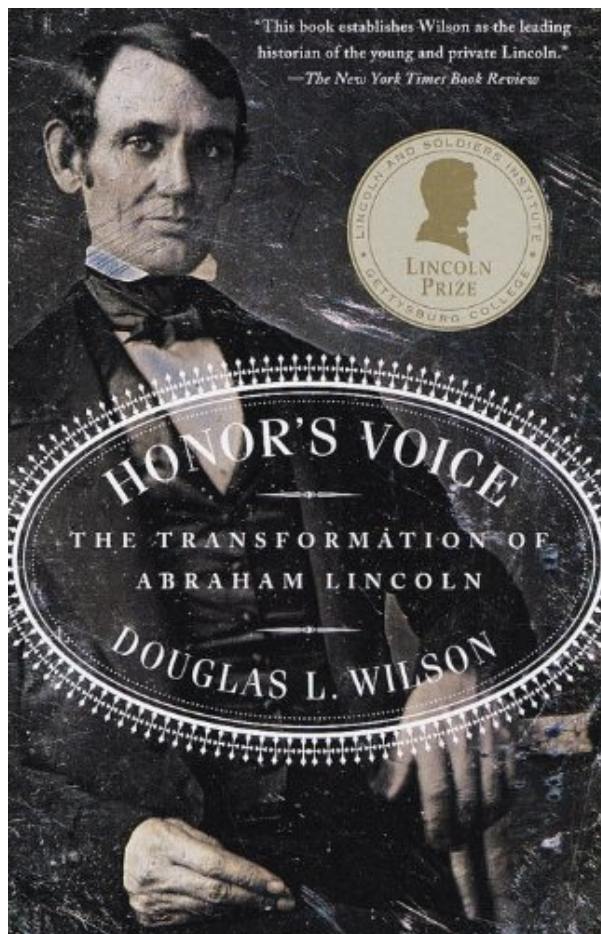
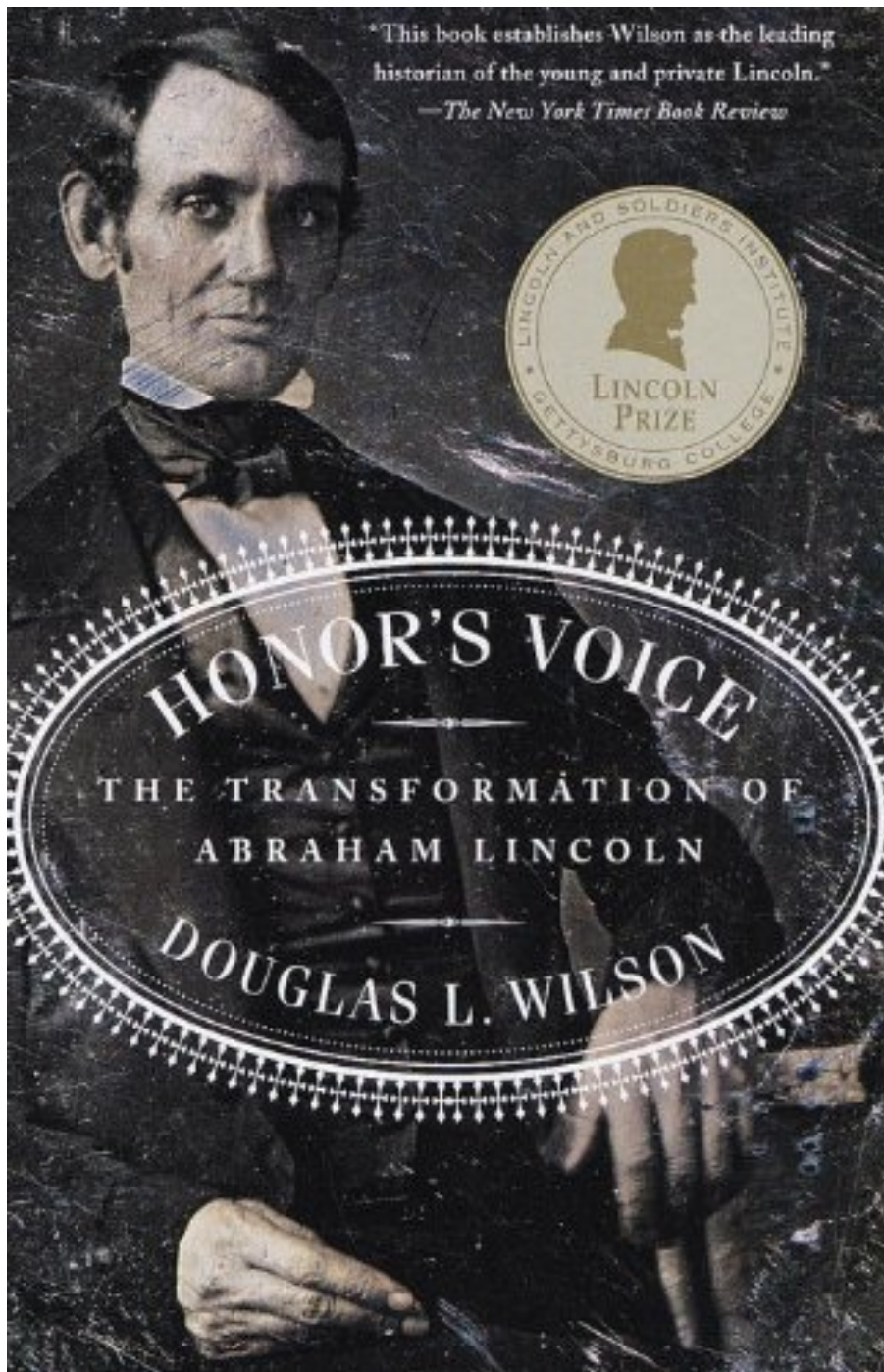


