



Abraham Lincoln: The Critical History of an American Icon

Alan Sked

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"If I were two-faced, would I be wearing this one?" *Abraham Lincoln*

Abraham Lincoln is revered in the USA and throughout the world as a political hero and virtual martyr. He is known as the saviour of the Union, victor in the American Civil War and the Great Emancipator of slaves. But is this glowing reputation deserved? In this engaging and sometimes provocative new book, Alan Sked overturns the consensus on an American hero, and provides an original angle on the political career of an otherwise impenetrable figure.

The cult of Abraham Lincoln is based on two propositions: firstly, that he was forced into Civil War in 1861 by Southern determination to secede but managed to save the Union; secondly, that he used the war to implement his long-held desire to free America's slaves. Sked here contests these assumptions with fresh new research, shedding light on the truth behind the causes of the Civil War and Lincoln's problematic relationship with African-Americans. Was the Civil War inevitable? Did Lincoln's dogged insistence on the illegality of secession needlessly cost 650,000 lives that could have been spared? Did Lincoln receive a democratic mandate in 1860 with only 39% of the overall vote? What was his attitude toward Native Americans? What really were his views on the liberation of African-American slaves? Sked scrutinises the legitimacy of Lincoln's eminent status, and offers a rare glimpse into the life and politics of a flawed hero. An informed and unique view, this engagingly written book will fascinate general readers and prove essential for students and specialists.

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