate the issues. The debates would deal mostly with their opposing views of slavery. Although the debates would increase Lincoln's reputation, Douglas would win the election.

In 1859, Lincoln continued to give speeches on slavery, most of the material already familiar to his audience. However, Lincoln also began speaking about free labor in the north. Lincoln argued that free labor would be much more profitable if brought to the South because the workers would much better motivated to work if they were promised wages at the end of the day. His opponents argued, however, that life was rarely better for the free labor worker than for a slave.

Even as the fight to free the slaves expanded, the prejudices of those fighting for this right began to compromise their fight. Many abolitionists who fought for the end of slavery also embraced a darker view of blacks, continuing to think of them as less deserving of the same rights as a white man. This led to a new debate as to what would happen with all the black people set free in the South. Colonization was a solution that had been promoted before. Henry Clay had been a strong supporter of colonization. Lincoln was known to have been a strong supporter of colonization.

In this chapter, the author discusses the changing political climate in the late 1850s that led to the Lincoln-Douglas debates and their fallout. When the Dred Scot decision came down from the Supreme Court, it created a ripple through the country, dividing the country further on the issue of slavery. Many saw the Dred Scot decision as proof that black people were not covered by the Constitution and therefore did not deserve some of the basic rights that the citizens of America are given under the Constitution. This muddied the debates for and against slavery.



The author points out, however, that Lincoln's views never wavered and he continued to urge the government not to allow new territories to be slave owning states. Lincoln continued to argue that the Declaration of Independence covered blacks as well as whites and other immigrants to the country. To this end, Lincoln found himself often presenting an opposite opinion to the one Douglas often offered. For this reason, Lincoln invited Douglas to a series of debates that to this day are considered one of the most important events in American history. Not only did these debates set up a new way for political candidates to present their views to the American people, but it is also a well-documented view of the slavery debate that took place during this time period.

The chapter also discusses colonization in detail. Colonization was the idea that America could collect all the black people who would be freed when slavery ended and allow them to begin new lives in another place. The idea was that blacks and whites should not be expected to co-exist and that it would be easier for everyone if blacks were able to form their own community, outside of the United States. While to modern ears this may sound like just another form of prejudice, during this time period it seemed like a reasonable solution to a problem no one was quite sure how to handle. Lincoln was a well-documented proponent of this solution most of his political career.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary and Analysis

In chapter five, Lincoln is shown to have pushed for a united Republican party, aware that this would be essential if they were to win in 1860. To achieve this, the Republicans became aware that they must stay away from the idea of black equality. They also realized that becoming embroiled in the fight over the Fugitive Slave Law could cause them trouble. Lincoln promoted the Republican party as a conservative party, despite their views on slavery. In a speech at the Cooper Institute, Lincoln claimed that the Republicans did not want to change slavery in states where it already existed, but only wanted to stop it from expanding. Lincoln also suggested that it was Southerners who were tearing apart the country, not Republicans, by threatening secession.

The Democratic party remained divided in 1860, presenting two candidates to the people for the presidential campaign. The northerners nominated Stephen A. Douglas while the Southerners chose John C. Breckinridge. An independent party, the Constitutional Union party, chose John C. Bell as their candidate. The campaign was intense. In the end, Lincoln took most of the northern states while the vote in the South was split between Bell and Breckinridge. This allowed for Lincoln to win the Electoral College.

Seven slave states in the South immediately declared their independence when Lincoln was elected. There was a mixed reaction in Congress in how to deal with the seceded states. Many wanted to teach them a lesson, to not bend to their demands. Others thought that the government should do whatever it took to get them to return to the nation. Buchanan, who was still in office at the time, refused to accept the legality of secession and continued to treat the seven states as a part of the United States. Several bills were presented in Congress over the next few months to create a compromise and to entice the states back. Lincoln remained in Illinois until a short time before his inauguration.

In his inaugural address, Lincoln stated that he had no intention of interfering with slavery in southern states, but that in his mind the states had not seceded because it was not possible for them to do so. The South did not see Lincoln's speech as consolatory, however, and the South remained unsatisfied with the government's position.

A short time after Lincoln took office, Southerners fired on Fort Sumter. As a result, Lincoln was forced to declare an insurrection in the southern states and send reinforcements. Lincoln was careful to never mention the word slavery when making his orders or speaking about the war. At the same time, Northern Democrats also declared that the war was not about slavery, but a direct response to the insurrection of the South. However, war declared an interesting situation for the slaves. With the Southern



states seceding, slaves were beginning to attempt escape into the North. Now Lincoln had to decide what to do with the slaves who were claiming asylum.

