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Abraham Lincoln: Making a Man of a Legend

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Owen Martinelli

**Abraham Lincoln: Making a Man out of a
Legend**

Presented to the Department of History

Dominican University of California

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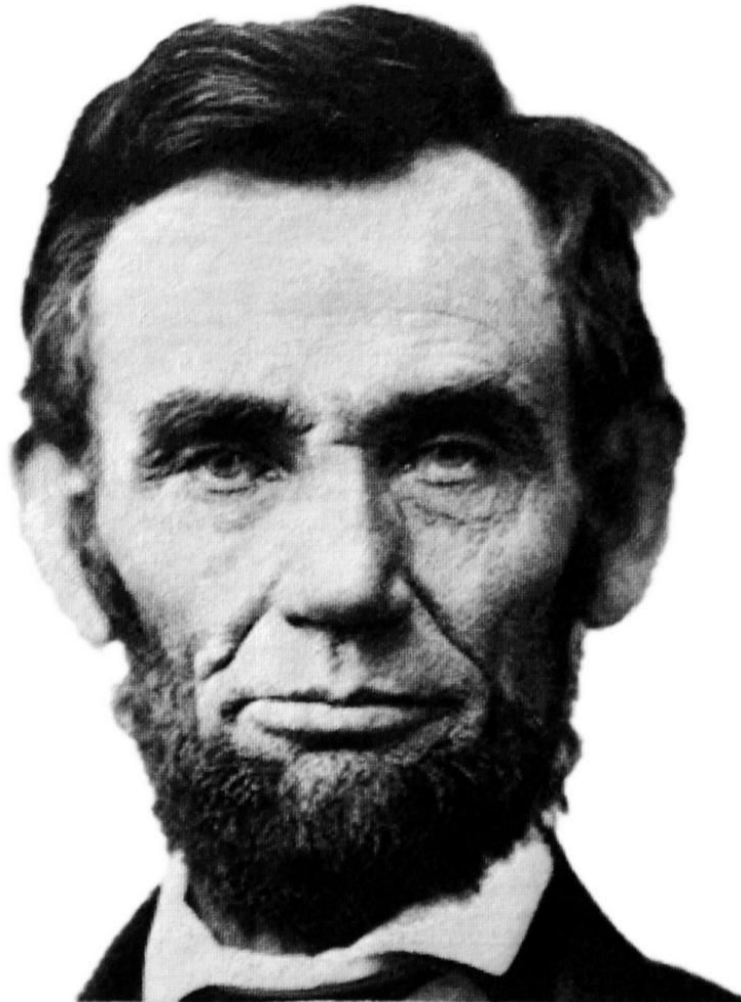


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INTRODUCTION:
A STATE OF DISUNION

Today's America is in a state of turmoil. Disunity in the United States is a trend that has piqued the interest of journalists and scholars from all across the world, with some believing that America is in its most divided state since the Civil War. In recent years, the Black Lives Matter movement sprung up as a 21st Century Civil Rights group in direct response to shootings of black people by police officers. Protests in major cities have spontaneously erupted, sometimes violently, as in Baltimore, MD and Charlotte, NC, sparking discussion on racism and prejudice in America. The Presidential election of controversial businessman Donald Trump in 2016 sparked further tension. A Gallup poll conducted just after the election of Donald Trump showed that 77% of Americans perceive their nation as being divided.¹ Even worse, political violence between right wing and left wing forces has become more common-and deadly. Violent protests have rocked cities across America, notable enough to attract national and worldwide attention. On February 1, 2017, far left protesters used vandalism and violence to shut down a speaking event planned by Breitbart writer Milo Yiannopoulos, injuring several people.² On August 12, 2017, a protest in Charlottesville, Virginia organized by the "Alt Right" against the removal of Confederate statues ended in intense melees and a vehicular attack on a crowd of counter-protesters by an Alt-Right protester named James Alex Fields. The violence in Charlottesville drew worldwide attention, with spontaneous rallies against white supremacy, Trump, and Confederate statues.³ On August 27, 2017 in Berkeley, California, a large crowd of black-clad Antifa attacked a small group of right wing protesters in response to violence in

¹ Jeffrey Jones, "Record-High 77% of Americans Perceive Nation as Divided." Gallup. Last modified November 21 2016.

² Phil Helsel, "Protests, Violence Prompt UC Berkeley to Cancel Milo Yiannopoulos Event." NBC News. Last modified February 2, 2017.

³ "Deadly car attack, violent clashes in Charlottesville: What we know now." USA Today. Last modified August 13 2017.

Charlottesville, overwhelming the police and attacking several right-wing rally attendees.⁴

.Disunion is not only manifesting in street-level violence; cities and even entire states such as California are increasingly dissenting and uncooperative with the federal, Republican-held government. In October 2017, California became the first state to adopt a statewide policy against cooperation with federal immigration authorities, provoking debate and a lawsuit by the Trump administration against California⁵. Governor Jerry Brown publicly denounced the Trump administration's environmental policies, calling them "a declaration of war against America and all of humanity."⁶As political polarization continues to increase, with no end in sight, it is prudent for Americans to look back to the example of Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln's strong sense of conviction led him to end the system of slavery while preserving the Union from splitting apart, and in these trying times, it is more important than ever to reflect on why he is a widely remembered American icon.

In his own time, Lincoln was not seen as the "great unifier" he is often considered to be today. In fact, he was known by the moniker "rail splitter," referring to both his occupation and his supposed propensity for splitting America in half. Upon being elected, nearly the entire South seceded or began the process of secession. During his Presidency, many blamed him for the secession crisis and Civil War, with a group of anti-war "Copperheads" opposing Lincoln's continuation of the Civil War. A wrong move by Lincoln could have caused him to lose popular support, threatening to cripple war efforts. His own cabinet was made up of many of his former political rivals; furthermore, his actions as President to suppress dissent and draw up troops with

⁴ Kyle Swanson, "Black-clad antifa members attack peaceful right-wing demonstrations in Berkeley." Washington Post. Last modified August 28 2017.

⁵ Jazmine Ulloa, "California becomes sanctuary state in rebuke of Trump administration policies." LA Times. Last modified October 5, 2017.

⁶ Jeff Daniels, "California Gov. Jerry Brown blasts Trump plan." CNBC. Last modified August 21 2018.

a draft sparked riots in New York City. Especially contentious was the Election of 1864: If Democrats gained a majority in Congress, they could have pre-emptively ended the war. Throughout his entire Presidency, Lincoln seemed to be walking on a wire, laced with kerosene, while holding a burning pole. Despite all of these obstacles, Lincoln managed to save the Union by seeing the war through to the end. Not only did Lincoln save the Union, but he called upon the need for compassion and reconciliation when many of his Republican allies believed that the South should be punished for their revolt. When Republican-held congress passed a plan for Reconstruction that involved requiring ex-Confederates to swear under oath that they never took arms against the Union and disenfranchise the Confederate population, Lincoln vetoed the bill because he believed it would harm Reconstruction efforts. In Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address, delivered on March 4, 1865, Lincoln said, "With malice towards none, with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds."⁷ Lincoln's assassination set off a wave of mourning, grief, and furthered uncertainty.

Lincoln's rationality and leadership abilities, solidified during his four difficult years as President, were replaced by southerner Andrew Johnson on the eve of Reconstruction, who plunged America into another crisis with his lack of experience and level-headedness. Johnson allowed former Confederates to slip back into power, enact oppressive laws, and terrorize the freed community until suppressed by the federal government. There are countless questions that have remained unanswered about Lincoln: what he wanted to do for recently freed slaves, his vision for rebuilding the Southern economy, among many other theoretical questions about his

⁷ "Second Inaugural Address of Abraham Lincoln." Yale Law School, Lillian Goldman Law Library. 2008.

second term. Lincoln's legacy is marked with a variety of different perspectives: early biographies and public manifestations of Lincoln's memory have varied in everything from veneration to castigation, and such polarization continues today. He has been lifted up as a Demigod by some and dragged through the dirt by others; surprisingly, sometimes these critiques came from those whom you would least expect it. In many ways, this phenomenon is an extension of Lincoln's troubled relationship with America in his life, and the troubles that followed after his death. America's turbulent history on racial issues is undoubtedly linked to Lincoln, as it was he who opened the door for African-Americans to live in America. Lincoln ended the greatest atrocity of all, slavery, but racism did not die with the 14th amendment. Lincoln fundamentally altered the social structure and dynamics of America, setting America on an uncharted voyage that has seen moments of glory, as in the triumph of desegregation, and of tragedy, as in the shocking lynchings, racial and political violence that have continued to plague America.

