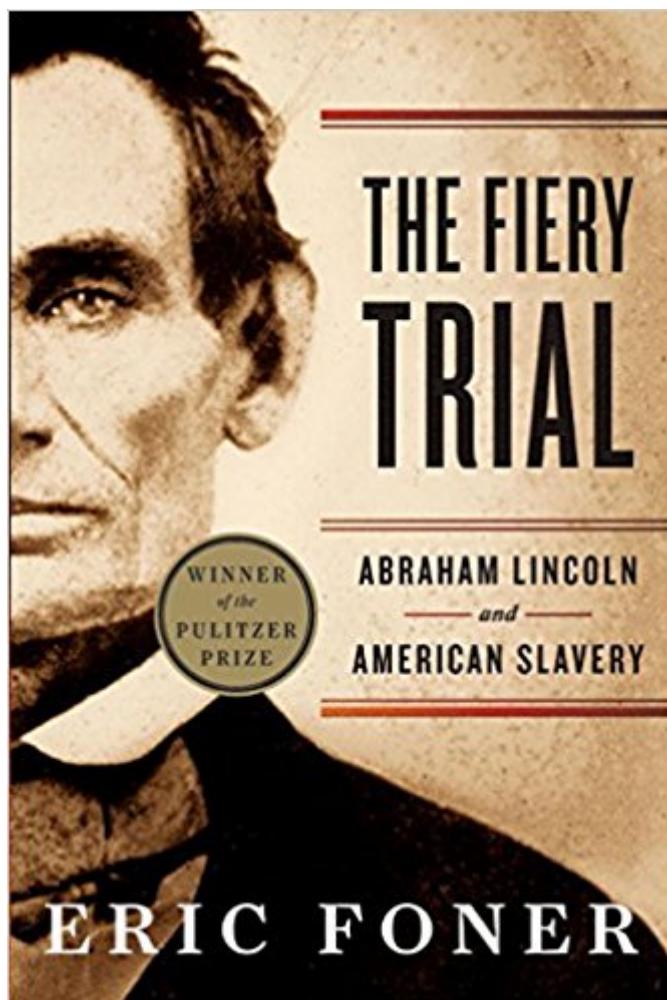


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The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln And American Slavery



Synopsis

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

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Eric Foner is a great American historian. His book on Reconstruction remains the standard and definitive work. This volume is the definitive study of Lincoln's evolving attitude toward slavery. Foner sets out the story in chronological order. He strikes a fine balance between the competing demands of completeness and concision and does so with both sound scholarship and narrative flair. To say this book reads well is an understatement. Of course we read that Lincoln grew up in border areas and had limited and somewhat ambivalent dealings with blacks. He talked about blacks in language that makes us cringe. He could be patronizing and yet he was increasingly aware. And his initial stance on slavery, which originally owed much to his "beau ideal," Henry Clay, seems in retrospect hopelessly naive. For many years, he favored a combination of gradual emancipation rather than outright abolition, compensation of slave-owners, and colonization of slaves in another nation rather

than integration here. Bizarre as colonization seems to us now, among opponents of slavery it was for decades considered the only realistic option once slaves were emancipated. Even in the North, it was all but unthinkable that blacks could be integrated and enjoy social, legal and political equality. It is widely understood that Lincoln's attitude toward blacks and slavery evolved, as did his insight into how to govern a divided nation in the midst of a war that almost daily threatened to arrive at his very doorstep.

We see Abraham Lincoln as "The Great Emancipator", who ended slavery in the United States of America. Lincoln's words describe and inspire us, remaining as current as the day they were spoke. We see Lincoln not as the man but as the larger than life occupant of the Lincoln Memorial. Lincoln's 1860 nomination is not because he is or is thought to be "The Great Emancipator". Lincoln is a moderate on slavery and race, acceptable to both wings of the party. Abraham Lincoln's and Americans journey to emancipation is the subject of this excellent book. America faces serious divisions over slavery but very few over race. The wish to end slavery often did not include what to do with the former slaves. Northern states, with few slaves, accepted gradual emancipation and managed to tolerate their Black population. In the majority of Northern states Blacks could not vote, could not serve on a jury nor could they testify against a White person. Some Northern states essentially ban Blacks. In many more states, they are under severe restrictions and required to post bonds to insure good conduct. Garrison said that Illinois is essentially a "slave state" due to the restrictive laws on Blacks. This is a book about race relations more than about slavery. The majority agreed that slavery is "bad" but cannot see a reasonable exit. Gradual Emancipation is an acceptable answer. Slaves born after a set date become free when they become n years old. The current slaves either remain slaves or become free after n years. This pushes the race problem away, leaving it for another generation to deal with. Immediate Emancipation ends slavery but has few answers to the race question. Colonization is a popular answer.

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