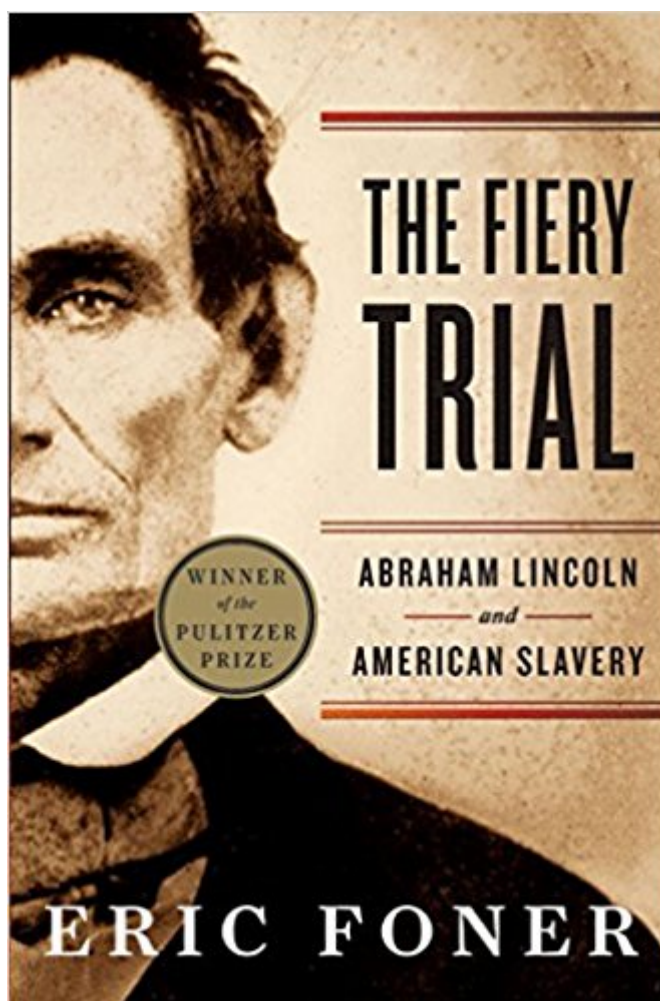


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The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln And American Slavery



Synopsis

“A masterwork [by] the preeminent historian of the Civil War era.” —*Boston Globe* Selected as a Notable Book of the Year by the New York Times Book Review, this landmark work gives us a definitive account of Lincoln’s lifelong engagement with the nation’s critical issue: American slavery. A master historian, Eric Foner draws Lincoln and the broader history of the period into perfect balance. We see Lincoln, a pragmatic politician grounded in principle, deftly navigating the dynamic politics of antislavery, secession, and civil war. Lincoln’s greatness emerges from his capacity for moral and political growth. 16 pages of black-and-white illustrations; 3 maps

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A mixture of visionary progressivism and repugnant racism, Abraham Lincoln’s attitude toward slavery is the most troubling aspect of his public life, one that gets a probing assessment in this study. Columbia historian and Bancroft Prize winner Foner (*Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*) traces the complexities of Lincoln’s evolving ideas about slavery and African-Americans: while he detested slavery, he also publicly rejected political and social equality for blacks, dragged his feet (critics charged) on emancipating slaves and accepting black recruits into the Union army, and floated schemes for colonizing freedmen overseas almost to war’s end. Foner situates this record within a lucid, nuanced discussion of the era’s turbulent racial politics; in his account Lincoln is a canny operator, cautiously navigating the racist attitudes of Northern whites, prodded--and sometimes willing to be prodded--by abolitionists and racial egalitarians pressing faster reforms. But as Foner