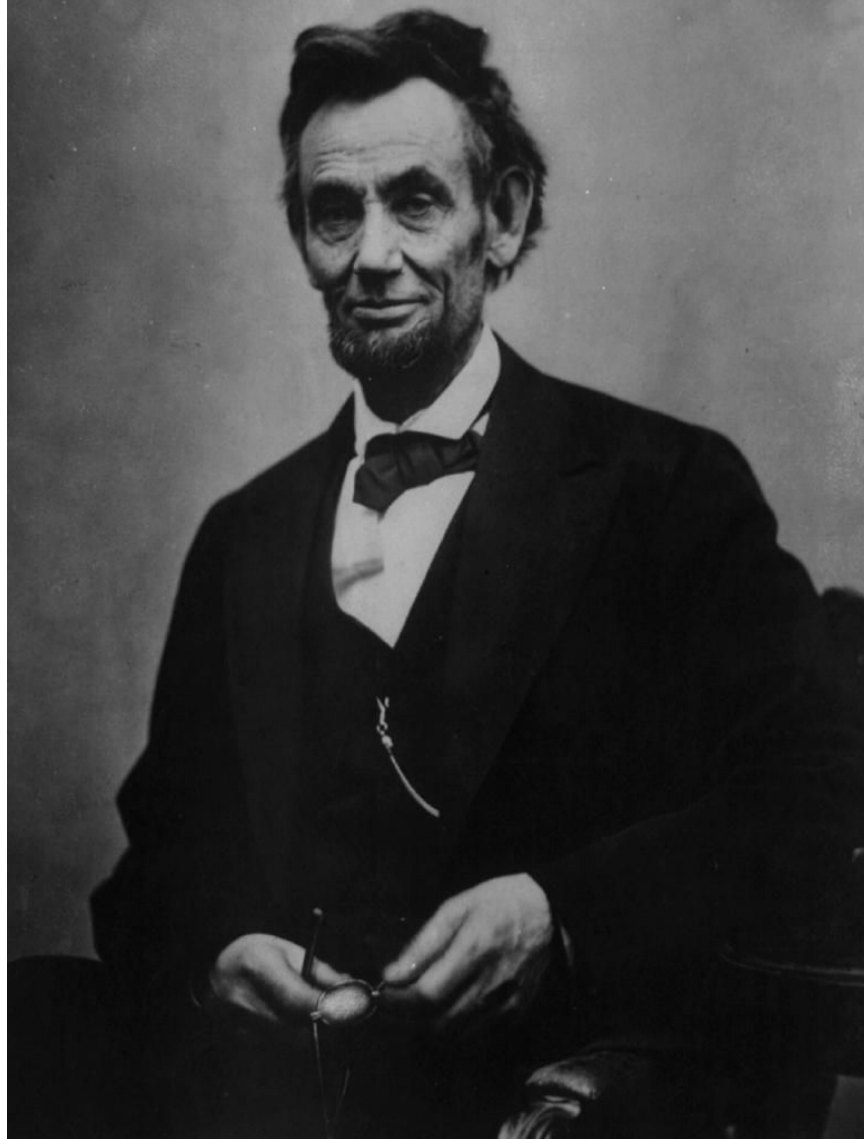


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METHODOLOGY AND THESIS

This paper is based within the concept of “Collective Memory” research as defined by scholar Maurice Halbwachs. Halbwachs stated that collective memory is “a continuous current of thought, of a continuity that is by no means artificial, because it conserves nothing from the past except the parts which still live, or are capable of living in the conscience of the group.”⁸ This perception can change dramatically according to Halbwachs; he wrote, “Society represents the past for itself according to the circumstances and according to the times: it changes its own conventions.” The assassination of Abraham Lincoln radically altered the collective memory of Lincoln in the minds of many Americans. Before his assassination, Lincoln was heavily criticized and doubted by a significant portion of the population. An editorial from the *New York World* in 1864 gloated at the prospect of Lincoln losing the election: “Abraham Lincoln is lost; he will never be President again.... The obscene ape of Illinois is about to be deposed from the Washington purple, and the White House will echo to his little jokes no more.”⁹ Immediately following his assassination, public opinion swung dramatically in favor of Lincoln. Those who once loudly criticized him fell silent. “All party rancor is hushed. Political strife has ceased. All men of all parties, feeling a common interest and a common grief, stand together in support of the nation and of the man thus suddenly charged with the execution of the people's wil,”¹⁰ wrote the *New York Times* shortly after Lincoln’s assassination. I will use the theory of “collective memory” in my analysis of monuments, biographies, films, and other representations of Lincoln’s legacy.

⁸ Maurice Schwartz, *On Collective Memory*. (University of Chicago Press, 1992.)

⁹ Larry Tagg, *Unpopular Mr. Lincoln: The Story of America’s Most Reviled President*. (Savas Beatie, 2009). Pg 415

¹⁰ “The Effect of President Lincoln’s Death on National Affairs.” (The New York Times, April 17 1865)

My paper is also structured based off of the idea of “memory makers” and “memory consumers” as defined by scholar Wulf Kansteiner. “Memory makers” are the primary interpreters of history who then create mediums through which history is consumed by the “memory consumers”¹¹. For example, William Herndon is a memory maker, because he wrote a biography of Lincoln that was then “consumed” by the population, and the architects of the Lincoln Memorial are “memory makers” because Lincoln is remembered by a large majority of the population through the memorial. However, the memory makers interpretation of history may not sit well with the public, and be rejected. Herndon’s first writings of Lincoln were rejected by the public because they did not want to believe his interpretation of Lincoln as a lonely, depressed individual, but accepted his interpretation when he presented Lincoln more positively. A key aspect of this paper is the idea that memory makers are almost never unanimous in their interpretation of history. In many cases, their interpretation of history is distorted by their own personal biases and prejudices, or an agenda they would like to push. However, it would be a mistake to assume that Lincoln’s legacy has been entirely corrupted by bias and the truth has been lost; in many cases, historians, filmmakers, and architects simply differ in their interpretation of Lincoln’s character. One of the primary reasons why Lincoln’s memory is such an intriguing topic is because of the variety of different perspectives and viewpoints of his character. To some memory makers, Lincoln is primarily a civil rights hero; however, to others, he is the perfect example of a president with the aptitude and courage to handle a devastating conflict. And to those on the other side of the scale, he represents the gross and excessive expansion of the federal government. This paper covers a wide variety of interpretations of

¹¹ Wulf Kansteiner, “Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies.” *History and Theory*, vol. 42 no. 2. (2002)

Lincoln by these memory makers, and analyzes how they influenced Lincoln's perception amongst the general population.

This research is divided into five sections. The first section is titled "Lessons of Lincoln Historiography, and will include analyses of three different books written by other historians about the concept of Lincoln in public memory. The second section is titled "The Life and Death of Abraham Lincoln," and offers a contextual overview of Lincoln's life, accomplishments, and assassination. The third section, "The Evolution of Lincoln Biographies," examines how professional biographies of Lincoln have changed over time, concluding that Lincoln biographies have evolved from bias and conjecture to presenting Lincoln as more of a complex figure. It examines famous biographies such as *Team of Rivals* that have fueled interest in Lincoln as a skilled politician as well as more obscure biographies such as *Lincoln the Man* that present biased and speculative opinions about Lincoln. The fourth section, "Paper and Stone: Lincoln Memory Through Monuments, Art, and Currency," examines how Lincoln's memory has been represented through his inclusion on currency, as well as in publicly and privately funded memorials and museums. It examines famous monuments such as the Lincoln Memorial, how and why they were conceptualized and built, and the symbolism behind the monuments. In addition, it will reveal how Lincoln ended up on the five dollar bill and the penny. The final section, "Abe on the Big Screen: Lincoln in Popular Culture," showcases portrayals of Lincoln in film, television, and other mediums of popular entertainment and the public sphere at large. It analyzes how Lincoln was portrayed in films ranging from *Birth of Nation* to *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*. By the conclusion of this paper, it will be clear how public perceptions of

Lincoln have evolved over time to show Lincoln as a complex individual who evolved over time rather than a binary figure.

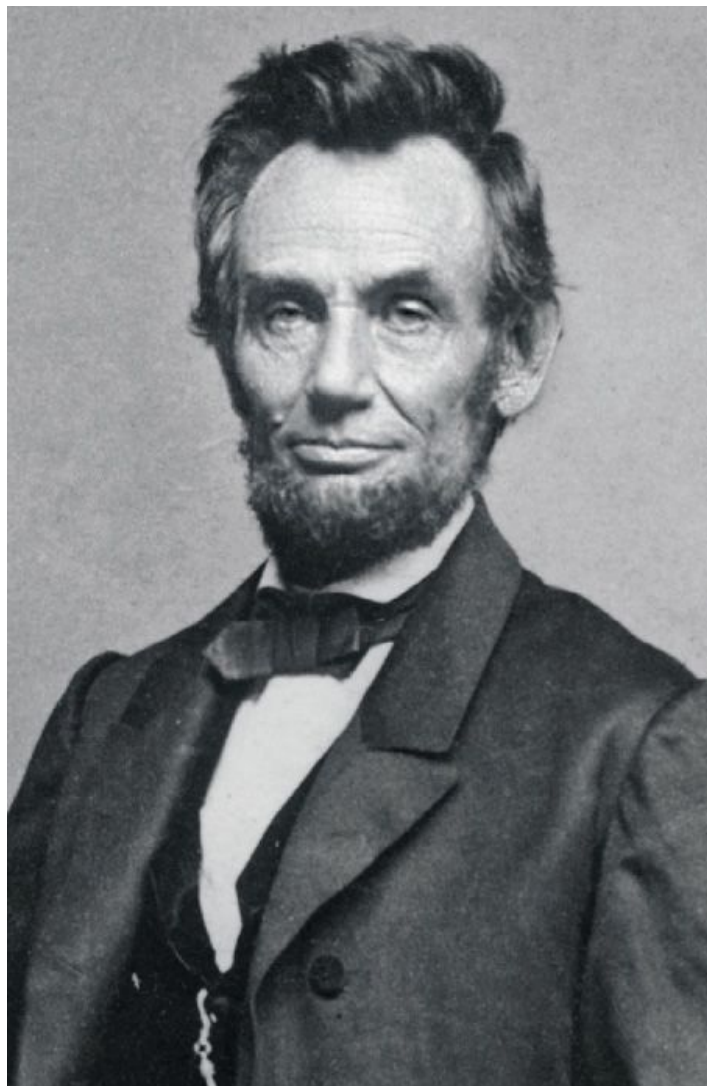


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LESSONS FROM LINCOLN

HISTORIOGRAPHY

Although Lincoln himself has been analyzed extensively and almost every historian is aware of the impact and weight behind Lincoln's name, relatively few have taken a closer look at the study of Lincoln in the collective memory. This realm of study is extremely important, as few are aware of how perceptions of Lincoln have differed from today. Part of this difficulty is the myopia that many people suffer from when it comes to history. The beliefs and perceptions of people from the medieval era, for example, are generally discarded as being outdated in the modern era, despite the value that they may possess. The most valued perspective is almost always the contemporary one. However, several historians have taken a closer look at how perspectives of Lincoln have varied over time. The books discussed in this section are *Loathing Lincoln* by John McKee Barr, *Lincoln Before Lincoln* by Brian J Snee, and *Collective Memory and History: How Lincoln Became a Symbol of Racial Equality* by Barry Schwartz.

Loathing Lincoln by Barr theorizes that anti-Lincoln sentiment is an "American tradition" that has been more common than Lincoln's reputation today. His book is a commentary on how highly positive modern perceptions of Lincoln have created a false narrative in which Lincoln is mistakenly believed to be consistently loved throughout history. "Numerous individuals and scholars from all walks, regions, and eras of American life have challenged accepted views of the Civil War president... a largely unexamined area of Lincoln scholarship,"¹² he writes. Within his book, Schwartz analyses the time from Lincoln's tenure as President to the modern era, examining how anti-Lincoln sentiment manifested in each era. In the chapter "Postbellum Disgust," he examines the connection between loathing of Lincoln and the failures of the

¹² John McKee Barr, *Loathing Lincoln: An American Tradition from the Civil War to the Present*. (LSU Press, 2014) Pg 2

reconstruction era. According to Barr , many Southerners felt as though Lincoln was the one responsible for the suffering of the South, even though he had expressed a desire to bring the South back in the Union peacefully. Part of this hatred towards Lincoln was rooted in hate of the larger Republican Party, who took over Reconstruction efforts following the death of Lincoln. Later in his book, Barr examines how distrust of Lincoln manifested in a radically different group: civil rights activists. Although some such as Martin Luther King Jr. spoke positively of Lincoln, Barr wrote about how many activists criticized Lincoln. Malcolm X, for example told blacks to “take down the picture of Lincoln”¹³; that is, refuse to idolize a “white savior” and instead look for their own liberation. Other criticisms levied at Lincoln during this time involved accusing Lincoln of not believing in the equal status of blacks at all. In his examinations of Lincoln criticism in the modern era, he claims that modern Lincoln critics often focus on Lincoln’s “tyranny” and wartime excesses. These critics are often conservative or right-wing, and rooted in distrust of federal government. To them, Lincoln represents the gross and irreversible expansion of the federal government, the intrusion of a President and his executive branch into every aspect of people’s lives. Barr’s analysis of these critical perspectives of Lincoln show that collective memory not always in unanimous accord. He concedes that these critical perspectives were not popular during their own periods, but nonetheless, examination of these overlooked perspectives of collective memory is important when considering how Lincoln has been perceived over time.

