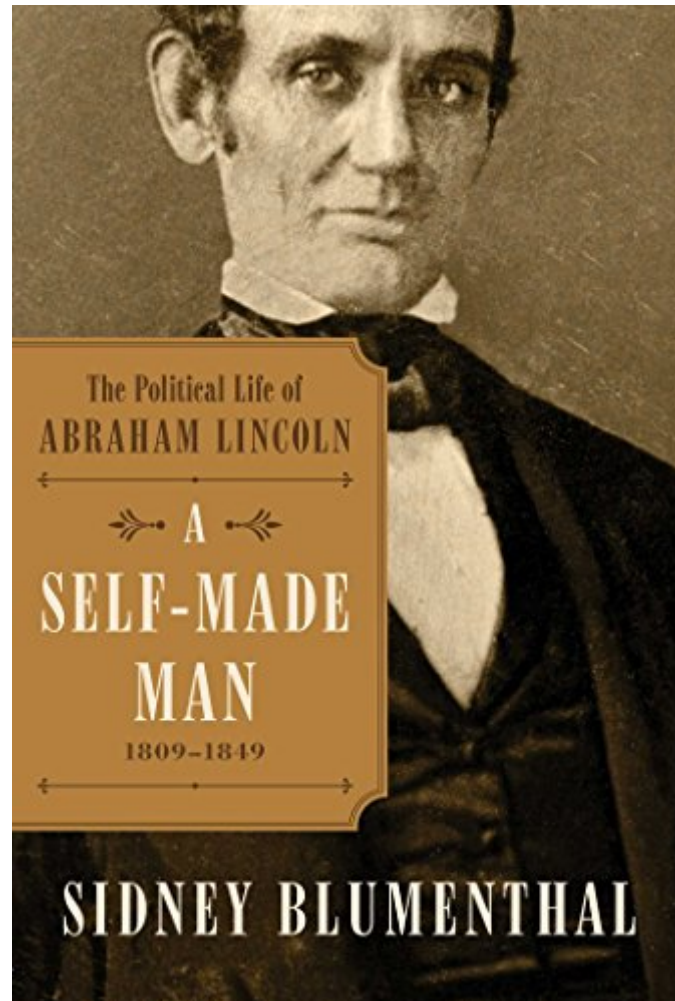


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A Self-Made Man: The Political Life Of Abraham Lincoln Vol. I, 1809 - 1849



Synopsis

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

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Customer Reviews

This is a superb start on what promises to be a major new biographical treatment of Lincoln, and it could not come at a better time, what with the Republican Party struggling to find its way forward in today's troubled political climate. Blumenthal is a skilled historian and graceful writer. Michael Burlingame's big two-volume biography of a few years ago seemed to read like a compilation of stories and anecdotes about Lincoln. Blumenthal's first volume is driven by a clear and convincing analysis of the political education of young Abraham Lincoln. One point he emphasizes is how early Lincoln came to his moral condemnation of slavery. The influences were all around him, including the Baptist churches of the frontier Midwest. Long before his fabled trip to New Orleans, where he first beheld the sale of human flesh, Lincoln was predisposed against slavery. Blumenthal also makes the case for Lincoln as a Deist, a religious skeptic who saw the fire and brimstone religion of his youth as part of the ignorance and superstition he wanted to escape. Among his early influences were Tom Paine and Volney, Enlightenment era rationalists who criticized religion as an obstacle to human progress through reason. Another important theme in this book is Lincoln's quest for status and respectability. He became a self-made man, with a profession, a wife from a prominent political family in Illinois, and standing in the community sufficient to elect him to Congress in 1846. On his marriage, we see Mary Lincoln in a very interesting new light: Lincoln was drawn to her because she was a smart, strong-minded woman whose political savvy he trusted. Mary was drawn to him because he listened to her and respected her opinion. It was a political partnership.

Help Matilda! My homemade books cases are already falling down like London Bridge! Too many books on Lincoln! Yet who cares if there is a new book on our sixteenth and greatest POTUS? There is also something new to learn; how true Self-Made Man by Sidney Blumenthal. The author covers Lincoln's legal and political career in the Illinois House of Representatives and the United States Congress; Among other things the author: a. Provides a detailed oversight of the major issues of Lincoln' young manhood and inchoate political rise up the ladder. b. Chapters deal with the

growing call for the abolition of chattel slaves and the rise to prominence of such abolitionists as William Lloyd Garrison, Theodore Weld, the Grimke sisters and many others. c. Good profiles are provided of anti-abolitionists Southern pols such as John Calhoun, Robert Barnwell Rhett and several others. d We learn how Lincoln grew up in Kentucky and Indiana feeling that he was a slave used by his rough father Thomas to hire out to farms for heavy manual labor. Lincoln always seem to have a deep commiseration for slaves and a desire to end slavery in the United States. e. Lincoln was a religious sceptic being influenced by Thomas Paine and the Age of Enlightenment authors he loved. He was also able to memorize much of Shakespeare and the Bible. He never joined an organized religious body. f. Lincoln was awkward and shy around women. His marriage to the volatile Lexington Belle Mary Todd Lincoln helped him to rise in politics. Mary had social and political connections and was a strong Whig and later Republican. g. Lincoln opposed the Mexican War with his "spot resolutions" in Congress and favored the Wilmot Proviso. h.

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