

# LINCOLN LORE

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## BEST ONE-VOLUME BIOGRAPHY OF LINCOLN

The question most often asked in the library of the Lincoln National Life Foundation is this one, "What is the best book on Lincoln?" A direct answer is usually evaded by suggesting: a recognized exhaustive study, the most scholarly discussion, the outstanding compilation of Lincoln's works, or the earliest complete biography. If this does not satisfy the inquirer the next best escape is to name a half-dozen good Lincoln books which are outstanding in their respective fields. If the questioner is still persistent, however, one has to admit that he is unable to name "the best book on Lincoln."

It appears as if the first task in attempting to provide a fair and intelligent answer for the question, would be to ascertain just what the average inquirer has in mind when the question is asked. Invariably a book, one book, not two or several volumes, but a one-volume work, is suggested, so the original query is limited to the best one-volume work. Next the subject matter comes up for consideration and immediately the conclusion is drawn that a life of Lincoln is implied, that is a complete life of Lincoln, from cradle to grave. So the question now qualified, stands, "What is the best one-volume biography of Lincoln's complete life?"

When an attempt is made to define the relative significance of the word "best," confusion usually results because emphasis, historical accuracy, proper division of subject matter, rhetoric, annotations, human interest slant, etc. weigh more heavily with some individuals than with others. Evidently the word "best," in the mind of the average questioner, carries with it, more or less, all of these qualifications. However, brushing aside any evasive classification, any student who has given much time to the study of Lincoln's life is expected by his friends to be able to answer the question about the "best" book without hesitation.

With the question now limited to the best one-volume biography of Lincoln, the next task is to find an impartial judge who can speak with authority on this question. W. E. Barton, one of the better known Lincoln students, who did considerable work on Lincoln bibliography, in one of his books, published in 1920, made this statement about the one-volume edition by John G. Nicolay, "This is the most important and valuable single volume life of Lincoln in print," but there have been many Lincoln books published since 1920, and one earlier biography, which originally was published in three volumes, is now available in one.

The director of the Lincoln National Life Foundation decided to place this question before the members of the Foundation Advisory Group, comprising nineteen of the leading Lincoln students in America. Thirteen of the nineteen returned ballots naming first, second, and third choices. This is the result of the balloting:

### Result of Ballot for Best Book

Herndon and Weik— <i>Herndon's Life of Lincoln</i>	4 votes
Stephenson, Nathaniel— <i>Lincoln</i>	4 votes
Arnold, Isaac N.— <i>Life of Abraham Lincoln</i>	2 votes
Nicolay, John G.— <i>A Short Life of Abraham Lincoln</i>	2 votes
Rothschild, Alonzo— <i>Lincoln, Master of Men</i>	1 vote

For second choice, Lord Charnwood's *Abraham Lincoln*, received 5 votes, the largest number of any book. Inasmuch as all of the ballots did not contain three selections, any further analysis of the votes would be of no advantage, although it would be of interest to list the books not already noted which did not receive mention: Binns, Henry Bryan—*The Life of Abraham Lincoln*; Holland, Josiah G.—*The Life of Abraham Lincoln*.

It might be of interest to submit in this issue of *Lincoln Lore* a list of fifty of the best known complete biographies of Abraham Lincoln, exclusive of juvenile publications.

### Fifty Lincoln Biographies

- Arnold, Isaac N.; *Life of Abraham Lincoln*  
Bacon, G. W.; *The Life and Administration of Abraham Lincoln*  
Baldwin, James; *Abraham Lincoln, A True Life*  
Barrett, Joseph; *Life of Abraham Lincoln*  
Barton, William; *Life of Abraham Lincoln* (4 vols. in 1)  
Binns, Henry Bryan; *The Life of Abraham Lincoln*  
Bissett, Clark P.; *Abraham Lincoln, A Universal Man*  
Brockett, L. P.; *The Life and Times of Abraham Lincoln*  
Brooks, Noah; *His Youth and Early Manhood with a Brief Account of His Later Life*  
Browne, Francis F.; *The Everyday Life of Abraham Lincoln*  
Carnegie, Dale; *Lincoln the Unknown*  
Clark, L. Pierce; *A Psycho-Biography*  
Charnwood, Lord; *Abraham Lincoln*  
Coffin, Charles Carleton; *Abraham Lincoln*  
Crosby, Frank; *Life of Abraham Lincoln*  
Curtis, William Eleroy; *The True Abraham Lincoln*  
Elias, Edith L.; *Abraham Lincoln*  
French, Charles Wallace; *Abraham Lincoln, the Liberator*  
Gordy, Wilbur F.; *Abraham Lincoln*  
Hannaford, Mrs. P. A.; *Abraham Lincoln, His Life and Public Services*  
Haggood, Norman; *The Man of the People*  
Hart, Col. F. W.; *Abraham Lincoln, The Great Commoner, The Sublime Emancipator*  
Herndon & Weik; *Herndon's Life of Lincoln* (3 vols. in 1)  
Holland, J. G.; *The Life of Abraham Lincoln*  
Ketcham, Henry; *The Life of Abraham Lincoln*  
Leland, Charles G.; *Abraham Lincoln*  
Lilly, William E.; *Set My People Free, A Negro's Life of Lincoln*  
Lockridge, Ross F.; *Abraham Lincoln*  
Ludwig, Emil; *Lincoln*  
Maltby, Charles; *The Life and Public Services of Abraham Lincoln*  
Masters, Edgar L.; *Lincoln the Man*  
Minor, Charles L. C.; *The Real Lincoln*  
Morgan, James; *Abraham Lincoln, The Boy and the Man*  
Nicolay, John G.; *A Short Life of Abraham Lincoln*  
Nichols, Clifton M.; *Life of Abraham Lincoln*  
Power, John Carrol; *Abraham Lincoln, His Life and Public Services, Death and Great Funeral Cortege*  
Putnam, John Haven; *Abraham Lincoln, The Peoples' Leader in the Struggle for National Existence*  
Raymond, Henry J.; *The Life and Public Services of Abraham Lincoln*  
Rothschild, Alonzo; *Lincoln, Master of Men*  
Rutherford, Wm. G.; *Abraham Lincoln, Plough Boy, Statesman, Patriot*  
Sheppard, Robert Dickinson; *Abraham Lincoln, A Character Sketch*  
Snider, Denton J.; *Abraham Lincoln an Interpretation in Biography*  
Stephenson, Nathaniel Wright; *Lincoln, An Account of the Personal Life, Especially of its Springs of Action as Revealed and Deepened by the Ordeal of War*  
Stern, Philip Van Doren; *The Life and Writings of Abraham Lincoln*  
Stevens, C. M.; *The Wonderful Story of Lincoln*  
Stoddard, William O.; *The True Story of a Great Life*  
Strunsky, Rose; *Abraham Lincoln*  
Tarbell, Ida M.; *Life of Abraham Lincoln* (2 vols. in 1)  
Thomas, D. D.; *Abraham Lincoln, the First American*  
Whitlock, Brand; *Abraham Lincoln*