Another important book about collective memory of Lincoln is *Lincoln Before Lincoln* by Brian J Snee. Later in this paper, there will be analyses of many of the films that Snee examined.

¹³ Barr 247

Snee analyzed several defining films about Lincoln, paying close attention to the values and ideals that each movie represented. Snees overall message is that these Lincoln films, while having many common themes, were often reflective of the time period they were produced in. For example, early films of Lincoln from 1900 to 1915 represented a time in which Lincoln's assassination was still a relatively recent event, and he was still considered to be a martyr, chosen by God. Lincoln's portrayal in these films was often of that as a Christlike savior who possesses heavenly powers of redemption. As the effects of Lincoln's assassination on the national psyche wore off over time, new films of Lincoln began to reflect different collective values. In the film *Young Mr. Lincoln*, released in 1939, Snee argues that the film is "missing" key aspects of Lincoln's character, such as his stance on slavery, in favor of portraying him as a "great commoner"¹⁴ who stands up for the values of truth, honesty, and who easily appeals to the masses with his accessible speaking style and humor. The more lighthearted portrayal of Lincoln reflected a desire to escape from increasingly fraught with peril, as the film was released around the same time that the Nazis were invading Europe and global tensions were skyrocketing. Snee upholds the importance of film as a lens into the collective memory, as the visual medium of film provides a clear picture of not only the subject matter, but of the underlying values and beliefs of the culture in which it was produced.

Collective Memory and History: How Lincoln Became a Symbol of Racial Equality by Barry Schwartz examines Lincoln with respect to the study of collective memory, charting Lincoln's evolution from a purely regional unifier to a racial unifier. When it comes to Lincoln's legacy, his intentions when it came to freeing the slave population and attitudes towards race are

¹⁴ Brian J. Snee, *Lincoln Before Lincoln : Early Cinematic Adaptations of the Life of America's Greatest President*. (The University Press of Kentucky, 2016.) Pg 62

highly controversial. Schwartz uses this controversy to argue in favor of the theory of collective memory, and how malleable it is over time. He begins by describing a series of early biographies of Lincoln, and then remarks at how “not one of these books hinted, let alone asserted, that Lincoln was inclined towards a multiracial society.”¹⁵ In addition, Schwartz writes about how civil rights activist Frederick Douglass was critical of Lincoln’s attitudes towards race during a speech in 1879. “He was preeminently the white man’s president,” said Douglass. Schwartz maintains that throughout the 20th century, Lincoln was seen as a figure who did not believe in racial equality in America. Schwartz uses the example of a cartoon from 1922, at the height of the Ku Klux Klan’s power, in which Lincoln is holding a sign that says “Real citizens: you must be self supporting,” with the caption “What Lincoln Would Say if Alive Today.” The cartoon is targeted against the black population that Lincoln freed, calling them lazy and parasitic, and implying that Lincoln expected more out of the slaves that he freed. Thus, the collective memory of Lincoln can be seen as doubting his belief in a post-racial America. However, several decades later, the collective memory of Lincoln began to change. “Northern civil rights organizations stepped up their drive to abolish segregation... the Supreme Court began to strike down local discrimination ordinances... American presidents began publicly renouncing segregation,”¹⁶ Schwartz writes. The collective memory began to change and portray Lincoln as a believer in an equal society. In the 1950s and 1960s, cartoons were printed depicting Lincoln’s shame at discriminatory policies and police brutality in the South, and African American writers described Lincoln’s work as “unfinished,” as though his ultimate belief was not just to end slavery, but to secure an equal society for all. He was also shown working alongside John F. Kennedy and

¹⁵ Barry Schwartz, “Collective Memory and History: How Abraham Lincoln Became a Symbol of Racial Equality.” *The Sociological Quarterly*, Vol. 38 No. 3. (1997)

¹⁶ Schwartz 496

Martin Luther King Jr. in several political cartoons. Schwartz' ultimate conclusion is that Lincoln cannot be seen as an isolated figure who influences the memory of the public. Rather, he is part of an ever growing "network" of policies, events, and people that Lincoln is paired with, compared, and contrasted. "Lincoln has changed through the twentieth century from a conservative symbol of the social and economic status quo to a liberal symbol of social and economic reform."¹⁷ Schwartz' theory of collective memory and how it applies to Lincoln is critical, as we can see through his writings that the collective memory of one figure is often tied to many others.

¹⁷ Schwartz 496



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THE LIFE AND DEATH OF ABRAHAM

LINCOLN

Before delving into the historical interpretations of Lincoln and the consumption of these interpretations, it is important to provide the historical context and understand Lincoln in his own time. Lincoln's actions as the 16th president were pivotal, as his ascendancy to the presidency threatened to tear the United States apart and destroy the fledgling nation before even one hundred years passed. Most intriguing of all, Lincoln was a person of an impoverished, obscure background, with an odd appearance, seemingly unlikely to attain the highest office in America. His early life was full of melancholy, from the early death of his mother, difficulties with his father, and the loss of his first love. This "Unknown" man, as described by Dale Carnegie, would go down as an enduring symbol of America and the subject of countless historical inquiries despite an early life of hardship and tragedy. Without Lincoln in the Oval Office, the North might have conceded to the South, fracturing the country in two.

Abraham Lincoln was born on February 12, 1809, on the Sinking Springs farm near Hodgenville, Kentucky.¹⁸ His parents were Thomas Lincoln, a carpenter, and Nancy Hanks Lincoln. The Lincoln family struggled with a number of land disputes and moved to Indiana in 1816, a free state, in order to escape some of their financial problems.¹⁹ Lincoln's parents were both Separate Baptists, a denomination of Christianity that was anti-slavery and anti-alcohol. In October 1818, Nancy Lincoln died from poisoned cows milk and Thomas Lincoln remarried a year later. From a young age, Lincoln detested farm work and preferred to learn how to read and write, putting him at odds with his father and family. According to Lincoln's cousin, Dennis

¹⁸ Joseph Barrett, *Life of Abraham Lincoln* (Moore, Wilstach & Baldwin, 1865)

¹⁹ Joseph Barrett, Pg 24

Hanks, “Lincoln was lazy-a very lazy man-he was always reading, scribbling, writing, Ciphering, writing poetry, etc.”²⁰

When he was a teenager, Abraham preferred to make runs down the Mississippi River as opposed to working on the farm.²¹ In 1830, the family moved to Illinois, the state most closely associated with the adult Lincoln and where he spent most of his adult life. In 1831, Lincoln was 21 years old and left the family as was customary at the time. Lincoln moved to New Salem, where he became popular amongst the townsfolk due to his ability to read, good-hearted nature, and physical strength from years of farm work. In April 1832, a conflict broke out between the Sauk Indian leader, Black Hawk, and American settlers. Lincoln volunteered to serve in the army, and was promoted to Captain. He did not see any action in the short conflict, and when he returned from duty his ambitions were set on public office.

In his first foray into politics, Lincoln sided with the anti-slavery Whig Party, but was still appointed Postmaster of New Salem by Andrew Jackson, despite Jackson being a Democrat. During this time, he became known as the “railsplitter” because of the fact that he split rails and did other menial tasks for extra income. He was elected to Illinois State Legislature in 1834, and was re-elected multiple times, until 1842. He first made public his anti-slavery views in a speech to the Young Men’s Lyceum on January 27 1838, where he blamed instability within the United States on slavery proponents. He continued to campaign on behalf of the Whig Party and practiced law until 1856. At that time the Whig party became defunct and he joined the nascent Republican Party. Lincoln was thrust into the national spotlight in 1858 as he sought a position within the U.S Senate, pitting him against renowned and respected incumbent Democrat,

²⁰ Daniel Wolff, *How Lincoln Learned to Read*. (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009.) Pg 77

²¹ Joseph Barrett, Pg 34

Stephen Douglas. By this point, the issue of slavery was dominating the national conscious, as the United States continued to expand westward and new states were added to the Union.

Throughout several debates with Douglas, Lincoln maintained that slavery was a moral wrong, building on his “House Divided” speech in which he stated that “this government cannot endure, permanently, half slave and half free.”²² Douglas upheld the doctrine of “Popular Sovereignty,” that the issue slavery being allowed or not should be decided by the population of a state. In the end, Douglas won the nomination to Senate, but Lincoln solidified himself in the national conscious.

In 1860, Lincoln positioned himself as a centrist within the newly reformed Republican party, opposing the expansion of slavery in new states but opposing abolition in slaveholding states. He narrowly defeated William Seward and secured the Republican nomination to the Presidency in May 1860. On November 6, 1860, Lincoln was elected President in a sweeping electoral victory, with 180 votes while his closest rival, John C Breckinridge, received only 72.²³ Despite taking a less radical position than many within the Republican Party, the slaveholding states and many Democrats were outraged at Lincoln’s nomination to the presidency. One by one, slaveholding states began to declare secession from the Union; at the same time, Lincoln began assembling his cabinet. Much of his cabinet consisted of his political rivals; William Seward was chosen as Secretary of State, Salmon P. Chase was chosen as Secretary of Treasury, and Edward Bates was chosen as the Attorney General. Seward had once called Lincoln a “little Illinois lawyer” unfit for office, Chase ran against Lincoln during the Republican primary, and Bates was a former member of the nativist “Know Nothing Party” which Lincoln detested

²² “House Divided Speech (1858).” National Park Service.

²³ Michael S. Green, *Lincoln and the Election of 1860*. (SIU Press, 2011)

privately. Hostilities between the North and South, now the Confederate States of America, continued to grow, fueled by a Union blockade of Confederate ports and other hostile actions, until the first open conflict kicked off.

On April 12, the Army of the Confederate States attacked the Union-held Fort Sumter near Charleston, South Carolina, the first open engagement between the Union and Confederacy. Lincoln called a force of 75,000²⁴ men to crush the rebellion, and the Civil War was underway. Lincoln first had to prevent the border states of Delaware, Missouri, Kentucky, and Maryland from joining the Confederacy. He carefully avoided open conflict while discreetly ordering that pro-Confederate sympathizers be arrested, and pro-Union sympathizers be bolstered. One of Lincoln's early General appointments, John C. Fremont, surprised him by declaring the emancipation of all slaves in Missouri. Lincoln quickly reversed the order, a move that would seem to contradict his later decision to declare emancipation throughout the entire Confederacy. The war started on a bad note for the Union, as the Confederate army proved to be capable, well-led, and highly motivated, despite their disadvantage in infrastructure and manpower. Lincoln faced intense pressure at home to sack some of his generals due to a perceived lack of progress, while anti-war Copperheads in the North threatened to undermine Lincoln and the war effort. However, a Union victory at Antietam in September 1862 gave Lincoln the confidence he needed for his most ambitious act yet.