In this chapter, Lincoln campaigned for and was elected to the presidency. The debate over slavery had expanded to such a point that with the election of a politician with a clear anti-slavery platform, seven states in the South had seceded. The threats of secession had been around for years; therefore, this act was of no surprise to anyone. However, the government was immediately thrown into disarray because no one knew for sure what to do about it. Some wanted to do whatever it took to entice the southern states into returning to the union, while others did not want to offer any compromise at all. If the politicians had compromised, if they were able to pass any of the bills or Constitutional Amendments they had been planning on, then it would have set the slavery debate back by years. However, no one wanted war.

Lincoln was a politician, but he was also a human being. Personally, Lincoln understood that holding another human being in bondage was wrong. Lincoln had debated and spoken about his views in public for more than a decade by the time he was elected president. However, even Lincoln had not fully formed these opinions at this point, and he was unclear of what to do as he faced a crisis in his country based on this debate.

The author shows that while Lincoln was fundamentally against slavery, he was not so hard set on it that he decided to make slavery illegal upon his first act of the presidency. Lincoln was also not willing to allow the southern states to influence the government with an act of rebellion. The author shows the reader that Lincoln was in a difficult position as he took the office of president, and that he faced many crisis even before he took the oath.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary and Analysis

In chapter six, from the moment the war began, slaves began to escape and to make their way to the north or to northern held military forts. Although the country was at war, the Fugitive Slave Law was still in effect, and many of these slaves were sent back to their home states even if it meant sending them back into bondage. However, on May 23, 1861, at Fortress Monroe, General Benjamin F. Butler decided not to send a group of escape slaves back to their owners. Instead, Butler, citing a need for more manpower, declared slaves contraband of war, allowing him to keep them. Butler soon had dozens of slaves coming to him. Lincoln was made aware of what Butler had done and approved, but he could not publicly support him. For this reason, other commanders of Northern held forts were left to their own discretion as to how to handle fugitive slaves.

In July of 1861, Congress was called to special session. A bill was passed declaring the war had nothing to do with slavery but was being fought in order to preserve the Constitution. Several bills regarding slavery were considered, but few made it to a vote. One, however, did. The Confiscation Act was passed, the first bill to be enacted that forced the government to deal directly with slavery. This bill allowed for slaves to be confiscated and used in the military, both in the north and south. However, this bill did not specifically state whether the slave in question would be freed after their service in the military ended.

Throughout the early years of the war, individual military commanders were left to make their own choices regarding the emancipation of slaves. John C. Fremont was commanding forces in Missouri and would emancipate the slaves of rebels whom he executed. Fremont did this with the idea of separating the blacks from the South and using them in the north to weaken the enemy. This did not go over well in the border states, especially Kentucky. Lincoln felt he needed to keep the border states from seceding. Lincoln was advised to tell Fremont to stop his practice, but Fremont refused. Six weeks later, Lincoln removed Fremont from his command.

The Fremont incident would prove to be the most controversial of Lincoln's presidency. Many would criticize Lincoln for stopping Fremont, including Fremont himself, who suggested that he had handed Lincoln an opportunity to deal with slavery and he refused to take it. Lincoln, however, knew it was more important to keep the country together, which meant holding on to the border states if at all possible

In the fall of 1861, public sentiment appeared to be in favor of emancipation of the slaves. One politician who had previously not taken a stance for or against slavery came out in support of emancipation. Lincoln approached Delaware politicians with the idea of passing a bill to slowly end slavery in that state, a plan that included an apprenticeship program and compensation to owners. This plan was also extended to



all the other border states. Although he did not include it in his initial plan, Lincoln also floated the idea of colonization.

In February, to deal with the question of fugitive slaves seeking asylum with the army, Lincoln signed into law an article of war that forbade the military from returning fugitive slaves to their owners. Also in February, Lincoln proposed a measure to compensate states who willingly agreed to abolish slavery within its borders. The response was mixed, but this measure soon led to the abolishment of slavery in Washington D.C., something Lincoln had fought for earlier in his political career. A short time later, Lincoln would also sign into law a bill that would abolish slavery in the American territories.

This chapter outlines the changes toward slavery the American government made in Lincoln's first sixteen months in office. The federal government had never before directly dealt with the issue of slavery. As war began in the South, however, Congress found itself forced to deal with the issue directly. Many bills were presented in Congress, but few of them survived debate, especially in the early months of secession and war. However, as the war began and the military became involved in the equation, things began to change on the federal level.

