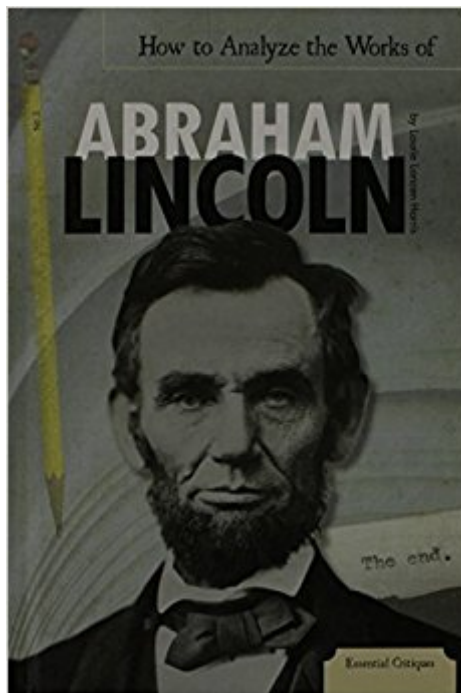


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How To Analyze The Works Of Abraham Lincoln (Essential Critiques Set 4)



Synopsis

This title explores the creative works of US President Abraham Lincoln. Works analyzed include his "A House Divided" speech, the Gettysburg Address, and his first and second inaugural addresses. Clear, comprehensive text gives background biographical information of Lincoln. The "You Critique It" feature invites readers to analyze other creative works on their own. A table of contents, timeline, list of works, resources, source notes, glossary, and an index are also included. Aligned to Common Core Standards and correlated to state standards. Essential Library is an imprint of Abdo Publishing, a division of ABDO.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Essential Critiques series helps students understand the basics of critical theory: what a thesis statement is and how to support it by analyzing three or four works, each from a different perspective. Each title begins with biographical information. Next, a piece of writing, such as Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, is used to sum up the context for the speech and what points were made. The author then analyzes the work using, say, feminist criticism or political criticism and creates a thesis statement (highlighted on the page and explained further in a sidebar). Quotes from the original work are used to support the thesis, and then the reader is invited to consider whether they think the author made a persuasive case. Abraham Lincoln discusses Lincoln's speeches from a historical, rhetorical, political, and religious perspective. With the recent emphasis on critical thinking in the Common Core Standards, this should be a useful tool as well as a solid biographical

As someone who is a frequent practitioner of the arts of critical reading, I was a bit surprised at how basic a level this book was written at, for though I knew it would be short, I was not familiar enough with the series as a whole and its goals to realize that this is an introductory book in the field of textual criticism. The intended audience of the book is not someone who engages in textual criticism at an academic level but rather a range from a bright middle school student in a good school district to a community college freshman just becoming familiar with textual criticism in an introductory course on literary analysis, who is familiar with the five paragraph essay form of writing [1] and is learning how to organize a paper that wishes, on a basic level, to defend a given thesis about the writings of another. So, in the interests of fairness, I will do my best to review this book not based on the more advanced literary analysis text I was expecting, but on the book as it was conceived, in light of what would be most helpful to the audience for which it was intended. In terms of its contents, the book is straightforward in its aims and approach. The author introduces the field of textual criticism, states its wide variety of flavors, and then praises the reader for embarking upon a greater understanding of the field. What follows is a drastically oversimplified biographical sketch of Lincoln's life that includes some worthwhile quotations but makes some leaps in conclusion about Lincoln's approach that seem to lack the nuance and complication of Lincoln's actual record. After this there follows four chapters which provide a summary of four of Lincoln's most notable speeches: the House Divided speech that launched his Senate bid in 1858, his First Inaugural, the Gettysburg Address, and the Second Inaugural, along with five paragraph essays written in extremely simple and straightforward form that provide an example of four different types of criticism: political criticism, historical criticism, rhetorical criticism, and religious criticism, followed by an assignment to the reader to find their own Lincoln text and provide a textual criticism for it [2], as well as a helpful bibliography that points to some basic texts for an astute reader to become familiar with the scope of Lincoln's texts [3]. There is both notable praise and criticism that can be offered to this work. For one, as a fond student of Lincoln's writing, and someone who views his clarity of thought with a great deal of respect, I wholeheartedly support the encouragement this book provides to young people entering into their own practice of textual criticism to take Lincoln's texts seriously as texts, something that has not always been the case within the world of academia. The author, and the works she selects, certainly demonstrate the importance of Lincoln's writing in the way that it has formed the way many of us, myself included, think about American history and political philosophy, whether it is

through our acquaintance with his texts directly, or through able interpreters like Gary Wills, Douglas Wilson, and Harry Jaffa, among many others. That said, there is one area where this book particularly serves its intended audience very poorly, and that is in the fact that although the book deals with short texts—“the Second Inaugural is less than 800 words, the Gettysburg Address only about 200 words, to give a couple of examples”—nowhere does the author include, not even in an appendix, the texts that are being criticized themselves, but only the very fragmentary abridgments to those texts provided in the critical apparatus itself. It should go without saying that if one wants to be an able practitioner of textual criticism, one needs not only to read what others have written about a given text, but to read the text themselves. This is all the more important when one is dealing with a writer like Lincoln who places so many layers in texts that appear simple, even obvious, but which richly repay continued analysis and rereading in light of personal, political, and historical, philosophical, and religious contexts. The author of this book does its readers a great disservice by seeking to introduce the subject of textual criticism without providing the texts for the book’s young readers to criticize, even if such texts can be easily found elsewhere. It is only by paying close attention to and having a great respect for texts and the people who compose them that those texts can serve to improve our wisdom and knowledge, after all.

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