On January 1, 1863, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring that all slaves in the Confederate States were now free. The direct impact of the Proclamation was minimal, as there was no mechanism to free slaves in the Confederate-held deep south were most

²⁴ Ron Field, *Lincoln's 90-Day Volunteers*. (Bloomsbury Publishing, Jul. 2013)

slaves were still in bondage. However, it was an important symbolic message sent by Lincoln and revealed his abolitionist platform, a major part of his legacy. A key turning point in the war was reached on July 1, when the Union defeated the Confederacy in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, despite taking heavy casualties. On November 19, 1863, Lincoln gave a brief, yet moving, address in Gettysburg in which he affirmed that the Union struggle was against the evil of slavery and that all the men who died have not died in vain. “The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here,”²⁵ Lincoln said of the dead.

The war policy of the Union became more aggressive following Gettysburg, as Lincoln appointed General William Sherman to replace Ulysses S. Grant as commander of the Western Theater. Sherman adopted a “scorched earth” policy, destroying Southern infrastructure and civilian property on the path from Atlanta, Georgia to Savannah, Georgia. These victories renewed confidence in the Union Army, and Lincoln was elected to a second term on November 8, 1864. The success of Sherman’s campaign shattered Confederate logistics and supply routes, leaving the remaining Confederate soldiers desperate and isolated. The Union army caught up with Confederate General Robert E. Lee in Virginia, cutting off all of his routes of escape. With his army starved and near hopeless, Lee surrendered at the Appomattox courthouse on April 9, 1865. After 4 bitter years of conflict, the Civil War was over, and the process of Reconstruction began.

Although Lincoln’s view of Reconstruction was never realized, he was moderate when compared to some of his radical Republican colleagues. Lincoln had been planning

²⁵ “Gettysburg Address.” Library of Congress Official Website, 1995.

Reconstruction since 1863, offering a pardon and restoration of property to all Confederate citizens who had not held high office in exchange for respecting the rights of freedmen and swearing an oath of loyalty to the Union. In addition, he promised that states could be readmitted to the union with only 10% of voters affirming an oath to the Union. On his second Inaugural Address, on March 4, 1865, Lincoln affirmed his desire for reconciliation rather than revenge. “With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations,”²⁶ Lincoln said.

However, Lincoln’s plans for post-war America were dashed to dust on April 14, 1865. Faced with the impending defeat of the Confederacy, pro-Confederate actor John Wilkes Booth conspired to kill Lincoln, Vice-President Andrew Johnson, and Secretary of State William Seward. Booth gathered co-conspirators Lewis Powell, David Herold, and George Atzerodt, and set off at night. Booth succeeded in killing Lincoln, shooting him once in the back of the head before escaping the theater where Lincoln was viewing a play. However, Powell failed to kill Seward, and Atzerodt lost his nerve. Lincoln perished not long after being shot, dying on the morning of April 15. Eventually, Booth was cornered and killed, and Powell, Herold, and Atzerodt were hung along with boarding house owner Mary Surratt.

The death of Lincoln did not fracture the Union again as some feared. However, Lincoln’s untimely assassination was a pivotal moment in history, as the process of

²⁶ Second Inaugural Address of Abraham Lincoln.” Yale Law School, Lillian Goldman Law Library. 2008.

Reconstruction was fundamentally altered and Lincoln's plans for post-war America were never realized. The ascension of Andrew Johnson to the presidency following Lincoln's assassination allowed many former Confederate officials to slip back into power, a turn of events which Lincoln feared, and "Redemption" Democrats unleashed a wave of terror and violence against the freed slave population that was unchecked for many years. Though eventually the North and South began to reconcile, racism and discrimination against the recently freed African-Americans continued. While Lincoln had secured freedom for the slaves of America, a bitter price was paid in blood.

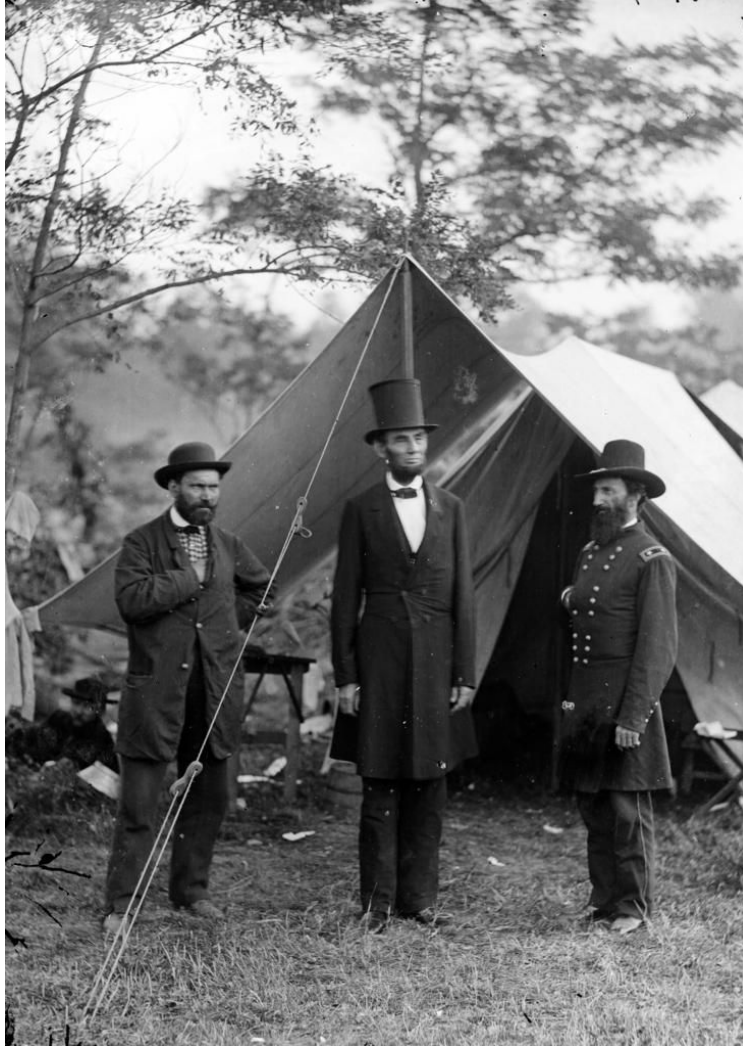


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THE EVOLUTION OF LINCOLN

BIOGRAPHIES

Throughout history, historians have been unable to develop a consistent caricature of Lincoln. Despite a treasure trove of primary sources and testimony from those who knew Lincoln in life, many of Lincoln's decisions and actions remain a puzzle for modern historians. His monumental legacy continues to be probed and examined by scholars and the public at large. To many historians, his complexity is perhaps why he is so revered; he is the man who cannot be contained by any one way of thinking. Since his death, the Lincoln biography has manifested through three general historiographical manifestations. The three major interpretations of Lincoln are of him as the perfect savior and martyr of the Union, a morally bankrupt, slovenly, and tyrannical individual who represented everything wrong with the Union, or a complex individual who cannot easily be understood. This section will explore these three perspectives of Lincoln that have evolved over time and how modern biographies have come to embrace the more complex interpretation of Lincoln.

The view of Lincoln as a perfect savior and martyr of the Union was the first to emerge. In one of the first biographies of Lincoln following his death, Josiah Holland emphasised the supposed Christian virtues of Lincoln in his 1866 biography *Life of Abraham Lincoln*. Holland states, "His character was planted in [his] Christian mother's life. Its roots were fed by this Christian mother's love. Holland goes on to lionize and lavish praise on Lincoln many times in his book, calling him "the humble and unobtrusive citizen, the self-educated and Christian man."²⁷ Most interestingly, Holland did not know Lincoln personally, and yet his biography of Lincoln was more well received than those who did know him personally. Holland's narrative was based on embellishments and presumptions, but nevertheless, it was the most accepted narrative

²⁷ Josiah Holland, *Life of Abraham Lincoln*. Springfield: 1866. Pg 530

amongst the population. To Holland, the simplest explanation of Lincoln was all that was needed; he was guided by God. The death of Lincoln on Good Friday undoubtedly fed into this image of Lincoln as a Christ-like figure. However, historians who knew Lincoln questioned this depiction.

William Herndon, a friend of Lincoln, was worried of a potential cult of personality around Lincoln, and was one of the first to speak out against the traditional view of Lincoln's memory in the face of highly aggrandizing biographies like Holland's. Herndon believed that the nationwide image of Lincoln was incorrect and based entirely around his legendary accomplishments while neglecting his true character. Herndon stated, "Sacred lies will not protect us. Hence as Mr. Lincoln's friend I propose to sink and cut a counter mine."²⁸ He gave several speeches following Lincoln's death, in which he described Lincoln as "dripping with melancholy" and that "Faith was unknown to his soul." The more realistic view of Lincoln presented by Herndon was widely denounced in the North, and he was forced to write more positively of Lincoln in his 1889 biography *Abraham Lincoln: The True Story of a Great Life*.²⁹ Despite his reversal on his portrayal of Lincoln, Herndon's image of Lincoln would later turn out to be the one favored by historians moving forward.

In the early 20th century, historians began to focus on the humanity and unknowable nature of Lincoln, rejecting the traditional Lincoln dichotomy and demythologizing him. In one of the first biographies of Lincoln published in the U.K in 1907, Henry Binns remarked on the startling opaqueness of Lincoln's inner personality. "We can trace his history through almost all its details... but at the end, we confess we are not satisfied with the explanations we have to

²⁸ John McKee Barr, *Loathing Lincoln* LSU Press, 2014. Pg 86

²⁹ William H. Herndon, *Abraham Lincoln: The True Story of a Great Life*. 1886.

offer.”³⁰ One of the most notable biographies of this era, *Lincoln the Unknown*, written by Dale Carnegie in 1932, was perhaps the most symbolic of this era of Lincoln scholarship. In *Lincoln the Unknown*, Lincoln’s biography is told in the form of a novel. It is relatively short, with only 256 pages, and spends a great deal of time covering Lincoln’s upbringing and his troubled marriage with Mary Todd Lincoln.³¹ Unlike other Lincoln biographies, Carnegie does not present a mountain of information, testimonies, and letters. It’s succinct nature presents Lincoln as-is, with little commentary or political influences. A good part of it is dedicated to Mary Todd Lincoln, revealing how disliked and hated she was in comparison to her husband. This era of Lincoln scholarship was evolving beyond the overly political, personal and religious influences of previous biographies, and turned its attention to Lincoln as a man instead of a national symbol.

However, around this same time, anti-Lincoln scholarship was experiencing a revival, demythologizing Lincoln in a way that presented him as a man of highly questionable morals and slovenly character while also blaming him for ills of the time. Leading the charge was Edgar Lee Masters, author of *The Spoon River Anthology*. Described as “the most bitter attack on Lincoln that has been made since the days of secession,”³² *Lincoln the Man* was nearly entirely dedicated to attacking Lincoln’s character and even blaming him for the Great Depression, which was in full swing at the time the biography was written. “So we shall soon see Lincoln, the attorney of the Illinois Central Railroad, riding about on special trains furnished for him, and posing again as ‘humble Abraham Lincoln.’ His long years of professional mediocrity, his

³⁰ Henry Binns, *Abraham Lincoln*. 1907. Pg 398.

³¹ Dale Carnegie, *Lincoln the Unknown*. (The Century Company, 1932).