Lincoln, who has always been morally opposed to slavery, found himself in a precarious position in the early months of his presidency. Due to the fact that Lincoln knew he had to hold on to the border states, the states bordering seceded states that either were slave owning or were sympathetic to slave states, so that he could stop them from severing the country even further. This caused Lincoln to be forced to walk a thin line when it came to slavery, often making choices that outraged his anti-slavery supporters and the more radical members of his political party. However, Lincoln was eventually able to make several changes in federal policy toward slavery, including abolishing slavery in Washington D.C. and in the new territories. It was small, but it was a beginning.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary and Analysis

In chapter seven, as the war progressed, what to do about slaves and freed slaves who wanted to serve in the Union Army became an issue. At first Lincoln instructed his officers not to allow blacks in the army. Lincoln was afraid the nation was not prepared for such a radical move and still worried that the border states would secede. Lincoln struggled to appease the border states while also attempting to conform to his own desire to see slavery abolished. In July of 1862, Lincoln introduced legislation to Congress for gradual emancipation of the slaves in the border states, but the measure failed. A short time later, Lincoln introduced a measure that would give compensation to states who agreed to abolish slavery. This offer was also rejected. However, as the military continued to struggle to find enough men for menial labor at the camps, a bill was introduced that would allow for the confiscation of slaves belonging to rebels who crossed Union lines. This bill would be successful and came to be known as the Second Confiscation Act.

In the aftermath of signing the Second Confiscation Act, it became clear that Lincoln was considering declaring mass abolishment of slavery throughout the country. Lincoln presented four measures to Congress that would allow the Army to confiscate property in enemy territory, including slaves. Three of these passed. A short time later, Lincoln announced that he planned to use his wartime powers to declare immediate abolishment of slavery without compensation. Lincoln's cabinet was shocked at his decision, especially Seward, whom Lincoln expected to give him his full support. Seward, however, feared that making the announcement immediately would encourage foreign interference because Britain would be concerned about their cotton supply and it would appear to be an act of desperation. Lincoln agreed, tabling the discussion temporarily.

In September of 1862, Lincoln issued a Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. This proclamation stated that the south had until January 1 to return to Union or face the freeing of their slaves immediately. The proclamation offered gradual emancipation and compensation to the border states and any states that returned voluntarily to the Union. At the same time, Lincoln continued to push the debate over colonization. Secretary of State Seward arranged treaties with several foreign governments to colonize some of their colonies in the Caribbean basin in the wake of a failure of the Chiriqui colony. However, many foreign countries were unhappy with the idea of America using their colonies to deal with their freed slaves. At the same time, Lincoln continued to push the idea of gradual emancipation and colonization to the American people even as the Republicans took a hit in the recent elections and the border states expressed outrage at the impending proclamation.

In order to get around the Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln allowed southern states to hold an congressional election in which he required a majority of citizens to vote.



Louisiana, Tennessee, and Eastern Virginia all took this route. West Virginia, chose another route. They asked to be entered into the Union as a separate state, agreeing that all black children born after July 1863 would be free. Lincoln eventually signed the resolution. Then, on January 1, 1863 Lincoln published his Emancipation Proclamation, freeing the slaves in the remaining southern states. However, the Emancipation Proclamation did not pertain to the slaves in the border states, leaving nearly a million people in bondage.

In this chapter, the author describes the acts that led to Lincoln signing the Emancipation Proclamation. Lincoln struggled during the early years of the war with the idea of slavery and how to bring about its end. Although Congress had declared that the Civil War was not about slavery, but about preserving the Union, slavery remained a major issue between the warring peoples. Not only this, but as the war continued, hundreds of slaves overran the military encampments as the Union moved further and further into the South. Many of Lincoln's military leaders wanted to use blacks in their ranks, mostly as menial laborers to free white men to fight. Lincoln allowed his commanders to act as they felt they should, but soon was forced to make a definite decision to guide his military. This led to the Second Confiscation Act.

Lincoln was always a president who listened closely to what his people wanted. As more and more policy was written in regards to slavery, public sentiment leaned toward an outright abolishment of slavery. Lincoln suggested an emancipation policy to his cabinet, but was immediately warned against it. However, as the war dragged on and policy continued to be ambiguous, Lincoln came to believe emancipation, or the threat of it, was the only thing he could do. For this reason, Lincoln issued the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, warning the southern states that they must comply with his demands or face the loss of their slaves. Several states complied, including West Virginia, which was made into a new state, but many others did not. For this reason, Lincoln issued the Proclamation Emancipation, a historical document that freed the slaves in the southern states. However, opposite to common belief, this document did not free all the slaves in the United States, nor did it provide for any kind of future for the slaves who were freed. However, as the author points out, it was a good beginning.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary and Analysis

Chapter eight shows how as part of the Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln cleared the way for blacks to serve in the military. Originally planning on keeping the blacks to a labor role, Lincoln quickly changed his mind and encouraged blacks to enlist as soldiers. Thousands of young black men enlisted in the military at a salary less than the white soldiers. Lincoln signed into law a bill that dictated that black soldiers were to be treated equally as white soldiers. This outlook led to Lincoln's first meeting with Frederick Douglass in August of 1863. Lincoln's meeting with Douglass was one of many Lincoln would have with intelligent, accomplished black men during his presidency. Through these meetings, Lincoln's opinions on race began to change.