HONOR'S VOICE: THE TRANSFORMATION OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN BY DOUGLAS L. WILSON



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From Library Journal

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Abraham Lincoln's remarkable emergence from the rural Midwest and his rise to the presidency have been the stuff of romance and legend. But as Douglas L. Wilson shows us in *Honor's Voice*, Lincoln's transformation was not one long triumphal march, but a process that was more than once seriously derailed. There were times, in his journey from storekeeper and mill operator to lawyer and member of the Illinois state legislature, when Lincoln lost his nerve and self-confidence - on at least two occasions he became so despondent as to appear suicidal - and when his acute emotional vulnerabilities were exposed.

Focusing on the crucial years between 1831 and 1842, Wilson's skillful analysis of the testimonies and writings of Lincoln's contemporaries reveals the individual behind the legends. We see Lincoln as a boy: not the dutiful son studying by firelight, but the stubborn rebel determined to make something of himself. We see him as a young man: not the ascendant statesman, but the canny local politician who was renowned for his talents in wrestling and storytelling (as well as for his extensive store of off-color jokes). Wilson also reconstructs Lincoln's frequently anguished personal life: his religious skepticism, recurrent bouts of depression, and difficult relationships with women - from Ann Rutledge to Mary Owens to Mary Todd.

Meticulously researched and well written, this is a fascinating book that makes us reexamine our ideas about one of the icons of American history.

From the Hardcover edition.

- Sales Rank: #178506 in Books
- Color: Other
- Published on: 1999-05-25
- Released on: 1999-05-25
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x .82" w x 5.18" l, .73 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 400 pages

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Not a bad book, interesting tidbits about Lincoln's early life that ...

By writergurl

Not a bad book, interesting tidbits about Lincoln's early life that reveal his first feelings on slavery. The text is decent, but has some illogical conclusions, and is somewhat destroyed by the author's natural misogyny, and an index that seems to have been compiled by a child. I was assigned it for class, but I don't recommend it for those getting a masters/Ph.D in American history.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

An Excellent Examination of Lincoln's Early Adulthood

By Nathan Albright

This book is an exemplary view of Abraham Lincoln's young adulthood in New Salem and Springfield between 1831 and 1842. The book begins with an introduction, than an explanation about the evidence that the historian of Lincoln's early life must sift through, and then it examines such important and interesting elements of Lincoln's early adulthood life as his numerous failed experiences with women, the tension between his honorable and ambitious external life and his tendency to mock religion and insult political enemies in his private life, as well as his professional successes and failures as he began his political life. This book is an excellent resource to any fan of Lincoln and any history student curious about the early life and formative years of Lincoln's political education. The book is easy to read and provides many fascinating quotations of personal letters that provide an aid to the authenticity of the author's occasionally startling claims.

21 of 25 people found the following review helpful.

Tough Sledding

By Richard R

Wilson opens "Honor's Voice" with an overly long introduction to his methodology, which, in brief, is to sort

through all the bits and tales and legends about Abraham Lincoln from age 22 to 33, and weighing the stories for credibility and accuracy, reach the truest picture of the young man. Because there is no shortage of material, Wilson has focused on ten themes, including how he educated himself, how he entered politics, his relations with women, and particularly with Mary Todd, etc.

The problem is that it's not clear for whom Wilson is writing. Wilson himself declares that the book is not for academics, but who else would be interested in a work that is less about Lincoln than about stories about Lincoln? Few of the legion Lincoln fans, save scholars, would have the interest or the patience for a tedious historiography and word-by-word analysis of obscure letters and notes about the life of their subject. For example, the first chapter examines a wrestling match Lincoln had at age 22, and fully describes the match and its significance in three interesting pages. The problem is the chapter goes on for 33 pages, citing dozens of sources, including eyewitnesses as well as later biographers, analyzes differences in their accounts of the match, and weighs them against each other for credibility. This approach may be a useful "how to" for amateur historians, but most readers would likely prefer more history and less methodology.

Fortunately, the first chapter is the toughest sledding. The subsequent ones follow the same pattern, but are far more readable, relying less on Wilson's interior dialogues on reliability and veracity. Lincoln's character slowly and arduously emerges, and Lincoln fans with the patience to wade through will find loads of interesting detail, such as on his surveying and early political careers. Wilson also excerpts snatches of Lincoln's favorite poems (Burns, Byron, etc.) to excellent effect in demonstrating both source and reflection of Lincoln's state of mind. The speculation on his melancholy and on his tragic romance with Ann Rutledge are well worthwhile, if a bit tedious.

The book is a good one, but could be much better. Perhaps Wilson will follow up with a book of half the length giving a detailed and straightforward history of this fascinating period in Lincoln's life based on the conclusions from this work, but omitting the tedium and repetition

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