³² Matthew D. Norman. “An Illinois Iconoclast: Edgar Lee Masters and the Anti-Lincoln Tradition. *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* vol 24 no 1 (2003).

poverty... his melancholy, the pathos of his homely face... all these things stood Lincoln in good stead.”³³ As for the Great Depression itself, he argues that the “tariff and the bank” responsible for America’s economic collapse are “Lincoln institutions.”³⁴ Borrowing much of his research directly from Herndon, Masters penned one of the most infamous biographies of Lincoln, one that came to define the anti-Lincoln movement of the early-to-mid 1900s.

From the 1990s onward, Lincoln scholarship has embraced the image of Lincoln as a confounding yet brilliant individual who accomplished amazing feats. One of the most well-known biographies of this era is *Team of Rivals* by Doris Kearns Goodwin. In this biography, Goodwin’s image of Lincoln does not represent his life as a “rugged frontiersman,” but instead covers his political career in the White House. Lincoln is presented as an inexperienced, yet highly skilled politician who was able to navigate a minefield of tumultuous and conflicting advisors to end the Civil War. “Washington was a typical American. Napoleon was a typical Frenchman, but Lincoln was a humanitarian as broad as the world. He was bigger than his country - bigger than all the Presidents together,”³⁵ she writes. Lincoln is not only an American hero, but a *human* hero, a man whose skill and intellect in addition to his strong sense of morality is what makes him great. Other biographies post 2000s parallel this perspective. The biography, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery*, by Eric Foner discusses how Lincoln’s character was perverted by those who tried to apply their own framework of understanding when analyzing Lincoln’s life. “The problem is that we tend too often to read Lincoln's growth backward, as an unproblematic trajectory toward a predetermined end. This

³³ Edgar Lee Masters, *Lincoln the Man*. 1931. Pg 274.

³⁴ Masters Pg 464

³⁵ Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*. Simon & Schuster, 2005.

enables scholars to ignore or downplay aspects of Lincoln's beliefs with which they are uncomfortable,"³⁶ Foner wrote. Foner's biography avoids including the perspectives of other historians on Lincoln, drawing most of its content from unbiased and objective facts about Lincoln instead of the speculation and bias that drove many earlier biographies of Lincoln.

However, in this modern era, strong anti-Lincoln perspectives also exist, often tying contemporary controversy to Lincoln's legacy. *The Real Lincoln* by Thomas DiLorenzo is the most prolific of the modern anti-Lincoln biographies, and presents Lincoln as the architect of the modern-day excessively federal system of government. DiLorenzo's criticism of Lincoln is remarkably similar to Edgar Lee Masters; in that both described Lincoln as an agent of Federalism and a destroyer of Jeffersonian democracy. "Thanks to Lincoln's war, states' rights would no longer perform its most important function: protecting the citizens of the states from federal judicial tyranny,"³⁷ he writes. In an article for the Miles Institute, DiLorenzo wrote that Masters "pinpointed exactly what Lincoln and the Whig/Republican politicians of the nineteenth century were all about," that is, the radical expansion of the federal government and the "plunder" of the American people through taxation. The existence of DiLorenzo's harshly critical biographies reveals the complexity and variety of Lincoln scholarship and how a consistent national portrait that all of America can agree on may never come to fruition.

To conclude, Lincoln historiography has come a long way since his assassination. Originally filled with one-sided bias, speculation, and mythology, Lincoln biographers have now come to see him as a man like any other. His intentions and motivations may never properly be understood and historians have accepted this fact. Lincoln was a man of contradictions and

³⁶ David Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery*. (W.W Norton and Company, 2010)

³⁷ Thomas DiLorenzo, *The Real Lincoln*. (Crown Forum, 2003.)

questions that continue to puzzle even today. Yet it is these questions, these remarkable and sometimes shockings decisions made by Lincoln which baffle the most studied historians that fuel into Lincoln's status as the most notable American president.



Image Credit: Pixabay (CCO Public Domain Image)

**PAPER AND STONE: LINCOLN
MEMORY THROUGH MONUMENTS,
ART, AND CURRENCY.**

An evolution in the way Lincoln is remembered is also seen in monuments, currency, and other government and privately endorsed commemorations of Lincoln's memory. The most famous monument to Lincoln, the Lincoln Memorial, has stood for almost 100 years, and was the site of the "I have a Dream" speech by Martin Luther King Jr. Lincoln has had a symbolic tie with the national pulse even after his death, and a large number of monuments, pieces of art, and tourist attractions have been created to commemorate Lincoln. While some historians, such as Barry Schwartz, argue that Lincoln has although lost some of his sacredness in recent years, reflected in the declining public interest of Lincoln monuments, his legacy has been set forever in stone. In addition, Lincoln has been included on U.S currency since 1861, beginning when he was still alive. Through memorials, monuments, and currency, Lincoln's legacy as a unifying figure has been preserved in the collective memory.

The first public commemorative sculpture of Lincoln was commissioned in Washington D.C, 13 days after Lincoln's assassination and represented unity in the face of his death. Despite being the capital of the Union during the civil war, D.C itself was highly divided during the Civil War, especially considering it's close proximity to Richmond, the capital of the Confederacy. In an attempt to demonstrate loyalty and devotion to the slain President, local leaders in D.C came together to raise funds for the erection of a Lincoln sculpture in front of the Superior Court.³⁸ A headstone maker named Lot Flannery was chosen as the sculptor, who some considered to be a poor choice to sculpt a figure as famous as Lincoln. The sculpture depicts Lincoln gazing outward while his hand rests on a fasces, a symbol of strength. The unveiling ceremony on April 15, 1868, exactly 3 years after Lincoln's assassination, drew a large crowd of about 20,000,

³⁸ Kathryn Allamong Jacob, *Testament to Union: Civil War Monuments in Washington*. (JHU Press: 1998)

approximately 20% of the population of D.C. The opening ceremony was well received, but unfortunately, some critics attacked the statue as being too small and unremarkable to represent Lincoln, who was still regarded as a deific figure in the public mind. There is no mention of the Emancipation Proclamation, Civil War, or any other remarkable event associated with Lincoln, which some critics interpreted as being overlooking of Lincoln's legacy.³⁹ Nevertheless, the sculpture was remarkable as not only one of the first sculptures of Lincoln commissioned, but also in how it represented Lincoln as symbol of public unity, a "perfect" figure for all to unite behind.

The Lincoln Tomb, Lincoln's final resting place, went over several drastic changes ever since its inception in 1865, reflecting on changing attitudes to how Lincoln should be remembered. Even after death, Lincoln's body was restless. Following his assassination, Lincoln's body travelled throughout the nation, stopping in several different states throughout the Northeast and Midwest. Meanwhile, donations were gathered for the construction of a permanent tomb in Springfield for Lincoln. However, Congress wanted the President to be buried underneath the Capitol dome, and Mary Todd Lincoln wanted his body to be buried in the rural Oak Ridge Cemetery.⁴⁰ Mary Lincoln's wishes won out, and construction began in 1869 on the permanent resting place for Abraham Lincoln called the Lincoln Tomb. On October 15, 1874, President Grant held the dedication ceremony for the Tomb, and it seemed like the turmoil over burying Lincoln's body was at an end. However, in 1876, a conspiracy was hatched to steal Lincoln's corpse and ransom it for 200,000 dollars. Although the conspiracy was foiled, severe structural problems in the Lincoln Tomb were discovered, and the death of the last member of

³⁹ Kathryn Allamong Jacob, Pg 68.

⁴⁰ "The Transformation of the Lincoln Dome." *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*, Vol. 27, no. 1. (2006)

the Lincoln Monument Association meant that the state of Illinois now had to decide what to do about the Tomb. Once again, there were proposals for the Tomb to be rebuilt in Springfield, but they were never heard out. Even after the monument was reconstructed in 1901, structural problems continued, with one tunnel coming to the verge of collapse. In addition, many visitors criticized the Tomb for containing too many tacky folklorish relics and the curator for not taking his job seriously and telling wild legends to visitors. One group questioned, “Under existing conditions, is it possible to show that reverence which every true American should and really wishes to show at the tomb of Lincoln?” The tomb was rebuilt again in 1930, this time with more modern structural improvements and a different focus. Harry H. Cleaveland, the director of the Department of Public Works stated that the new Tomb would be of “solemn and imposing dignity, yet not heavy and forbidding.”⁴¹ Lincoln’s body was now entombed underneath dozens of feet of concrete, safe from graverobbers or vandals, and a faux marble sarcophagus now laid in the center. The changes that the Lincoln Tomb underwent are important when considering how Lincoln has been remembered. Once a haphazard museum filled with tacky knick knacks, the Lincoln Tomb is unique among Lincoln memorials as a place of solemn remembrance. While many other memorials to Lincoln are designed for the visitor, the Tomb is now dedicated to Lincoln himself. There is no gift shop, nor a visitor’s center associated with the Tomb. While Lincoln’s resting place has received considerably more attention than other Presidents, the Lincoln Tomb has evolved into a place where the deceased President can be memorialized without sensationalism, kitsch, or money involved. The evolution of the Lincoln Tomb is a reversal of the traditional history of attitudes towards Lincoln; while Lincoln was slowly

⁴¹ “Transformation of the Lincoln Dome,” pg 10.

becoming humanized following his assassination, the Lincoln Tomb was turning away from Lincoln as a man and towards a more sacred and solemn reverence of Lincoln's memory.

While the Lincoln Tomb has transformed into a more subtle commemoration of Lincoln's memory, the most famous monument to Lincoln, the Lincoln Memorial, has stood the same for almost one hundred years, becoming solidified in the public memory thanks to Martin Luther King Jr. The Lincoln Memorial was dedicated in 1868, but construction efforts stalled until the 20th century thanks to the efforts of House Speaker Joe Cannon.⁴² With a final bill approving construction passed in 1910, the Lincoln Memorial Commission decided on Henry Bacon's design proposal. Bacon's design of the Lincoln Memorial was a large, classically styled temple with Lincoln at the center, looking towards the Washington Monument over a reflecting pool. To the left and right of Lincoln is the text of the Gettysburg Address and his Second Inaugural Address, and above is a mural depicting an angel freeing a slave from captivity. In 1922, the memorial was completed, and visitors flocked to see the grandest dedication to Lincoln's memory yet. The Lincoln Memorial is unique in its depiction of a President; Lincoln is seated, in a relaxed yet determined posture. His hands rest atop two fasces, an ancient Roman symbol of power and dominion. The contrast of Lincoln's relaxed posture with symbols of power reflect on how he is perceived as both a humble man, and strong leader in the public memory. The hands of Lincoln reflect this dichotomy as well; one hand is open in a relaxed posture, while the other is clenched in a posture of strength. In the sphere of public memory, the Lincoln Memorial is perhaps the most important Lincoln monument of all due to its setting for Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I have a dream" speech. In the speech, Martin Luther King Jr. outlined his vision for racial

⁴² "Evolution of Lincoln Memorial." National Park Service. Last modified Jul. 31, 2017.

equality in America with a dramatic, metaphor-laden speech. While King did not directly reference Lincoln by name, the speech invoked Lincoln's memory in content, and in location. "Five score years ago a great American in whose symbolic shadow we stand today signed the Emancipation Proclamation... but 100 years later the Negro is still not free,"⁴³ King said of Lincoln and the present discrimination facing African-Americans. King's speech would ultimately go down in history, being ranked the top speech of the 20th century by scholars in 1999⁴⁴. Following the speech by Martin Luther King Jr., the Lincoln Memorial became not only a memorial to Lincoln, but a symbol of racial equality, progress, and unity, despite Lincoln's nebulous views on race. Before Martin Luther King, an African-American singer named Marian Anderson The Lincoln Memorial has become the defining monument to Lincoln's memory, standing today as an enduring commemoration of Lincoln's memory and representing the ideals he stood for.

