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2<sup>nd</sup> Year  
Book Review

## **Land of Lincoln** **Andrew Ferguson**

Most kids growing up in America are told about how Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves, and saved the Union. But as Andrew Ferguson shows throughout his book that Lincoln is much, much more than that. With Ferguson's interactions with all types of people from Lincoln admirers to Lincoln haters, Ferguson shows the complex man that was Abraham Lincoln. Throughout Andrew Ferguson's book *Land of Lincoln*, Andrew Ferguson gives the reader an amazing experience traveling to different Lincoln destinations. His knowledge of Lincoln is highlighted as he travels throughout America, while explaining the many important histories of Lincoln around the country. Whether he is talking with southerners upset about the Lincoln statue on Monument Avenue in Richmond, Virginia, or talking with curators at Chicago's Historical Museum, Ferguson creates a great narrative of the land that was influenced and shaped by this amazing and controversial President, Abraham Lincoln.

Andrew Ferguson is a great writer; early on in the book you can see that he has a knack for storytelling. He does an amazing job weaving his trip throughout the country and his vast knowledge on Abraham Lincoln. He shows that he is able to step across the line from time to time and give the readers an unbiased look at this "American Hero."

One of the more interesting trips he takes is to Richmond, Virginia where he attends a conference of educated southerners that do not look so kindly on Lincoln. He attends a Conference named, "Lincoln Reconsidered." This conference had college professors and even government workers in attendance. His interactions with these people are not written to make them look foolish or ignorant, but rather to show the complex opinions of this historic figure, Abraham Lincoln. These interactions make the reader think about all that you have learned about this "American Icon," Lincoln is an amazing man with many different sides, he is loved by so many and on the other hand he is hated by so many. Lincoln like so many other historical figures is surrounded by folklore.

One of the more interesting parts of the book is when he is interacting with collectors of "Lincoln Memorabilia," no, not coffee cups with his name, but Abraham Lincoln's actual chamber pot, blood soaked pieces of fabric from the sheets that Lincoln died on. These collectors of fine Lincoln memorabilia are very interesting. There is a great deal of Lincoln memorabilia that made me think about what these people were really collecting, and why they would collect such things. Also Ferguson does a great job explaining how these people got in to collecting these items, The upper class woman that fell in love with Lincoln after reading, *Love is Eternal*. The fact that Louise, a collector in Beverly Hills, has one of the largest Lincoln collections in the world is amazing; who would have thought that a Lincoln collection of that size would be in Beverly Hills and was started because of a book a woman read about Abe Lincoln, and Mary Todd . She has so many interesting pieces of Lincoln history it made me wish that I had the pleasure

of seeing her collection. I also thought it was interesting that former Presidential candidate and Texas billionaire, Ross Perot was also a collector Lincoln knick-knacks.

One of the funnier parts of the book is when Ferguson dives in to the world of Lincoln “presenters,” because “impersonators,” sounds to, “showbizzy.” Ferguson goes to a Lincoln convention in Santa Claus, Indiana, and is intrigued by the amount of Lincoln presenters, and Mary Todd presenters. I found it funny how explains how some men were told that they looked like Lincoln when they grew a beard, and how this then turns them to learn more about the man that they will spend countless hours and dollars dressing like and travelling around the country impersonating him.

Another great part of the book is when Ferguson travels to Springfield, Illinois to explain the creation of the Abraham Lincoln museum and library. Ferguson does a great job explaining how this library and museum came to be. This library and museum is not like other presidential libraries and museums. In terms of why it was made, it is pretty easy to understand why a Lincoln museum and library would be important to the people of Springfield, Illinois. Also it is important for the fact that the most famous American in history should have a museum and library in his honor. Early on it was going to be a museum to hold the many Lincoln artifacts that Springfield, Illinois had collected throughout the years. The State of Illinois had set out to build it for 10 million dollars. Soon it ballooned to be a 150 million dollar project that accepted bids from many museum building firms. Ferguson does a great job explaining how eventually a firm named the Bob Rogers Company. Early on they had gone to Walt Disney world to speak with them about creative ideas for the Abraham Lincoln Museum and Library. Ferguson

goes on to explain how the Lincoln museum and library had gotten a touch of Hollywood. The museum is not like most museums. It is designed to attract young adults and inject them with the facts of Abraham Lincoln's life, and influence on America. I found it interesting that a Hollywood consulting company won the bid to make this museum, one of the most important museums in our country, I also found it interesting that it is more of a, hands on approach to history, not much reading is necessary to go throughout this museum. In the age of technology Lincoln's library was designed to keep the museum visitor intrigued, they do not hide the facts that Lincoln could be considered a racist, they show a different view of Lincoln, a more realistic view of him. Ferguson made me want to jump in my car and drive out to Springfield, Illinois to visit this museum.

Ferguson keeps the reader interested in the story of his journey around the country, while still giving the reader a large chunk of history. He does an amazing job intertwining history with his journey. The book is written very well. He does a great job making the reader feel like he is right there with him on his journey whether it is to Gettysburg, or Monument Avenue, you feel like you are right there with him. Ferguson does a great deal of justice to the man that Lincoln was, he does not push his view points about Lincoln down your throat, rather he provide you with an amazing portrait of one of the most important people in American History. He shares with you the importance of understanding the full Lincoln rather than the elementary school Lincoln. Ferguson also does a great job explaining why certain parts of the country feel strongly about Lincoln for different reasons. Ferguson creates a great narrative that will entertain the history

buff, and will enlighten people to the complex man and history of Abraham Lincoln. In closing Ferguson understands Lincoln and his appeal, and he explains why so many people look up to this man it can be found on pages 114 and 115, “ In the end what you come up with is that he’s interesting because a lot of people over the last 150 years have been interested in him. He’s been hated and loved, pondered and studied, honored and mourned so intensely for so long that it doesn’t seem to matter why. He’s reached the zenith of American celebrity. He’s famous for being famous.” And in the current climate of American society and politics, he has a lot in common with most famous politicians and stars.

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