In 1864, Maryland abolished slavery. West Virginia, which had committed to a gradual emancipation of its slaves, abolished slavery the following year, with Missouri and Tennessee following suit. To Lincoln, however, abolishing slavery in Louisiana was the most important step because Louisiana was the only state in the south in which he attempted to apply his plan for Reconstruction as he had in Missouri and Tennessee. When Louisiana ratified its new constitution, abolishing slavery, it was a victory as much for Lincoln as for the slaves in Louisiana.

In this chapter, the author has presented the aftermath of the Emancipation Proclamation. While the direction of the war changed in 1863, the fight to free the slaves continued. Lincoln found himself in a position where he not only had to defend his proclamation, but in which he needed to find a solution to the sudden influx of large numbers of black citizens without jobs, homes, or occupations. Lincoln changed the rules of enlistment and allowed blacks to serve in the military. Lincoln also initiated several free labor programs, finally giving up his idea of colonization after realizing that relocating to a new country was not something most blacks wanted and the overwhelming failure of a government supported black colony in Haiti.

Lincoln freed the slaves in the south, but many of them would not be freed until the Union Army marched into their hometowns and freed them forcibly. Others were not freed, however, under the Emancipation Proclamation. However, Lincoln began to look toward reconstructing the country and began implementing plans to encourage these states to free their slaves. In time, Missouri, Tennessee, Maryland, West Virginia, and Louisiana would free their slaves under this plan. Lincoln was strong in his convictions during this time period and did all he could to help a people he was quickly discovering were more than he had at first imagined. Illustrating the theme of personal growth, Lincoln turned his thoughts away from colonization and slowly came to the realization that black people were not different from whites and could mix in society. This is a major change from the Lincoln, who addressed a black delegate and told them there were significant differences between them that would prevent the mixing of society.



Chapter 9 and Epilogue

Chapter 9 and Epilogue Summary and Analysis

In chapter nine, as Lincoln focused on encouraging state initiated emancipation in the states, the Radicals turned to the idea of a Constitutional amendment. Republicans presented a draft of the amendment to Congress. Democrats did not support the measure, and this led to a great deal of debate over the issue. Finally, however, in April of 1864, the Senate passed the amendment, but it failed to pass the House. Congress did repeal the Fugitive Slave Act in June of 1864.

Lincoln had always worried about the Constitutionality of the Emancipation Proclamation; therefore, when the House chose to revote on the Thirteenth Amendment, Lincoln threw his support behind the measure. On January 31, 1865, the House passed the Thirteenth Amendment. Shortly afterward, Lincoln would meet with several leaders from the South to attempt negotiations to end the war and to encourage them to ratify the new Constitutional amendment. This meeting, known as the Hampton Road conference, did not achieve its desired end. At the same time, the Thirteenth Amendment was sent out to state governments for ratification. Including the seceded Southern states, there were thirty-six states, requiring it to be ratified in twenty-seven states. This would have to include five Southern states, creating a difficult situation for the amendment's supporters.

Even as an amendment was being ratified making slavery illegal, the problem of what to do with freed slaves persisted. Sherman, as he burned through the Southern states, began giving forty acres of land to freed slaves and their families. This raised more questions than it solved, however, leaving the question of what to do with the freed slaves the main focus of Lincoln's second term.

In the epilogue, in Lincoln's second inaugural address, he did not pat himself on the back for his success in the war that was quickly moving toward an end. Instead, Lincoln focused on religion and the future. A short time later, the Confederate Congress approved a measure to allow blacks into the military, something Lincoln saw as an act of desperation. On April 9, a few weeks later, Grant accepted Lee's surrender. The focus then turned to reconstruction. In a final speech given days before his assassination, Lincoln encouraged Republicans to think as reconstruction as a practical problem, not a philosophical one.

In these sections of the novel, the author takes the reader beyond the Emancipation Proclamation to the events that led to the Thirteenth Amendment. The Thirteenth Amendment would take the Emancipation Proclamation a step further, outlawing slavery throughout the United States, rather than freeing the slaves in the South and leaving slavery legal in the border states. Lincoln continued to push for individual Constitutional changes in the border states and gradual emancipation, but his fears that the

Emancipation Proclamation would eventually be declared unconstitutional supported the amendment. It would be ratified eight months after his death.

These final sections of the novel show the toll the presidency took on Lincoln and how much remained to be completed. Reconstruction became as much of a debate as slavery ever was because no one knew what to do about the millions of black people suddenly freed and needing a source of employment and a home. Even the abolitionists had not thought this far ahead. Lincoln found opposition all along the way as he attempted to enforce his plans. Unfortunately for the country, Lincoln died before a final decision could be reached as to the reconstruction of the country. For that reason, it would take decades for a solution to be found, one that came at a great price.