Abe Lincoln is remembered alongside the likes of George Washington, Andrew Jackson, and Ulysses S. Grant on U.S currency, having earned his place on the five dollar bill and penny. Lincoln had actually appeared on paper money while he was still alive, the first president to do so. When the Civil War broke out, the federal government was faced with the prospect of having to pay the salaries of thousands of new troops and other wartime expenses. In response, they began printing "Demand Notes," in 1861, paper currency that was not legal tender for private transactions, but could be exchanged for coin at banks. Lincoln was placed on this short-lived currency, appearing on the ten dollar note to give it more legitimacy when being exchanged.

⁴³ Martin Luther King Jr, "I Have a Dream" Speech. Accessed through King Institute of Stanford University.

⁴⁴ "I Have a Dream' leads top 100 speeches of the century," *University of Wisconsin-Madison*. Last Modified Dec. 15 1999

However, demand notes quickly fell out of favor since many banks still refused to honor them as currency. They were replaced by the “Legal Tender” we now use today, which was valid in all transactions, private and public. Lincoln found his way onto currency once again in 1909, once again making a first when it came to currency. In commemoration of the 1909 centennial of Lincoln’s birth, the U.S Mint hired Victor David Brenner to create a new design for the penny with Lincoln on it. There was controversy associated with the release, as Brenner’s initials were removed from the penny after complaints that they were too prominent and detracted from Lincoln’s image. However, the public was in a frenzy for these Lincoln pennies. “The popularity proved so great that Sub-Treasury outlets and banks rationed the new cents to a limit of 100 coins per customer. Long lines were formed at the payout windows of various Treasury Department outlets. On August 5th, supplies ran out, and signs were posted reading, ‘NO MORE LINCOLN PENNIES’,”⁴⁵ according to currency expert Q. David Bowers. In 1959, 150 years after Lincoln’s birth, the Lincoln Memorial was added to the back of the penny. In 2009, in honor of the bicentennial of Lincoln’s birth, the U.S mint produced four variations of the penny, each depicting a different scene from Lincoln’s life. One variation depicted Lincoln’s log cabin house as an infant, another depicted young Lincoln reading while sitting on top of a log, the third depicted Lincoln in front of the Illinois State Capitol during his years in the state legislature, and the fourth depicted the Lincoln Memorial.⁴⁶ In the year 1913, Lincoln was placed in the five dollar bill by the U.S Mint department. Undoubtedly, Lincoln’s legendary reputation meant that it was only fitting that he would appear on the five dollar bill. In addition, Lincoln’s placement on the five dollar bill came at a time when global tensions were escalating towards World War

⁴⁵ Q. David Bowers, *A Guide Book of Lincoln Cents, 2nd edition*. (Whitman Publishing, 2016.) Pg. 70.

⁴⁶ Q. David Bowers. Pg 160.

One. Lincoln is remembered for his skill at handling a domestic crises, so the inclusion of Lincoln was perhaps meant to remind Americans of Lincoln's dream for a united America, and to avoid the fracturing that plunged Europe into war. By appearing on two forms of currency, Lincoln is subconsciously remembered every time a five dollar bill or penny changes hands. Although the changing of money is a routine process, the placement of Lincoln on currency ensures that his legacy is solidified and that he remains in the U.S consciousness.



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ABE ON THE BIG SCREEN: LINCOLN IN FILM

Despite his tenure as President being cut short, Lincoln had an eventful life throughout his childhood, young adulthood, and career as President. It seemed that Lincoln, the man who was both humble in character and larger than life in his accomplishments, was destined for an extensive legacy in all mediums of public memory. Through film, new life was breathed into the memory of Lincoln, allowing filmmakers to depict the President on a more intimate scale. Compared to lengthy and obtuse biographies that were often filled with many details, film allowed for the general public to digest the life of Lincoln more easily and along with others in a theater. Early filmmakers used this new medium to hearken back to the early days of Lincoln in the public memory; Lincoln was almost universally presented as a martyr. “It is in this mode that Lincoln entered film history,”⁴⁷ wrote Jeff Menne and Christian Long in their book, *Film and the American Presidency*. Often times, these films presented fictionalized or dramatized historical moments, such as Lincoln’s supposed romantic relationship with Ann Rutledge, and his wartime pardoning of several Union soldiers. Over time, filmmakers began exploring different aspects of Lincoln, such as his early life and time as a lawyer. In the modern era, Lincoln is defined by the eponymous Spielberg documentary, which presented a far more deep and complex Lincoln to audiences. Fictionalized or not, Lincoln films provide insight into how Lincoln was perceived in the public memory over time, as well as being one of primary imprinters of Lincoln in the public memory.

Lincoln was first depicted in film as a miraculous savior, paralleling the way in which the first historical biographies of Lincoln were written. The films were titled *The Reprieve: An*

⁴⁷ Jeff Menne and Christian Long. *Film and the American Presidency*. (Routledge, Feb. 2015)

Episode in the Life of Abraham Lincoln (1908), *Abraham Lincoln's Clemency* (1910), and *The Sleeping Sentinel* (1914). Each film revolved around the same premise of Lincoln pardoning a Union soldier who was due to be executed. Although copies of the films are not publically available or lost to history, each film centered around a Union soldier who had fallen asleep while on guard duty, and received clemency from Lincoln himself. The films were in fact true to history, as Lincoln did pardon many Union soldiers court martialed for various offenses. According to historian Jonathan W. White, Lincoln lessened the punishment of 77 to 95 percent of court martial cases that went before him.⁴⁸ These early films were highly positive of Lincoln, and presented him as a messianic figure who gave life, the same way that Jesus healed the sick and dying. Although many of his pardons were conducted via telegram, the film *Abraham Lincoln's Clemency* depicts Lincoln delivering the pardon in person, a highly dramatized rendition of what was usually a simple task. The film's official summary describes the pardon: "All is in readiness for the fatal word of command to be given, when through a cloud of dust a coach dashes up attended by outriders. The President steps out and pardons the prisoner, who falls on his knees and blesses him."⁴⁹ Later, the pardoned soldier is shot on the battlefield, and while dying, witnesses the President appearing to him in a vision and sending him off to heaven. At the end of the film, there is symbolism of Lincoln as a unifier: a Union and Confederate flag are rolled up by Lincoln, and when unfurled, it has become the traditional Stars and Stripes. The messianic symbolism is extremely evident; Lincoln not only saves and intervenes in individual lives through magical means, he saves the souls of all the divided Union. There is no complexity in the portrayal of Lincoln; he is a man of mercy, and has the grace of God. These three early

⁴⁸ Jonathan W. White, *Emancipation, the Union Army, and the Reelection of Abraham Lincoln*. (2014) Pg 86

⁴⁹ "Abraham Lincoln's Clemency (1910) Plot". International Movie Database.

Lincoln films all presented Lincoln as a benevolent, sometimes magical and Christlike figure, echoing the early development of written Lincoln biographies in portraying Lincoln as an infallible figure.

Another early film with a positive view of Lincoln is surprising at first glance: *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) by D.W. Griffith. *The Birth of a Nation* is remembered today as a thoroughly, disgustingly racist film, despite being popular in its own time. The film went as far as to be screened inside the White House and is often viewed in U.S. history survey courses. In the film, a fictionalized version of Reconstruction is presented in which armed, black federal troops use force against white southerners to prevent them from voting, and freedmen rape southern women, among other fictional atrocities.⁵⁰ The KKK is presented in the film as a liberating force who save a southern town from an evil mixed-race Lieutenant Governor named Silas Lynch. With all of the racism towards blacks and hatred directed at the North in the film, it is surprising that Lincoln is presented as “The Great Heart” as one southern character describes. Lincoln is presented as a foe to the villainous Radical Republican Stoneman family. In one exchange of dialogue, the radical Republican Austin Stoneman says to Lincoln that “Their [Confederate] leaders must be hanged and their states treated as conquered provinces,” to which Lincoln replies “I shall deal with them as if they never were away.”⁵¹ When Lincoln is assassinated by John Wilkes Booth, the southern Cameron family mourn his loss, as Radical Republicans will now assume control of Reconstruction efforts. Griffith presents Lincoln and the KKK together as a stabilizing force, while the secessionists and the freed slaves are lumped together as bringing ruin to the South through their short-sightedness and selfish motivations. While undoubtedly a

⁵⁰ “The Birth of a Nation (1915) Plot”. International Movie Database.

⁵¹ “Austin Stoneman talks to Lincoln Scene.” *Birth of a Nation*. Directed by D.W. Griffith, 1915.

racist and ahistorical film on many subjects, *Birth of a Nation* remains a very important film when considering how Lincoln is portrayed. “If one examines the four major scenes in which he appears, and situates those scenes within the larger context of Lincoln’s representations in American cinema throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it becomes clear that Griffith’s Lincoln has greatly influenced several generations of filmmakers and audiences,”⁵² according to historian Brian J Snee. Griffith’s portrayal of Lincoln as a hero for both the North and the South had an impact on future Lincoln films, which generally portrayed Lincoln in a similar manner and avoided contentious issues of race.

In 1930, D.W Griffith went on to direct another film, this time solely focused on Lincoln and exploring Lincoln’s childhood in addition to his presidential feats. Titled *Abraham Lincoln*, it was notable as the first “talkie” Lincoln film. Despite starting strongly in depicting Lincoln’s early life, the film tapers off into dramatization and inaccuracy as the film goes on. It shows Lincoln first as a strapping, witty young man in a budding relationship with Ann Rutledge. However, following Ann’s death, Lincoln becomes more somber, and dedicated to a life in politics. The film largely skips over the debates Lincoln had with Stephen Douglas, with only a couple of minutes dedicated to this pivotal moment in Lincoln’s history. A review in the New York Times stated, “The debate between Lincoln and Douglas might easily have been filmed at greater length, even if other glimpses had to be shortened.”⁵³ The film contains several historical inaccuracies, the most egregious of which occurs at the very end of the movie. At the climax of the film, in Ford Theater, Lincoln delivers an amalgamation of the Gettysburg Address and his Second Inaugural Address to the audience, shortly before being shot. Perhaps Griffith believed

⁵²Brian J Snee, *Lincoln Before Lincoln : Early Cinematic Adaptations of the Life of America’s Greatest President*. (The University Press of Kentucky, 2016.)