tells it, Lincoln also embodies a society-wide transformation in consciousness, as the war's upheavals and the dynamic new roles played by African-Americans made previously unthinkable claims of freedom and equality seem inevitable. Lincoln is no paragon in Foner's searching portrait, but something more essential--a politician with an open mind and a restless conscience. 16 pages of illus., 3 maps. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Do we need yet another book on Lincoln?... Well, yes, we do if the book is by so richly informed a commentator as Eric Foner. Foner tackles what would seem to be an obvious topic, Lincoln and slavery, and manages to cast new light on it.... Because of his broad-ranging knowledge of the 19th century, Foner is able to provide the most thorough and judicious account of Lincoln's attitudes toward slavery that we have.--David S. Reynolds Starred Review. Original and compelling .In the vast library on Lincoln, Foner's book stands out as the most sensible and sensitive reading of Lincoln's lifetime involvement with slavery and the most insightful assessment of Lincoln's and indeed America's imperative to move toward freedom lest it be lost. An essential work for all Americans. "Moving and rewarding. . . . A master historian at work. --David W. Blight" "No one else has written about [Lincoln's] trajectory of change with such balance, fairness, depth of analysis, and lucid precision of language. --James M. McPherson" "Do we need another book on Lincoln? Yes, we do if the book is by so richly informed a commentator as Eric Foner. --David S. Reynolds" "While many thousands of books deal with Lincoln and slavery, Eric Foner has written the definitive account of this crucial subject, illuminating in a highly original and profound way the interactions of race, slavery, public opinion, politics, and Lincoln's own character that led to the wholly improbable uncompensated emancipation of some four million slaves. Even seasoned historians will acquire fresh and new perspectives from reading *The Fiery Trial*. --David Brion Davis, author of *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World*"

Eric Foner always keeps me on the edge of my seat. His discussion of the "Colonization Movement" and how it was discredited alone is worth the price of purchase. The valor of African-American soldiers fighting for union and for their freedom earned the respect of even initially reluctant fellow citizens. The awakening of Lincoln to the political rights of black Americans--not just freedom from bondage, and the rights of life and liberty, but also to the pursuit of happiness, is a riveting tale. In another book, an anthology he edited, Foner quotes DuBois on Lincoln. Du Bois remarked that, though staunchly anti-slavery, Lincoln started out with many of the prejudices of his time. The story

of Lincoln's transformation, of his growing humanity, is a story I am sharing with my middle school students. This theme is but one aspect of this wonderful book. I got mine at , but the library is cool, too!

I have read several biographies of Abraham Lincoln, this book is a great history of how his thinking about black Americans evolved over time. Abraham Lincoln was a politician, so it is extremely interesting to see how someone in the public as he was during much of this change, was able to lead the country to abolish slavery and to extend the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness to the black Americans. This book is a must read for those interested both in Lincoln and in the torturous path that this country is taking to extend the ideas in the Declaration of Independence to all its citizens.

A long historical debate about Lincoln's role in emancipation pits two opposing views against each other. One is the traditional and widely accepted notion of him as the Great Emancipator; the other notes his early southern Illinois racism, gradualist approach to emancipation but with colonization of all the freed slaves outside the US, and his often quoted statement that if he could win the Civil War without freeing the slaves he would do so, and was pushed into it by events on the ground and especially the actions of the slaves themselves in fleeing the plantations the moment they could, making the restoration of the institution a practical impossibility. Foner, the best current scholar on the subject, tells a detailed story that is far more nuanced and reasonable--of Lincoln's basic opposition to slavery from youth onward, and his gradual abandonment of colonization, acceptance of the reality of abolition, and movement towards incorporating black Americans into the promises of the Declaration of Independence. A superb work that clears the air.

This is the fascinating story of the evolution of Abraham Lincoln's views on race and slavery and how he came to decide that emancipation was right for the country. The author explores how politics, the Civil War and the president's personal relationships and thinking shaped his decisions and actions in not only ending the scourge of slavery but also saving the Union.

An incredibly thorough analysis of Lincoln's view toward slavery. It examines how the different circumstances in his life affected his position on slavery, and how this position changed over time. The book is dense with facts and explanations, so it requires a lot of focus and attention. But, this effort is well worth it, and I came away understanding so much more about the legend who was

Abraham Lincoln.

This is one of the best books I have read in a long time. In very readable prose it gives the reader an insight not only into the process by which slavery was eventually abolished in America but also of Abraham Lincoln as the cautious politician, whose caution led to his success.

I have read many books about Lincoln. This was the best in terms of showing him as a person with flaws and the ability to grow and change. The many balls he had to balance to come to right decisions was amazing.

Eric Foner represents our best civil war era historian. I have read quite a few good books about Lincoln, but this one has a unique perspective that has, interestingly, not been previously addressed. He does so cogently, skillfully, and with great sensitivity.

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