



Becoming Abraham Lincoln: The Coming of Age of Our Greatest President

Richard Kigel

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Becoming Abraham Lincoln: The Coming of Age of Our Greatest President tells the true story of how this great American hero grew up and became a man. The story begins with Lincoln's cousin describing the murder of Abe's grandfather in 1782 by the Wabash Indians in the Kentucky wilderness. It ends as Lincoln turns twenty-five, downcast and debt-ridden after the failure of his first business venture, as he earns his first election victory to take his seat in the Illinois State Legislature.

This vivid, authentic account of Abraham Lincoln in his formative years is told by those who were there—his friends and family. Supported by rigorous research, *Becoming Abraham Lincoln* is an authentic account of Lincoln's childhood and adolescence in the actual words of those who knew him best. We see Lincoln as he was, according to law partner Billy Herndon, "just as he lived, breathed, ate and laughed in this world." The historic eyewitness testimony in these pages forms a rich, detailed narrative unmatched in all Lincoln literature.

Becoming Abraham Lincoln: The Coming of Age of Our Greatest President Details

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From Reader Review Becoming Abraham Lincoln: The Coming of Age of Our Greatest President for online ebook

Annette says

The premise of the book, the love for reading sounded very interesting. However, I did not feel it through the story.

Ross says

I am giving this book 4 stars because Lincoln, along with Charles Darwin, I regard as the two most important persons who every lived. My making this note is because the material in the book is not too exciting to say the least. I have read many biographies of Lincoln and this is a whole big book about history that is covered in those biographies in just a few sentences.

For those who simply love Lincoln, however, the contents of this book about his youth are just very important, making clear how incredible it is that he rose to be our greatest president from such a penniless, deprived beginning.

So if you are not such a Lincoln fan, this is just a 2 or 3 star book.

Sharon says

This was a very easy to get into book about the early years of one of my favorite people of all time!!! There was definitely a lot about his growing up years that I didn't know as well as some of the circumstances that shaped his character and who he would become. Anyone who wants to become something more need only follow his example and live life with the same integrity that Lincoln always showed. He was a complex and complicated personality and rose to the circumstances he had to deal with more admirably than most of us would. He is to me endlessly fascinating and I could read countless volumes on him. Recommend to anyone who wants more info on this great man. Well done Richard Kigel !!!!

Zoe Mann says

DNF at 10%. History was my favourite subject at school so I was looking forward to reading this, but oh my goodness it was like trying to decipher an SAS code. It didn't flow, it changed from one narrative to another, it literally copied and pasted texts from other books but continued to tell it's own story. It was just car crash reading for me personally. None of it made any sense and I didn't have the faintest idea what was going on. Would not recommend to anyone who is looking to find out more about Abraham or history unless you are a trained code breaker.

Thanks to Netgalley for the ARC in return for an honest review.

David Kent says

My rating is probably 3.5 but I erred on the high rather than low side because of the tremendous amount of work the author did to pull pertinent passages from "Herndon's Informants" and other resources. The book ostensibly follows a chronological narrative but does seem rather choppy in places. These criticisms aside, the book is actually a pretty good summary of Lincoln's life as seen through the eyes of people who knew him.

Quick background: "Herndon's Informants" is a compendium by Lincoln experts Wilson and Davis. It collects all the interviews and correspondence conducted by Lincoln's long-time law partner William Herndon immediately after the assassination. Herndon communicated in person and by letter with dozens of people who knew Lincoln during his early life in Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois. He used the information in his biography of Lincoln written with Jesse Weik. Wilson and Davis pulled all of these together and provided substantial annotation to correct errors, give background, provide additional analysis, and create a hugely beneficial index.