⁵³ Mordaunt Hall, “*The Screen; Mr. Griffith’s First Talker.*” *The New York Times*, Aug. 26 1930.

that Lincoln's assassination was too ignoble of a death for his film, and decided to dramatize the assassination by having Lincoln deliver a speech before his assassination. Despite the above-mentioned inaccuracies, *Abraham Lincoln* by Griffith is an important film when considering how Lincoln was perceived. Instead of focusing mainly on the Civil War, with his childhood an afterthought, Griffith's film covered Lincoln's life in its entirety. Like the biography *Lincoln the Unknown* by Dale Carnegie, Lincoln's entire life is on display, not just his years as President. Also like *Lincoln the Unknown*, his relationships to Ann Rutledge and Mary Todd Lincoln are given considerable attention. Griffith, like some of his contemporaries, believed in Lincoln's virtues as a peacemaker first, not a civil rights hero. The way in which the film portrays Lincoln shows him as a peace-loving man eager to end the war, falling in line with his previous depiction of Lincoln in *Birth of a Nation*. A major event, the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, is brief enough to be missed if one looks away for thirty seconds. Although Griffith depicts slaves in bondage on a ship at the beginning of the film and makes it clear that slavery is an atrocity and the secessionists are in the wrong, the issue barely comes up throughout the film. When considering how portrayals of Lincoln in film evolved over time, *Abraham Lincoln* by D.W. Griffith is an important step. Not only was it the first Lincoln film with sound, but it was the first Lincoln film to put the primary defining moments of Lincoln's life on the sidelines while his younger years are given more attention. In addition, the way in which Griffith chose to portray Lincoln as a peacemaker first and foremost shows the complexity of Lincoln's legacy, in that it could be interpreted in many different ways. Although *Abraham Lincoln* was not a commercial success, it remains an important glimpse into Lincoln's early life,

showing that cinematic depictions of Lincoln were evolving alongside how he was perceived in the minds of historians and the general public.

Young Mr. Lincoln is another landmark Lincoln film, directed by famous director John Ford in 1939. Although not as critically acclaimed as his other films *Stagecoach* and *Grapes of Wrath*, *Young Mr. Lincoln* was a fresh look into Lincoln's life as a young lawyer. Like the earliest films about Lincoln, *Young Mr. Lincoln* is about a specific time in Lincoln's life. The film covers Lincoln's life as a young lawyer in Illinois and shows his ambition, wit, and benevolent personality through a true story about his handling of a murder case. Although the incident is dramatized with the inclusion of a lynch mob, a differing cause of death for the victim, and other discrepancies from the real case, the essence of the story in how Lincoln handled the case remains true to real life. In the film, a man is killed in a drunken brawl after an Independence Day celebration. Two brothers are accused of murder and held in jail, but the jail is quickly surrounded by a lynch mob. Lincoln, then a young lawyer, intervenes on behalf of the two brothers and convinces them to let a fair trial proceed, with Lincoln acting as the defense attorney. During the trial, Lincoln is able to disprove the witnesses' claim that he witnessed the brawl "under a full moon" by producing an almanac which showed that there was in fact no moonlight on the night of the murder. The way Lincoln's personality is represented through the film paint a picture of Lincoln as a man with a deep sense of morality and a strong, uncompromising character, reflecting on his future as President. In the film, Lincoln's lack of experience as a practicing lawyer is ridiculed by the prosecution. In response, Lincoln states "I may not know much about the law, but I know what is right!"⁵⁴ Despite facing immense pressure

⁵⁴ "Young Mr. Lincoln (1939) Plot." International Movie Database.

from his peers to resign from the case, Lincoln presses on with his defense. In many ways, the film is a parallel of Lincoln's later unpopularity during the Civil War. Lincoln was despised by many Northerners for his lack of experience and perceived mismanagement of the Civil War crisis. In both the film and as President, Lincoln faced tremendous opposition, but pressed on in order to do what he believed was right. At the end of the film and at the conclusion of the Civil War, Lincoln was vindicated.

A short film from around 1955 titled *The Face of Lincoln* took a unique approach that showed Lincoln literally evolving before the eyes. The film is only 21 minutes long, and is more of a lecture on Lincoln's life from a sculptor and professor named Merrell Gage. However, as Gage narrates Lincoln's life, he is in the process of sculpting Lincoln's face out of clay. While Gage narrates Lincoln's early life, his face has the appearance of a young man. He describes a transitional moment in Lincoln's life, in which Lincoln supposedly saw a slave market in Louisiana and was disgusted. At this moment, Gage places Lincoln's hair atop his head and begins carving out more adult facial features. Gage goes on to narrate Lincoln's entire life, describing how his opinion on various issues such as slavery and how to deal with the secessionists changed over time. While Gage describes how the Civil War began and how many stood in opposition to him, he carves wrinkles and other signs of aging into Lincoln's face. At the end of the film, when the sculpture is finished, Gage states "the spirit of Abraham Lincoln lives on. Wherever there is a struggle for human freedom, his deeds are remembered, his words are quoted."⁵⁵ Gage's film, despite not being a film in the traditional sense, was important because it portrayed Lincoln as a figure who evolved and changed over time in both the narration

⁵⁵ "The Face of Lincoln (1955)." International Movie Database.

and the sculpting of Lincoln's face. While the film is clearly favorable of Lincoln, the way in which Gage narrates Lincoln's life and the pivotal moments that impacted him shows a contrast to the simplistic approach of portraying Lincoln. Lincoln is known as a shaper of history; Gage describes how Lincoln himself was shaped by events around him, paralleling these pivotal moments in how he adds hair, wrinkles, and other distinctive features onto Lincoln. Gages film is a deconstruction of the legend of Lincoln; while Gage undoubtedly agrees that Lincoln is a great man, his constant "aging" throughout the film shows his humanity as well, and that he was just as subject to stresses as any other. Although it would take until Spielberg's *Lincoln* before this complex, evolving, and human perspective of Lincoln would be represented in the traditional format, *The Face of Lincoln* is a crucial step in portraying Lincoln in cinema as a complex and evolving figure unlike the previous, binary depictions of Lincoln.

While many biographical films of Lincoln have been produced, Abraham Lincoln cinema took a dip in the realm of action-fantasy with the cult classic *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* (2012). The film was based off a 2010 novel of the same name by Seth Grahame-Smith, and featured Lincoln as a vampire hunter, pitted against a horde of Confederate vampires. The film features events that actually happened in Lincoln's life, but portrayed in a fictional manner. The death of Lincoln's mother, for example, is depicted in the film as the result of a vampire attack, while in real life it was from food poisoning. Lincoln is portrayed as the farm worker and lawyer he was in real life, but is shown to secretly be training as a vampire hunter alongside his normal career. Moreover, his weapon of choice in the film, an axe with a head of silver, was a tool that Lincoln was familiar with as a rail-splitter. Despite the implausible premise, there are intriguing interpretations of Lincoln's legacy within *Vampire Hunter*. The main villain of the film, Adam,

challenges Lincoln by arguing that he has been alive for thousands of years and has seen nothing but slavery and cruelty, and thus, his actions are justified. “Men have enslaved each other... since they invented gods to forgive them for doing it,”⁵⁶ Adam says to Lincoln. Abraham Lincoln’s actions are thus then placed in the context of history: Lincoln’s struggle is presented as not only an American struggle, but a struggle against a history of oppression and violence. Lincoln’s triumph against Adam is a triumph against an evil as old as human history. In addition, *Vampire Hunter* shows the extent to which Lincoln’s legacy has become pervasive in the public mind. Lincoln has reached a mythological status and new “stories” can be invented about him the same way that the Greeks and Romans wrote fictional stories of real life figures. Although the film’s deeper message may be lost between the extravagant fighting scenes and dismembered limbs, it is clear that *Vampire Hunter* places Lincoln at the center of a greater struggle in addition to his contemporary struggles as President, and represents the fame of Lincoln in the public’s memory.

The same year as *Vampire Hunter* was released in cinema, one of the most defining Lincoln biopics was released: *Lincoln* by Steven Spielberg. Spielberg boasts one of the most, if not the most prolific resumes in Hollywood, directing blockbuster films from *E.T.* to *Jurassic Park*. *Lincoln* was much more subdued than many of Spielberg’s other films, focusing primarily on Lincoln’s career as President and the difficult decisions he had to make during the end of the Civil War. Lincoln is shown as a shrewd, but principled politician who uses somewhat underhanded tactics to win approval for the 13th Amendment banning slavery. Lincoln is shown offering positions within the federal government to win over Democrat votes, approving underhanded tactics to gain Republican approval, and misleading Congress about the presence of

⁵⁶ “Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter-Quotes.” International Movie Database, 2012.

Confederate envoys in Washington to gain enough votes. The portrayal of Lincoln shows him as a man with great principle, wit, and conviction able to convince people from a broad political spectrum to stand behind him. “His salty native wit is complemented by the clear and lofty lyricism that has come down to us in his great speeches,”⁵⁷ wrote A.O Scott in his *New York Times* review. Nearly every aspect of his personality, from his rural, folksy wit to his pragmatic political decision-making is shown in only a few months of Lincoln’s life. Part of the great success of the film is the casting of Lincoln by Daniel Day Lewis, an Oscar-winning method actor who takes many steps to prepare for his roles. *Lincoln* succeeded in attracting more attention and critical acclaim than most other Lincoln films, showing how the public memory of Lincoln has grown to not only view him as a great American hero, but as a complex and human individual as portrayed in the film. Day-Lewis stated himself that Lincoln has “been mythologized almost to the point of dehumanization... but when you begin to approach him, he almost instantly becomes welcoming and accessible, the way he was in life.”⁵⁸ Although earlier films such as D.W Griffith’s *Abraham Lincoln* made attempts at humanizing Lincoln, Spielberg’s *Lincoln* succeeded in creating a realistic and believable portrait of Lincoln on the big screen, and in introducing that portrait to a wide audience.

One of the primary ways that Lincoln is remembered is through the numerous photographs of him taken throughout his life, and which photographs that the public chooses to remember him by. Lincoln is undoubtedly one of the most recognizable presidents, with his sharp facial features and homely expression making him instantly recognizable by almost anyone in America. However, only a few photographs of Lincoln have become widely influential.

⁵⁷ A.O Scott, “Lincoln Movie Review.” *The New York Times*, Nov. 8, 2012.

⁵⁸ Charles McGrath. “Daniel Day-Lewis on Playing Abraham Lincoln.” *The New York Times*, Oct. 31, 2012.

