

# LINCOLN LORE

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## THE WRITTEN AND SPOKEN WORDS OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

The Bible and Shakespeare have influenced the literature of the English speaking race to a greater extent than any other two publications. A third compilation which promises to be a valuable supplement to this basic source material is the written and spoken words of Abraham Lincoln.

It is said that more has been written concerning Lincoln than about any other individual, Biblical characters excepted. This vast accumulation of biographical data by many authors in many languages has obscured to a great extent a much more important contribution to literature, namely Abraham Lincoln's own writings and sayings.

In 1772 an Englishman residing at Amsterdam, after three years laborious work on statistical facts about the Bible including the Apocrypha, found that it contained 926,877 words. It is not known that any such tabulation has been made of Shakespeare's writings, although the gathering of his complete works into one volume makes possible a fairly accurate estimate of the total number of words included. One edition contains 1,280 pages; and, with an average of approximately 800 words to the page, the total number for the book would reach 1,024,000 or 97,123 more words than appear in the Bible. While it is much more difficult to arrive at a satisfactory total of the number of words already in print which can be attributed to Abraham Lincoln's own writings and speeches, a total sufficiently accurate for the purpose of this monograph can be obtained. One will be surprised to learn that the printed words of Lincoln far outnumber the words of either the Bible or Shakespeare.

In tabulating the spoken words and written documents of Lincoln which are known to be authentic, it is necessary to consult several different authors.

### Nicolay and Hay

The first and most important exhaustive collection of writings is the two-volume edition by Nicolay and Hay, published in 1894. This compilation gathered by Lincoln's two secretaries became known as *The Works of Abraham Lincoln* and has always served as the basic source book for students of Lincoln. It contains 1,371 pages with an average of approximately 550 words to a page or a total of 754,050 words.

### Tandy

When the enlarged Tandy edition of the Nicolay and Hay publication appeared in 1905, thirty-six pages of newly discovered letters and documents were printed averaging about 250 words to the page or a total of 9,000.

### Lapsley

There was published also in 1905 an edition of Lincoln's writings which contained eighteen pages of data not found in either of the Nicolay and Hay editions. With an average of about 250 words to the page the total contributed in Lapsley's work amounted to 4,500.

### Tracy

A book edited by Gilbert A. Tracy in 1917, under the caption *Uncollected Letters of Abraham Lincoln* contains 253 pages of authentic Lincoln letters not appearing in the Nicolay and Hay work, or other compilations. There are about 200 words to the page giving a total of 50,600.

### PUBLISHED WORDS OF LINCOLN

Author	Date	Words
Nicolay and Hay	1894	754,050
Tandy	1905	9,000
Lapsley	1905	4,500
Tracy	1917	50,600
Brown	1927	1,715
Angle	1930	112,200
Hertz	1931	146,300
		1,078,365

### Brown University

Brown University issued a book in 1927 containing *Lincoln Letters Hitherto Unpublished in the Brown University Collection*. The manner in which the type is distributed in this seventy-two page book allows a more accurate estimate of the total contacts to be made by counting the lines of Lincoln correspondence of which there are 245. With an average of seven words to the line, a total of 1,715 is reached.

### Angle

A very valuable contribution to Lincolniana was made in 1930 by Paul Angle who brought out a compilation of Lincoln writings and speeches entitled *New Letters and Papers of Lincoln*. None of Angle's printed material appeared in previous works. This book of 374 pages contains, besides the original Lincoln writings, editorial matter which makes the estimate of the purely Lincoln data much more difficult to ascertain. With all editorial material deleted, 300 words to the page would be a fair estimate or a total of 112,200.

### Hertz

The most recent compilation of original Lincoln letters and documents was published in 1931 by Emanuel Hertz. The plan of Mr. Hertz, however, is somewhat different from the other objectives as he states in his introduction that he has included some of the letters already appearing in the Angle publication. He also states

that he has reprinted documents and letters which have heretofore been abbreviated or misprinted. An attempt has been made to avoid tabulating this duplicate material with the result that 52 pages have been deducted from the 460 pages of Lincoln's writings, leaving 418 pages of unpublished data. Figuring 350 words to the page the total reaches 146,300.

### Summary

The seven publications mentioned above contributed 1,078,365 words.

Comparing this total with the other two source books, the Bible and Shakespeare, we have this summary:

The Bible including the Apocrypha	926,877
Shakespeare, Complete Works	1,025,000
Lincoln's Printed Speeches and Writings	1,078,365

### Unpublished Manuscripts

There are three known sources from which we may expect large additions of original writings to the total already compiled.

Robert T. Lincoln, son of the President, presented to the Library of Congress the personal papers of his father with the understanding that they were not to be opened for examination for twenty years after the donor's death. The collection comprises about 10,000 documents, but most of them were used by Nicolay and Hay in compiling their publications. There are many unpublished manuscripts, however, estimated at 150 folders by one examiner who has been allowed to check those not used by Lincoln's secretaries in their compilation of Lincoln writings. It now appears that this source material will not be available until July 26, 1946.

The collection of manuscripts gathered by William Herndon during his lifetime and later in possession of Jesse W. Weik when made available to the public will also add a very large number of documents to the sum total of Lincoln writings. There are nearly 500 original court documents written by Lincoln in the collection and a great many letters and memorandums in his hand.

The large number of unpublished Lincoln writings which are discovered annually in the possession of individuals, libraries and in the archives of the state and nation will continue to swell the grand total of this growing Lincolniana.

The one publication most needed just now by all libraries is *The Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln* in one volume, which may be used along with the Bible and Shakespeare as one of the three great collections of original sources available to students of literature.