



Reading With Lincoln

Robert Bray

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Through extensive reading and reflection, Abraham Lincoln fashioned a mind as powerfully intellectual and superlatively communicative as that of any other American political leader. *Reading with Lincoln* uncovers the *how* of Lincoln's inspiring rise to greatness by connecting the content of his reading to the story of his life.

At the core of Lincoln's success was his self-education, centered on his love of and appreciation for learning through books. From his early studies of grammar school handbooks and children's classics to his interest in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and the Bible during his White House years, what Lincoln read helped to define who he was as a person and as a politician. This unique study delves into the books, pamphlets, poetry, plays, and essays that influenced Lincoln's thoughts and actions.

Exploring in great depth and detail those readings that inspired the sixteenth president, author Robert Bray follows Lincoln's progress closely, from the young teen composing letters for illiterate friends and neighbors to the politician who keenly employed what he read to advance his agenda. Bray analyzes Lincoln's radical period in New Salem, during which he came under the influence of Anglo-American and French Enlightenment thinkers such as Thomas Paine, C. F. Volney, and Voltaire, and he investigates Lincoln's appreciation of nineteenth-century lyric poetry, which he both read and wrote. Bray considers Lincoln's fascination with science, mathematics, political economics, liberal social philosophy, theology, and the Bible, and devotes special attention to Lincoln's enjoyment of American humor. While striving to arrive at an understanding of the role each subject played in the development of this remarkable leader, Bray also examines the connections and intertextual relations between what Lincoln read and how he wrote and spoke.

This comprehensive and long-awaited book provides fresh insight into the self-made man from the wilderness of Illinois. Bray offers a new way to approach the mind of the political artist who used his natural talent, honed by years of rhetorical study and practice, to abolish slavery and end the Civil War.

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