



The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery

By Eric Foner

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“A masterwork [by] the preeminent historian of the Civil War era.”*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

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The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery By Eric Foner Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

A mixture of visionary progressivism and repugnant racism, Abraham Lincoln's attitude toward slavery is the most troubling aspect of his public life, one that gets a probing assessment in this study. Columbia historian and Bancroft Prize winner Foner (*Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*) traces the complexities of Lincoln's evolving ideas about slavery and African-Americans: while he detested slavery, he also publicly rejected political and social equality for blacks, dragged his feet (critics charged) on emancipating slaves and accepting black recruits into the Union army, and floated schemes for colonizing freedmen overseas almost to war's end. Foner situates this record within a lucid, nuanced discussion of the era's turbulent racial politics; in his account Lincoln is a canny operator, cautiously navigating the racist attitudes of Northern whites, prodded--and sometimes willing to be prodded--by abolitionists and racial egalitarians pressing faster reforms. But as Foner tells it, Lincoln also embodies a society-wide transformation in consciousness, as the war's upheavals and the dynamic new roles played by African-Americans made previously unthinkable claims of freedom and equality seem inevitable. Lincoln is no paragon in Foner's searching portrait, but something more essential--a politician with an open mind and a restless conscience. 16 pages of illus., 3 maps.

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Review

Do we need yet another book on Lincoln?... Well, yes, we do if the book is by so richly informed a commentator as Eric Foner. Foner tackles what would seem to be an obvious topic, Lincoln and slavery, and manages to cast new light on it.... Because of his broad-ranging knowledge of the 19th century, Foner is able to provide the most thorough and judicious account of Lincoln's attitudes toward slavery that we have.--David S. Reynolds

Starred Review. Original and compelling .In the vast library on Lincoln, Foner s book stands out as the most sensible and sensitive reading of Lincoln s lifetime involvement with slavery and the most insightful assessment of Lincoln s and indeed America s imperative to move toward freedom lest it be lost. An essential work for all Americans. "

Moving and rewarding. . . . A master historian at work. --David W. Blight"

No one else has written about [Lincoln's] trajectory of change with such balance, fairness, depth of analysis, and lucid precision of language. --James M. McPherson"

Do we need another book on Lincoln? Yes, we do if the book is by so richly informed a commentator as Eric Foner. --David S. Reynolds"

While many thousands of books deal with Lincoln and slavery, Eric Foner has written the definitive account of this crucial subject, illuminating in a highly original and profound way the interactions of race, slavery, public opinion, politics, and Lincoln's own character that led to the wholly improbable uncompensated emancipation of some four million slaves. Even seasoned historians will acquire fresh and new perspectives from reading *The Fiery Trial*. --David Brion Davis, author of *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World*"

From the Back Cover

ADVANCE PRAISE FOR THE FIERY TRIAL: "While many thousands of books deal with Lincoln and slavery, Eric Foner has written the definitive account of this crucial subject, illuminating in a highly original and profound way the interactions of race, slavery, public opinion, politics, and Lincoln's own character that led to the wholly improbable uncompensated emancipation of some four million slaves. Even seasoned historians will acquire fresh and new perspectives from reading *The Fiery Trial*." --David Brion Davis, Sterling Professor of History Emeritus, Yale University, author of *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* "Definitive and breathtaking: with dazzling clarity and authority, demonstrating a total command of his sources and a sense of moral justice that transcends history, Foner has done nothing less than provide the most persuasive book ever written on Lincoln's vital place in the fight for freedom in America. This volume stands alone in the field. It is not only the best account ever written on the subject; henceforth, it should be regarded as the only account." --Harold Holzer, author of *Lincoln President-Elect* "Eric Foner has done it again. *The Fiery Trial* explores the pivotal subject of Lincoln and slavery free from the mists of hagiography and the muck of denigration. With his usual stylish mastery, Foner advances enlightened debate over our greatest president, the origins and unfolding of the Civil War, and the abolition of southern slavery. His book marks an auspicious intellectual beginning to the sesquicentennial of the American Iliad." --Sean Wilentz, author of *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln*

Users Review

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