Characters

Abraham Lincoln

Abraham Lincoln was born in Kentucky, but moved to Illinois as a small boy. Lincoln was the son of a farmer who would often loan his son out to neighbors in order to pay off the debts the father owed. Lincoln would come to resent this work, equating himself with a slave who had no choice over the work he was forced to do and who was not compensated for this work. Later, Lincoln would become a self-educated man who would distance himself from his family.

As a young man, Lincoln came into contact with slaves on several occasions. This contact made an important impression on young Lincoln, helping to solidify his stance against slavery. Early in Lincoln's political career, he made it clear that he believed that the institution of slavery was immoral and would have to end eventually. However, Lincoln often wavered on his opinion in regards to black people as a race. Lincoln worked a legal case in which a young woman was forced back into slavery, but also fought for laws that restricted the rights of slave owners.

As late as the first two years of his first presidential term, Lincoln continued to believe in colonization—the removal of free blacks from the United States. Lincoln believed that blacks and whites could not co-exist in society. However, Lincoln would later meet several black leaders who would convince him that there was no difference in the humanity of white and black persons. These personal beliefs of Lincoln's changed and fluctuated throughout his life, but they led him to the Emancipation Proclamation, solidifying Lincoln's place in history as the Great Emancipator.

Stephen A. Douglas

Stephen A. Douglas was a politician during the same period in which Lincoln was politically active. In the 1850s, Douglas was a senator from Illinois. Douglas was a supporter of territorial expansion and the Mexican War. Douglas also supported the expansion of slavery into new territories, something Lincoln opposed. When President Buchanan suggested that the Dred Scot decision suggested that slavery was legal in every state of the union and he attempted to bring Kansas into the union as a slave state, Douglas surprisingly opposed him because it was against the wishes of the majority of the residents in Kansas. Douglas was a strong supporter of popular sovereignty and used this as an explanation for his stance.

During the 1858 Senate race, Lincoln found himself following Douglas around the state, often responding to accusations made in Douglas' speeches. For this reason, Lincoln suggested a series of debates between himself and Douglas. These debates were historically significant and they helped to boost Lincoln's reputation. In the debates, Douglas accused Lincoln of dividing the nation, of encouraging the Southern states to



secede from the union. Lincoln accused Douglas of pushing for national slavery. While Douglas eventually won the Senate race, these debates helped to bring the Republican party to the forefront and had a hand in helping Lincoln win the Presidential election two years later.

Henry Clay

Henry Clay was a politician from Kentucky when Lincoln was a young man. Henry Clay had strong opinions regarding slavery that included the idea that slavery needed to be abolished slowly and that the freed slaves should be encouraged to move to other countries where America would help them establish a new colony. Lincoln was a great admirer of Clay, and in his early political career it is easy to see how closely Lincoln's beliefs shadowed those of Clay. Lincoln seemed to solidify this idea when he presented a eulogy at Clay's funeral that spoke of their shared values.

John C. Fremont

John C. Fremont was a politician during Lincoln's latter career. When Lincoln first joined the new Republican party, Fremont was the chosen presidential candidate for the party. Lincoln campaigned for Fremont, attempting to encourage the Republican party to embrace a united set of values in order to draw in more support. Later, when Lincoln was President of the United States, Fremont was a general who led Union troops in Missouri. Fremont would find and execute rebels and free their slaves. Fremont also declared all slaves in Missouri free. While Lincoln quietly agreed with Fremont's policy, his need to keep the border states, specifically Kentucky, on his side, so he was forced to ask Fremont to cease and desist. When Fremont refused, Lincoln was forced to remove him from command.

General Benjamin F. Butler

General Benjamin F. Butler was commander of Fortress Monroe at the beginning of the Civil War. When three slaves came to him and told him that they were being forced by their owner to help the Confederate Army but they would rather help the Union, Butler took them into his fort and put them to work. When their owner, Colonel Charles Mallory came asking for his slaves back, Butler told him that as a citizen of a seceded state, he was part of a foreign country and therefore was not entitled to satisfaction under the Fugitive Slave Law. Butler agreed to give the slaves back if Mallory took an oath of loyalty to the United States, but Mallory declined. Butler would go on to give asylum to more than forty more slaves before word of his actions caused Lincoln to replace him as commander in order to soothe the border states which were so crucial in Lincoln's mind to the preservation of the Union.



General William T. Sherman

General William T. Sherman was a commander of Union troops during the Civil War. Toward the end of the war, as the Confederates weakened and it became clear that the war would soon end, Sherman took his troops into the South. During his campaign in the South, Sherman assigned plots of land to slaves who had recently learned of their freedom due to the Emancipation Proclamation.

Secretary of State William Seward

Secretary of State William H. Seward was one of Lincoln's closest advisors during his years in the White House. When Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, Seward advised him not to go public with it immediately for fear of what its impact would do to the country, which was in the middle of a Civil War at the time. Seward would later be a target of the same assassination plot that ended Lincoln's life.

Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass was a black abolitionist. Lincoln was aware of Douglass' throughout his political career, and Douglass often looked to Lincoln as a strong supporter of his cause. While Lincoln was in the White House, he would meet with Douglass on several occasions to discuss slavery and rights of the black man. Douglass would meet with Lincoln to encourage him to allow blacks to join the military. Lincoln would also meet with Douglass after issuing the Emancipation Proclamation to discuss ways in which to spread word of the act.

Mary Todd Lincoln

Mary Todd Lincoln was Abraham Lincoln's wife. Mary Todd was the daughter of a Kentucky banker. When Lincoln began to court Mary Todd, he visited many members of her family, including several who owned slaves. Lincoln also worked closely with members of Mary Todd's family, who had ideas regarding slavery that were not always consistent with Lincoln's own opinions. The author notes these relationship and suggests ways in which they might have influenced his own beliefs or reinforced those beliefs.

Thomas Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson was one of the founding fathers of the United States and the writer of the Declaration of Independence. In the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson demands that all people have certain inalienable rights. Lincoln took Jefferson at his word and often used the Declaration of Independence and Jefferson's words written there and in other historical papers to support the abolition of slavery. In his latter

political career, Jefferson became as much of an influence on Lincoln and his views as Clay had been in his earlier career.



Objects/Places

Fort Sumter

Fort Sumter was a Union fort outside of Charleston, South Carolina. The Confederates fired on Fort Sumter in April of 1861, beginning the Civil War.

Fortress Monroe

Fortress Monroe was a Union held fort where commander General Benjamin Butler declared slaves war contraband and freed those who came to the fort.

Appomattox Court House

General Robert E. Lee surrendered at the Appomattox Court House in Virginia on April 9, 1865, ending the Civil War.

New Orleans

As a young man, Lincoln took two trips to New Orleans to deliver merchandise for an employer. It is known that Lincoln came into contact with slaves during these trips. Lincoln wrote to friends of his impressions of these encounters, suggesting both horror and some fascination with an institution that would come to form Lincoln's legacy.

Gettysburg Address

The Gettysburg Address is a speech Lincoln gave at Gettysburg, the scene of the Union victory over the Confederate Army that marked the turning point in the Civil War.

Dred Scott Decision

The Dred Scott decision was a Supreme Court decision handed down in 1857. Dred Scott sued for his freedom and the freedom of his family because they had been living in a state where slavery had been declared illegal. The United States Supreme Court ruled against Scott, finding that neither he, nor any person of African ancestry, could claim citizenship in the United States. Therefore, Scott could not bring suit in federal court. Not only this, but by declaring Scott free, his owner would be left unfairly without his property. The decision created a whirlwind of debate. President Buchanan even used it to attempt to bring Kansas into the Union as a slave state.

Black Laws of Illinois

While Illinois was a free state, there were enacted a set of Black Laws in the early 1800s that restricted the lives of black people living in the state, including forbidding blacks to be taught to read and write and requiring a bond to be posted before free blacks could visit the state. These laws would be repealed in 1865.

The Kansas-Nebraska Act

The Kansas-Nebraska Act repelled the Missouri Compromise and gave the right of the citizens of new territories to choose whether they entered the Union as a slave or free state. Lincoln spoke out against this act in a speech given on October 16, 1854.

First Confiscation Act

The first Confiscation Act nullified owner's rights to their slaves who were employed by the Confederate Army.

Second Confiscation Act

The Second Confiscation Act, signed into law on July 17, 1862, declared all slaves brought into Union lines owned by disloyal citizens free. The act also gave funds to a colonization program.

Emancipation Proclamation

The Emancipation Proclamation is an executive order issued by United States President Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863, during the Civil War under his war powers. It proclaimed the freedom of 3.1 million of the nation's 4 million slaves, and immediately freed 50,000 of them, with the rest freed as Union armies advanced.

Thirteenth Amendment

The Thirteenth Amendment is an amendment to the United States Constitution that abolishes slavery in the United States. It was ratified December 18, 1865.

Themes

Slavery

Slavery is the act of holding a human being in bondage. From before this country was formed, slavery was a way of life, especially in the South. Many plantation owners depended on slaves in order to plant, cultivate, and harvest their crops. While many northern states had abolished slavery by the early 1800s, many states in the southern section of the United States still depended on slave labor. This became a hot topic in political circles, especially as the United States continued to expand into the west, adding new states that could change the balance of slave and free states.

Lincoln was born in Kentucky, a state where slavery continued to be a common way of life. As a young child, Lincoln moved to Illinois where the purchase of slaves was illegal, but Black Laws and unscrupulous slave owners continued to perpetuate the lifestyle. Lincoln's family was against slavery and Lincoln himself would have many friends who belonged to slave owning families, but he would develop his own opinions that slavery was an institute that would need to end. However, Lincoln did not have any solutions to the situation that would free the slaves, integrate them into society, and solve the labor problems in the South.

