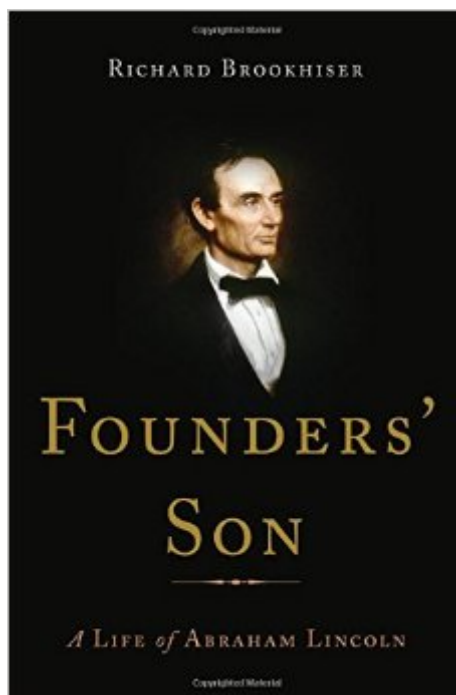


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# Founders' Son: A Life Of Abraham Lincoln



## Synopsis

Abraham Lincoln grew up in the long shadow of the Founding Fathers. Seeking an intellectual and emotional replacement for his own taciturn father, Lincoln turned to the great men of the founding—Washington, Paine, Jefferson—and their great documents—the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution—for knowledge, guidance, inspiration, and purpose. Out of the power vacuum created by their passing, Lincoln emerged from among his peers as the true inheritor of the Founders' mantle, bringing their vision to bear on the Civil War and the question of slavery. In *Founders' Son*, celebrated historian Richard Brookhiser presents a compelling new biography of Abraham Lincoln that highlights his lifelong struggle to carry on the work of the Founding Fathers. Following Lincoln from his humble origins in Kentucky to his assassination in Washington, D.C., Brookhiser shows us every side of the man: laborer, lawyer, congressman, president; storyteller, wit, lover of ribald jokes; depressive, poet, friend, visionary. And he shows that despite his many roles and his varied life, Lincoln returned time and time again to the Founders. They were rhetorical and political touchstones, the basis of his interest in politics, and the lodestars guiding him as he navigated first Illinois politics and then the national scene. But their legacy was not sufficient. As the Civil War lengthened and the casualties mounted Lincoln wrestled with one more paternal figure—God the Father—to explain to himself, and to the nation, why ending slavery had come at such a terrible price. Bridging the rich and tumultuous period from the founding of the United States to the Civil War, *Founders' Son* is unlike any Lincoln biography to date. Penetrating in its insight, elegant in its prose, and gripping in its vivid recreation of Lincoln's roving mind at work, this book allows us to think anew about the first hundred years of American history, and shows how we can, like Lincoln, apply the legacy of the Founding Fathers to our times.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Other books on Lincoln have noted his interest in the founding fathers and how he looked back to them, but here, for the first time, a historian of the founding looks ahead to Lincoln." And so he did. This is a truly excellent example of careful research and a desire to look at a much analysed life in a way that it has not been considered before. I have read tons of Lincoln books. I know people say this about books a lot, but truly, I have been collecting them since childhood and I read everything I can find on the subject. Naturally, when there have been so many books written about one man, (if you want to see an example of this, check out the Lincoln Book Tower at Ford's,) you are sure to run into information that has been documented before, albeit not always correctly. In such cases, it becomes important to the armchair researcher how the information is presented. This book took a different approach to telling the story of Lincoln from his youngest days to the end. It was appealing to me to see a book that did not focus on the untimely death of the sixteenth president, but rather his life. His preoccupations with certain poets, George Washington and Lincoln's propensity to suffer from melancholy and discontent with religious beliefs were focal points of this book instead. I felt while reading this, as though the author has made a great connection with history and was a reliable source for information as well as a talented wordsmith. This book does not have the drab, dull feel of a history book as many such titles do. \*\*My favourite thing about this book was the way the author approached giving facts. There was no point when I thought "well that was certainly subjective to your own interpretation.

I found this book worth reading because Brookhiser offers a new perspective on Abraham Lincoln. In brief, he sees Lincoln's identification with George Washington and the Founding generation as so intense that they became surrogate fathers. He tried to make their struggle his own and their triumph his inspiration. In Lincoln's time, America was drifting toward the massive trauma of secession and civil war. The moral crisis of slavery was getting worse. Viewed from pre-civil war America, it was not clear how the great founding documents were to be understood and applied--after the Founding generation had died. In his Dredd Scott opinion, Chief Justice Taney had rendered the Constitution into a tool to expand slavery throughout the United States. The threat

that States might secede over tariffs or slavery was regarded as credible and the Republic, created in unity by the Founding Fathers, could have collapsed. Finally, western territories, Kansas and Nebraska saw brutal mini-wars and vendettas. Civil order dissolved on the frontier. According to Brookhiser's account, Abraham Lincoln spent his life in the physical and intellectual struggle of preserving and refining the Founder's work. Our view of these things reflects the smugness of people who know how it turned out. But these were times of confusion and danger. Brookhiser quotes often from his subject and Lincoln's poetic and intellectual gifts enrich the book. Without forcing the facts, the author makes a case that Lincoln's depression, his distant relationship with his father, the family deaths that filled his childhood, all shaped his entire life. One novel treatment of an old story involves Parson Weems biography of George Washington.

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