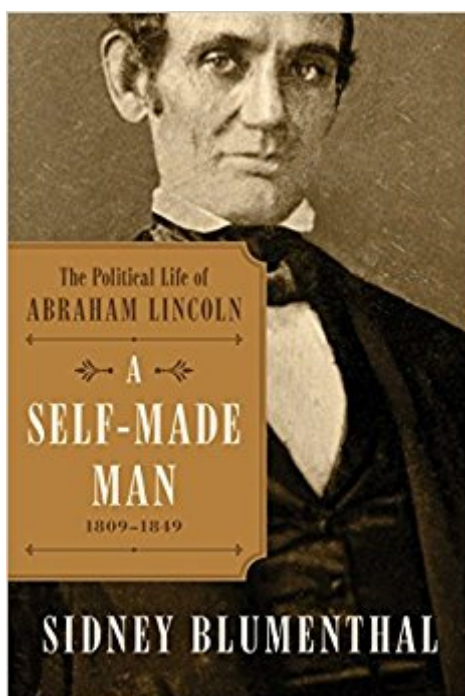


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A Self-Made Man: The Political Life Of Abraham Lincoln Vol. I, 1809 – 1849



Synopsis

“A breathtaking new view of Abraham Lincoln.” • The National Memo
“Illuminating” [an] instant classic. • The Daily Beast
“Engrossing” • Library Journal The first of a multi-volume history of Lincoln as a political genius • from his obscure beginnings to his presidency, assassination, and the overthrow of his post-Civil War dreams of Reconstruction. This first volume traces Lincoln from his painful youth, describing himself as “a slave,” to his emergence as the man we recognize as Abraham Lincoln. From his youth as a “newsboy,” a voracious newspaper reader, Lincoln became a free thinker, reading Tom Paine, as well as Shakespeare and the Bible, and studying Euclid to sharpen his arguments as a lawyer. Lincoln’s anti-slavery thinking began in his childhood amidst the Primitive Baptist antislavery dissidents in backwoods Kentucky and Indiana, the roots of his repudiation of Southern Christian pro-slavery theology. Intensely ambitious, he held political aspirations from his earliest years. Obsessed with Stephen Douglas, his political rival, he battled him for decades. Successful as a circuit lawyer, Lincoln built his team of loyalists. Blumenthal reveals how Douglas and Jefferson Davis acting together made possible Lincoln’s rise. Blumenthal describes a socially awkward suitor who had a nervous breakdown over his inability to deal with the opposite sex. His marriage to the upper class Mary Todd was crucial to his social aspirations and his political career. Blumenthal portrays Mary as an asset to her husband, a rare woman of her day with strong political opinions. Blumenthal’s robust portrayal is based on prodigious research of Lincoln’s record and of the period and its main players. It reflects both Lincoln’s time and the struggle that consumes our own political debate.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"A breathtaking new view of Abraham Lincoln." (The National Memo)
"Splendid . . . Blumenthal's work of building the context for Lincoln's political activism in the presidential elections of 1836 through 1848 is a miracle of detail and his six chapters on Lincoln as a congressman in antebellum Washington are worth the price of the book alone. . . . Never have we had such an exquisite warp of the ins and outs of political life in the 1830s and 1840s laid across the weft of Lincoln's individual trajectory. Rarely has a Lincoln biographer come to his task with such elegance of style. . . . Here is a great book, on a theme that too many people disdain to regard as great. That they are wrong about the theme, and wrong about Lincoln, is the burden of Blumenthal's labor, and no one can come away from reading A Self-Made Man without understanding that, or without eagerly anticipating the ensuing volumes." (Allen Guelzo Washington Monthly)
"Terrific . . . The Lincoln of Blumenthal's pen is a cunning Whig floor leader in Illinois, a brave progressive facing racist assaults on his religion, ethnicity, and very legitimacy that echo the anti-Obama birther movement. . . . Blumenthal takes the wily pol of Steven Spielberg's Lincoln and Doris Kearns Goodwin's Team of Rivals and goes deeper, finding a Vulcan logic and House of Cards ruthlessness." (The Washingtonian)
"Engaging and informative . . . lively . . . full of thought-provoking observations about the factors that went into Lincoln's makeup." (Christian Science Monitor)
"A terrific read, teeming with 19th-century life, from the down and dirty politics of 1830s Illinois to Lincoln's single term in Congress at the end of the 1840s." (The Guardian)
"Lincoln again? Not to worry. Just stand back and let this first volume of a planned four-volume treatment reveal its glowing qualities. . . . A fascinating perspective during a presidential election cycle." (Booklist, starred review)
"In beautiful style Blumenthal's Lincoln is a terrific read. I can't wait for the next volume." (The Buffalo News)
"Engrossing . . . Blumenthal takes the reader deep into Illinois and national politics to locate the character and content of Lincoln's ideas, interests, and identity, and to understand his driving ambition to succeed in law and politics. . . . [Blumenthal] effectively shows that the president's Illinois was a proving ground for the politics of expansion, economic development,