Throughout Lincoln's political career, slavery would be a dominant issue. Lincoln would continuously come out against slavery as an institution, but would waver as to his racial acceptance of free black people. For many years Lincoln would be a proponent of colonization, which was the idea of sending free blacks out of the country. Lincoln did not believe that blacks and whites could co-exist in society. However, a meeting late in his political career with a black man would help to change Lincoln's view of black people as a race.

At the end of his political career, Lincoln would be faced with the daunting task of reuniting a divided country. In an attempt to reunite his country, Lincoln focused on slavery. Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation in an attempt to bring the rebellious states back into the Union. In one stroke of the pen, Lincoln freed millions of slaves, making slavery the main theme of this book.

Politics

In the 1800s, slavery was the hot topic in politics. Modern readers might compare the fight over slavery in Lincoln's time with the ongoing debate over abortion or gay marriage. Slavery was about the basic human rights of an entire race of people. During this time period, many believed that blacks were not the same as whites, that they did not have souls or that they could not possibly have the same intelligence as white people. Blacks were only good for manual labor, and the labor they provided supported



the economy of a whole section of the United States. These beliefs made the debate over the institution of slavery a complicated and challenging one.

Lincoln came into politics quietly, keeping his personal beliefs regarding slavery close to his chest. However, as his career progressed, Lincoln embraced the beliefs of his idol, Henry Clay. Lincoln made it clear that he believed slavery was an immoral practice, coming out at one point to call it a monstrous injustice. As Lincoln matured and became more involved in politics, and as slavery became a more urgent topic in the country, he made multiple speeches that expressed his thoughts that slavery should not be allowed to spread into the new western territories and that it should be slowly abolished. In 1858, Lincoln became involved in a series of debates with Stephen A. Douglas in which he expressed these ideas eloquently.

The issue of slavery exploded in the early 1860s. With Lincoln's election to the presidency, seven Southern states felt they could no longer be a part of a country that was telling them how to live their lives and threatened to take away an essential basis to their economic success. Lincoln found himself forced to make an ultimate decision regarding slavery. Although Lincoln had always preached a slow end to slavery, he found himself freeing more than three million slaves with a single pen stroke.

Personal Growth

The author tells his readers at the beginning of the book that he does not intend this book as a biography of Lincoln, but as a close look at his relationship with slavery. Lincoln would become the Great Emancipator—the president who had the courage to abolish slavery in the United States. However, Lincoln did not come to this act quickly or easily, and the author shows this in his book.

In this book, the author examines Lincoln's childhood and early career, discussing the environment in which Lincoln grew up in and the people who had influence over his thoughts and opinions. The author points out how some of Lincoln's early ideas regarding slavery were not the high ideals that a modern reader might assume the man held. In fact, the author shows how Lincoln's thoughts and actions toward slaves and the institution of slavery changed over time. As a young man Lincoln could be seen as somewhat fascinated with slaves. As an older man, Lincoln could be seen defending a slave owner in court. Even as president, Lincoln is known to have supported the idea of colonization of freed slaves. However, in the end, Lincoln came to a conclusion that it would take millions of Americans a hundred years and civil unrest to come to, that blacks are the same as whites, and deserve the same inalienable rights. For this reason, personal growth is a theme of the novel.

Style

Perspective

The writer of this book is the author of multiple books on history. Many of the author's books include history of the Civil War, politics, and history of the black people in America. For this reason, the reader can see that the author comes to this book with a strong background in both history and politics.

This book is a book about slavery and how one man came to a position in which to end slavery in the United States. The author keeps the focus of his book on slavery, showing the reader how Abraham Lincoln was touched by slavery as a young man and how his collective experiences as a child and young man came to create in him a belief that slavery was an institution in need of abolishment. This is not a biography of a man, but the story of how one man changed a way of life that had existed for hundreds of years. With the author's previous works with history and political books, the reader feels that the author comes to this story with some authority.

Tone

The tone of this book is objective. The author does not bring a lot of personal opinions into his work, but keeps to the subject. The main theme of the book deals with slavery, a topic that is often a cause for great passions in some Americans. For this reason, the reader occasionally detects a change in tone, a suggestion that some of the events in the history of American slavery are offensive to the author. However, these moments are rare, keeping the tone objective throughout the majority of the book.

The author begins this book with a discussion on his objective for the book. The author explains that he has written this book not as a biography of a man, but as a discussion of the personal beliefs of this man that led him to become the Great Emancipator. By doing this, the author sets a tone at the beginning of the book that gives the reader a certain expectation of the book. The author fulfills this expectation, examining closely Lincoln's opinions and attitudes toward slavery without going too much into his personal or other aspects of his life.