Author Richard Kigel clearly spent a lot of time searching keywords in the index of "Herndon's Informants" to pull out relevant quotes and impressions on Lincoln throughout his upbringing. Each of the 32 chapters is short, packed with quotes (mostly well footnoted), and represents a vignette of some incident or period in Lincoln's life from birth through his formative years and into his early adult life in New Salem. He uses the quotes from people who knew Lincoln to give insight into Lincoln's development, character, and thoughts. Kigel adds his own insights, as well as enough background and transitioning material to make every chapter into its own story. As we progress through the chapters, we progress through Lincoln's life.

Some chapters carry the story concept better than others. Because the book is broken up into 32 more or less independent sections, some readers may not feel the overall story of Lincoln's life is fully coherent. Count me in this latter category. As much as I read about Lincoln, this book felt like it dragged on rather than carried me through. [In all fairness, I was taking notes as I went along rather than reading it for flow]

In my opening I alluded to the tremendous amount of work Kigel did going through Herndon's correspondence with Lincoln friends and family. This may be the book's greatest value. Herndon's Informants is near impossible to read (I'm being nice here) but serves as a fantastic primary resource for Lincoln researchers. Kigel has extracted comments, insights, and anecdotes on many facets of Lincoln's life and organized them into each of the chapter vignettes (Herndon's Informants has them spread almost randomly over 800 pages of text). So the book more or less works both as a general chronology of Lincoln's life and as a first step for Lincoln researchers looking for primary resource material.

There have been a spate of books on Lincoln's early life recently and some of them may (or may not) provide a better narrative, but I think none can match the level of effort Kigel has put into this volume.

Janilyn Kocher says

Becoming Abraham Lincoln is an interesting angle, focusing on Lincoln's early years, bolstered largely by quotes from William Herndon's research shortly after the assassination. While entertaining to read, the book really doesn't add information that is unique or new to the canon of scholarship about Lincoln. Thanks to NetGalley for the ARC.

Beth Neu says

I have read several biographies of Abraham Lincoln, but this book comes from a little different angle, in that it focuses on the first 25 years of his life. I really enjoyed learning about his parents and their early years as well as Abraham's formative years. Most of the research for this book was actually conducted by his law partner, William Herndon, who interviewed people who knew Lincoln shortly after his death. I learned some new things about his early years by reading this book, including quotes from his cousin, Dennis Hanks, who lived with Lincoln during most of his years in Indiana and also moved to be near-by in Illinois when the Lincoln family moved there. We often hear of Lincoln's work ethic and his love of reading, but this book gives us more insight into his sense of humor, love of playing pranks and his physical strength that helped him defend himself and others.

Ietrio says

A hagiography written by an exalted. Greatest. And Our. And Becoming. Puhlease!

Kristen says

Becoming Abraham Lincoln: The Coming of Age of Our Greatest President is a biographical sketch of Lincoln's life from birth until age 25 when he was elected to the Illinois state legislature. Richard Kigel primarily uses original source material collected by Lincoln's former law partner, Billy Herndon, collected after the President's death. The book is written in a readable, simple style. I read somewhere that the book was geared toward students and I believe the author is a schoolteacher. The book seems to follow along with that and school-age historians may find this of most interest.

An interesting new addition to the volumes of information on Lincoln, but I'm not sure there is much here that hasn't been covered before. However, the focus on Lincoln's early life is new.

Full disclosure: I won a copy of an advance reader copy of this book in a Goodreads giveaway.

Nick Vulich says

An excellent book told mostly in the words of Lincoln's contemporaries. I would highly recommend it.

Kristine says

Becoming Abraham Lincoln by Richard Kigel is a free NetGalley ebook that I read in late May.

Yeah, the cover image was a pull for me to pick up this book; it also really reminds me of Marilyn Monroe finding him to be one of the most handsome men ever. Anyway, this book covers Abraham Lincoln's birth

through to age 25 (when he runs for a seat on the Illinois house in 1834) while delving fully into the hardscrabble, pioneering life of his family as he grew up in Kentucky and familiarizing with his interests in books, axes, wrestling, Ann Rutledge, leading a militia, and working as a shop clerk amid bouts of gloom and melancholia.