According to researcher George Sullivan, there are 130 known photographs of Lincoln, taken between 1846 and 1865⁵⁹. Lincoln was first photographed in 1846 as a junior congressman from Illinois. In the earliest photographs of Lincoln, he is always clean-shaven, with nary a single hair visible until his presidential career began. In 1860, shortly before the elections, an eleven year old girl named Grace Bedell wrote a letter to Lincoln, urging him to grow out his facial hair. “All the ladies like whiskers and they would tease their husbands to vote for you and then you would be President,”⁶⁰ she wrote to Lincoln. Lincoln took Grace’s advice, and all photographs of Lincoln past November 25, 1860 feature his famous beard. Without the beard, Lincoln appears almost unrecognizable to those unfamiliar with his clean-shaven appearance. When thinking of Lincoln, the bearded image is almost always the image that would appear in one’s head. One of the most widely used images of Lincoln is the so-called “Gettysburg Portrait” that was taken a few weeks before he delivered the Gettysburg Address. Lincoln’s face is striking, staring directly at the viewer in a close-up shot of his head and shoulders. This portrait is one of the most widespread because of the complexity and recognizability of Lincoln’s features; his hair is long and messy, which along with the beard give his portrait a youthful quality. However, his face is wrinkled and with clear signs of aging, and his eyes suggest tiredness, yet determination. Combined with his high cheekbones and narrow face, it is clear why Lincoln stands out amongst all other presidents, and the Gettysburg Portrait specifically above his other portraits. In fact, Lincoln was the first president to grow a beard while in office, immediately setting him apart from his previous contemporaries, and no president since William Howard Taft (1909-1913) has

⁵⁹ George Sullivan, *Picturing Lincoln: Famous Photographs that Popularized the President*. (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2000)

⁶⁰ Grace Bedell, “The Advice of a Little Girl (letter to Abraham Lincoln.)” Preserved by Library of Congress.

grown facial hair⁶¹. Thus, with his homely appearance, complemented by an instantly recognizable beard, Lincoln's image is seared into the public memory.

⁶¹ Dan Kopf, "When was the last time a U.S President had facial hair?" Quartz Magazine, Feb. 19 2017.

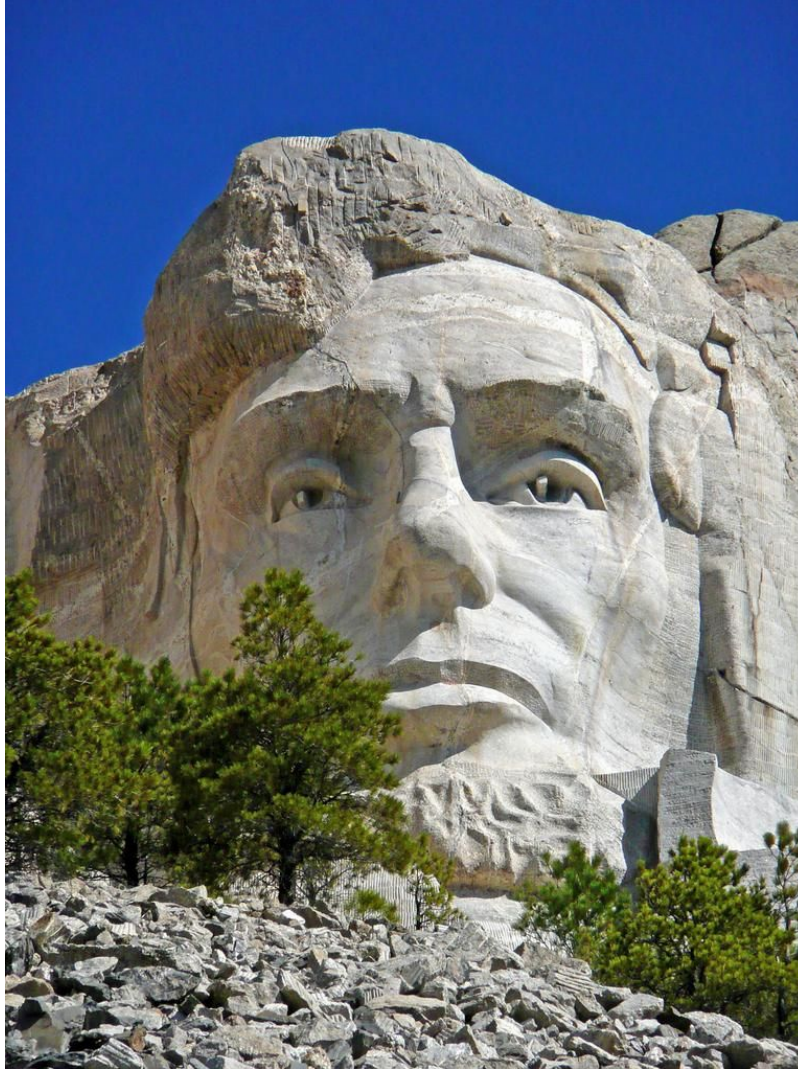


Image Credit: Pixabay (CCO Public Domain Image)

CONCLUSION: THE “NEW” OLD ABE

Abraham Lincoln is a president whose legacy has endured stronger than almost all others. Without Lincoln as President, history could have taken a number of turns. Stephen Douglas, Lincoln's presidential opponent, might not have had the conviction or desire to end slavery in the Union for good, or the skill to negotiate with competing factions within both parties. Lincoln had to deal with a series incredibly complex and divisive issues, despite a lack of political experience. In the end, Lincoln triumphed, not only bringing the Civil War to an end, but preserving the Union that has held strong ever since. For all that is known about Lincoln, he has remained a perplexing and sometimes controversial individual. As time has gone on, the public has viewed Lincoln in a variety of different lights.

Following Lincoln's assassination, the public reacted with an outpouring of grief, and developed the caricature of Lincoln as a "Perfect Savior." In early biographies such as Holland's, Lincoln was portrayed as an upstanding, faultless Christian man who was guided by faith. Lincoln's memory was commemorated by sculptures, statues, and even the elaborate Lincoln Tomb that became the location of pilgrimages in honor of Lincoln's memory. The criticisms levied against him during his Presidency seemed to be completely forgotten. This caricature of Lincoln persisted for decades, maintained even by those who would seem to be opposed to Lincoln's legacy. As explained above, D.W Griffith upheld Lincoln in *Birth of a Nation* as a profoundly wise, merciful and benevolent leader, while giving the same credence to the Ku Klux Klan. In other early Lincoln films such as *Abraham Lincoln's Clemency*, he was presented as having a Christlike personality and a connection with Heaven as he "blesses" a soldier at the last minute to spare him from an ignominious fate. This association of Lincoln with God was fueled largely by his assassination, as Lincoln's fate was believed by many to be a divine martyrdom.

As time went on, this over sentimentalized perspective of Lincoln lost its favor with historians and the public at large, and new ways of thinking of Lincoln began developing.

While the public has generally looked on Lincoln favorably, anti-Lincoln sentiment, or “brutally honest” testimony of the darker sides of Lincoln personality have persisted as a counter to claims of Lincoln’s greatness. As seen above, William Herndon, an associate of Lincoln, was among the first to call into question Lincoln's deific reputation, describing him as a morose, melancholic individual and that “faith was unknown to his soul.” Although Herndon’s perspective on Lincoln was rejected by the general public, it fueled anti-Lincoln sentiment that portrayed him as not only a failed President, but a depressed, lonely, and vengeful man. Edgar Lee Masters’ *Lincoln the Unknown* was one of the most harshly critical biographies of Lincoln in this vein, casting Lincoln as unprincipled, unscrupulous, and desperate to be seen as a hero amidst a series of crises induced by himself. In 1964, Lincoln was criticized by Malcolm X, who said that Lincoln had “done more to trick Negroes than any other man in history.”⁶² Decades later, Thomas di Lorenzo led a new charge against Lincoln, comparing his wartime excesses to that of George Bush after 9/11, and like Masters, blaming him for the radical expansion of the Federal Government. Although a minority perspective of Lincoln, this image of Lincoln as a “Vengeful Tyrant” shows how Lincoln’s legacy has been complex and divisive.

Many historians have concluded that there isn’t a simple way to simply characterize Lincoln, and that his personality was too complex and ever changing. It is this interpretation of Lincoln as a complex, human figure that has dominated the modern era and driven public interest in all aspects of Lincoln’s life, not just what he is most famous for. However, modern historians

⁶² John Hope Franklin. “The Use and Misuse of the Lincoln Legacy.” *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*, Vol. 7, no. 1.

were not the first to explore this side of Lincoln. The biography *Lincoln the Unknown* by Dale Carnegie depicted Lincoln's evolution from a poor farm boy to the highest office in the Union, and the changes in his personality over time. It avoided the bias and speculation that plagued other Lincoln biographies, showing the both the negative and positive aspects of Lincoln's personality. Famous memorials to Lincoln such as the Lincoln Memorial also represented the dualities of Lincoln's personality, portraying his firm leadership as well as his flexibility in how his hands were depicted closed in one fist and opened in the other. Often times, modern depictions of Lincoln's life such as *Team of Rivals* and Spielberg's *Lincoln* show a "behind the scenes" perspective, depicting the private yet dramatic dilemmas that Lincoln faced as President, where he made decisions that were controversial or contradicted his previous beliefs. The *Lincoln* film is especially important when considering how this perspective has dominated the modern era, as it reached an extremely large audience for a biographical film and has been influential in how the public perceives Lincoln today.

The theory of "memory makers" and "memory consumers" can be seen in how perceptions of Lincoln changed over time. The public atmosphere following Lincoln's assassination was strongly based in Christian beliefs that Lincoln was on a path from God, and his assassination was a martyrdom. This is reflected in how the earliest biographies of Lincoln, such as Josiah Holland's *Life of Abraham Lincoln*, often presented Lincoln as an upstanding Christian man who based his life and choices on serving God. This interpretation of Lincoln was well cultivated in the early decades following Lincoln's assassination, as it melded with the collective grief and fondness towards Lincoln. William Herndon's interpretation of Lincoln as a man who was faithless and melancholic was rejected by memory consumers because it did not

mesh with the collective memory of Lincoln as a perfect martyr. However, as time went on, memory makers and memory consumers became more detached from the wave of emotion that followed Lincoln's assassination, and new perspectives of Lincoln were formulated. Memory consumers no longer desired the overly romantic, religious portrayal of Lincoln that was presented by earlier memory makers. Throughout the 1930's onward, a more human side of Lincoln formed within the collective memory, bolstered by films such as *Young Mr. Lincoln* and biographies such as *Lincoln the Unknown*. However, the mythological status of Lincoln was never fully dispelled, as shown by enduring symbols of Lincoln such as the Lincoln Memorial that portray Lincoln as a legendary figure. Although memory consumers no longer hunger for Lincoln as strongly as they once did, the modern era has allowed for a wide selection of perspectives on Lincoln.

To conclude, while many perspectives of Lincoln have existed over time, modern public memory of Lincoln is driven by interest in Lincoln as a complex individual rather than a one-dimensional caricature. Although Lincoln is revered and remains one of the most widely regarded Presidents of all time amongst the public, the public at large has gradually become more educated and aware of more aspects of Lincoln's life behind what he is most famous for. Films such as *Lincoln* have driven a renewed interest into the difficulties and hardships that Lincoln experienced in his career in addition to his triumphs, and new biographies offer a closer look at the tough choices Lincoln had to make to preserve the Union. Despite all that has been revealed of Lincoln's life, with countless letters, witness testimony, and memoirs, he remains a man who will never be completely understood, but who will always be remembered. While the

world marches onwards into the future, it will never forget the rail splitter from the log cabin who made history.

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