Structure

The book is divided into nine chapters and has a prologue and epilogue. Each chapter is given a title that includes a line from a Lincoln speech that can be applied to the content of the chapter. Most of the chapters are extremely long; therefore, the author has divided each into multiple sections. The author tells his story in a linear fashion, examining Lincoln's relationship with slavery from his birth to his death and beyond.



The book is written as a non-fiction examination of Lincoln's relationship with slavery. For this reason, there is no dialogue in the book. There are excerpts from many of Lincoln's speeches and other written documents that survived the decades since his death. The author also includes a few snippets of other political figures speeches in an attempt to support his own conclusions. This structure provides a clear discussion of Lincoln's relationship with slavery, helping the author achieve the goal he set out to reach, as he outlines in the prologue of the novel.



Quotes

"Ever since his death a century and a half ago, Abraham Lincoln has provided a lens through which we Americans examine ourselves."

Prologue, p. 13

"I am naturally anti-slavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I cannot remember when I did not so think, and feel."

Chap. 1, p. 22

"The free states shared in the profits of slavery. As Lincoln experienced on his journeys to New Orleans, the slave states provided a crucial market for the produce of free western farmers."

Chap. 1, p. 35

"To Lincoln, Whig policies offered the surest means of creating economic opportunities for upwardly striving men like himself."

Chap. 2, p. 57

"Earlier in his career, Lincoln had described slavery as unjust, but never before had he referred to it as a 'monstrous injustice'."

Chap. 3, p. 86

"Much of Taney's opinion consisted of a historical discussion purporting to demonstrate that the founding fathers had not recognized black persons as part of the American people."

Chap. 4, p. 112

"By the time Lincoln took the oath of office on March 4, 1861, he addressed a divided nation."

Chap. 5, p. 164

"The war, as the New York Times would observe a year and a half into the conflict, shattered many myths."

Chap. 6, p. 187

"Steeped in antebellum legal culture, he harbored doubts whether even under the war power, an emancipation edict would be constitutional."

Chap. 7, p. 233

"Douglass was only one of many accomplished African-Americans who met with Lincoln during the war, the first such encounters of Lincoln's life."

Chap. 8, p. 280



"As the war neared its conclusion, it was apparent that the fate of the emancipated slaves would be the central issue of Lincoln's second term as president."

Chap. 9, p. 346

"Two months after Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, one abolitionist wrote that 'to make the proclamation a success, we must make freedom a blessing to the freed.' The question of how to do so would long outlive Lincoln and the Civil War."

Epilogue, p. 361



Topics for Discussion

Who is Abraham Lincoln? What does it matter what his opinions of slavery were? Why does the author examine Lincoln's opinions on slavery so closely? What opinions did Lincoln appear to have? Where did these opinions come from? Who were some of the most influential people in Lincoln's life? How did these people influence Lincoln?

Where is Kentucky? What were the slave laws there when Lincoln was born? Why did Lincoln's family live there? Why did they move away? How did this move impact young Lincoln? To where did they move? What were the slave laws in this new state? How did these slave laws impact the citizens of the state? How did they impact young Lincoln?

Who is Mary Todd? Where was her family from? How did the Todd family view slavery? How did Lincoln feel about their views? How did they impact Lincoln? Why does the author discuss Lincoln's marriage and his in-laws when the point of his book is Lincoln's political beliefs? How do you think Mary Todd and her family influenced Lincoln's beliefs?

What kind of law did Abraham Lincoln practice? Which of Lincoln's cases does the author examine in this book? For what reason does the author choose these cases to examine in his book? What do these cases say about Lincoln's personal beliefs in slavery? Explain.

Discuss Lincoln's early political career. What political offices did Lincoln hold? What was his platform like when he ran for these offices? What did Lincoln vote for or against while holding office that shows historians the extent of his beliefs in slavery? How could an examination of Lincoln's early political career have foreshadowed his actions as President of the United States?

Discuss the Lincoln-Douglas Debates. What were these debates? Why were they so significant? What office were the men campaigning for? What was the main issue discussed during these debates? Who ultimately won the campaign? For what reason? How do historians view these debates now? What impact did these debates have on the issues discussed and the way in which political campaigns are run?

What is the Dred Scott Decision? What impact did this decision have on the debate over slavery? Who was Dred Scott? What did the Supreme Court say about the rights of black people in the United States? What did Lincoln think of this decision? How does the modern historian know what Lincoln thought of this decision?

What is the Emancipation Proclamation? What did it do? How did this impact the Civil War? How did it impact politics at the time? What is the Thirteenth Amendment? What does it say? How long did it take for this amendment to be ratified? For what reason? How was this amendment received by the American people? Was this amendment inevitable? Is this what the Founding Fathers intended to have happen all along? Why did it take so long?