nativism, anti-Mormonism, and slavery that both reflected and affected national concerns. (Library Journal) "A tremendous historical and political contribution. (Huffington Post) "No one would have guessed that it would be Lincoln who emerged to save the union, abolish slavery and preserve American democracy. Future volumes of Blumenthal's engaging and well-crafted biography promise to show why. (Civil War Times) "[Blumenthal] delves deeply into the incremental building of Lincoln's anti-slavery views . . . A consummate political observer keenly dissects the machinations of Lincoln's incredible rise to power. (Kirkus Reviews) "In this compelling first volume of what will no doubt be a landmark biography of perhaps our greatest president, Sidney Blumenthal brings his formidable storytelling and analytical gifts to the task of creating a lasting portrait of Lincoln. In this Blumenthal succeeds wonderfully well, giving readers an engaging, clear-eyed, and insightful account of Lincoln's early years, clearly charting the sixteenth president's intellectual and political development. The book is at once timely and timeless. (Jon Meacham, author of *Destiny and Power* and *Thomas Jefferson*) "Sidney Blumenthal provides an intricate network of personal detail about the first forty years of our sixteenth president. Compelling, deeply researched, and superbly written, it provides a definitive account of how Lincoln became the man he was. (Jean Edward Smith, author of *Grant and Bush*) "Sidney Blumenthal has brought us a vivid, riveting, beautifully-written and strikingly original portrait of America's greatest President during his early years, which enhances both our understanding and admiration of how this truly self-made man ultimately became one of the towering leaders of all time. (Michael Beschloss, author of "Presidential Courage: Brave Leaders and How they Changed America, 1789-1989") "With riveting prose, solid command of the sources, and a genius for conveying time, character, and atmosphere, Sidney Blumenthal has accomplished the unimaginable: he has crafted an extraordinarily fresh account of the rise of Abraham Lincoln, master politician. I don't think there is a better, more eminently readable account of Lincoln's political rise in the entire literature. (Harold Holzer, winner of the Gilder Lehrman Lincoln Prize, author of *Lincoln and the Power of the Press*) "A veteran of modern political wars, Sidney Blumenthal has written an astute account of Lincoln the politician whose apprenticeship in that profession was a necessary prelude to his greatness as a statesman in the Civil War. Set in context of the transition in national political issues from the Second Bank of the U.S. and the tariff in the 1830s to the Mexican War and slavery by the end of the 1840s, this book offers new insights into Lincoln's life and career. (James McPherson, author of *The War that Forged a Nation*) "Illuminating . . . Blumenthal's greatest contribution is, as the book's subtitle indicates, putting

Lincoln the politician in bas-relief. . . . Blumenthal provides greater perspective and emphasis on perhaps the preeminent politician in American history. . . . instant classic . . . [Blumenthal] writes with a boldness as if no one has written on Lincoln before. ” (The Daily Beast) ” “Well-written and fast-paced . . . a joy to read . . . more than a biography of Lincoln. It is really a “life and times” treatment of the first 40 years of Lincoln’s life. ” (Civil War News) ” “Compelling . . . trenchant . . . magnificent ” (The Post and Courier (Charleston, SC)) ” “Reads like a conversation with those who knew Lincoln . . . a compelling read. ” (Deseret News) ” “A magnificent look at 19th-century American political, economic, and cultural history, with understated but impressive resonance for our current day. ” (James Fallows The Atlantic)

Sidney Blumenthal is the former assistant and senior adviser to President Bill Clinton, and senior adviser to Hillary Clinton. He has been a national staff reporter for The Washington Post, Washington editor and staff writer for The New Yorker, senior writer for The New Republic, and contributed to numerous additional publications. His books include the bestselling The Clinton Wars, The Rise of the Counter-Establishment and The Permanent Campaign. Among his films, he was the executive producer of the Academy Award- and Emmy Award-winning Taxi to the Dark Side.

Very thorough read, perhaps too thorough at times, but I learned a few things about Lincoln’s life that I did not know -- quite a feat for a man that has been so well written about.

Great read, extremely well written!

A detailed history of Lincoln’s early life up to the end of his congressional term. The politics in his day were as convoluted as ours, but he managed to navigate those treacherous waters. A little known fact: his father sold Abraham’s labor when he was but a child. He worked as a child slave.

The first of a planned multi-volume covers up to 1856-1857 (when the slavery issue became inflamed by the Dred Scott decision and the caning of Charles Sumner). The book contains many anecdotes supporting the somewhat revisionist history that Lincoln started out as more of an opportunist politician and gradually evolved his anti-slavery position. Examples: as a aggressive Whig smearing Democrat Van Buren in 1836 presidential election (called him a secret abolitionist);

his strenuous letter writing efforts to secure a political appointment after his one term in congress. The book also features extensive discussions of Calhoun, Jackson, Polk, Taylor, Scott, Garrison, Seward, Weed, and their associates whose relevancy to Lincoln is not well explained. Also not explained is how/why Illinois changed from strongly pro-slavery at the start of Lincoln's career to strongly anti slavery by the late 1850's. Was it because all the slaveowners and their supporters moved to Missouri, or was it because of the growth of Chicago.

The book is a thorough and well-written introduction of the man Lincoln was before he became president. There is a lot of new information, which is surprising, considering how many books have been written about him. I found this one to be totally engrossing. I was pleased to hear there will be additional volumes because this one left me wanting more. I highly recommend it.

Excellent and well researched. It is always a wonder to have more insight into the Lincoln legacy. I look forward to volume Two.

I gave this book to a close friend who is a hard core civil war enthusiast, and he couldn't stop thanking me enough. It is a very unique perspective on Abraham Lincoln's life, and a must read for history buffs.

I've read almost every major Lincoln bio printed in the past 50 years. Blumenthal's is the best of the bunch.

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