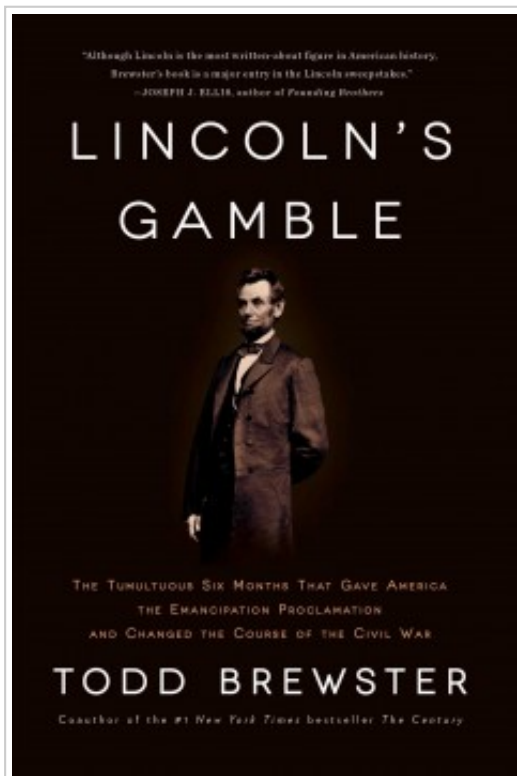


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Lincoln's Gamble

The Tumultuous Six Months that Gave America the Emancipation Proclamation and Changed the Course of the Civil War

by Todd Brewster

Price: \$18.00(Paperback)

Published: August 11, 2015

Rating: 0.0/5 (0 votes cast)

From the Publisher: "A masterful psychological portrait" (George Stephanopoulos) of the most critical six months in Abraham Lincoln's presidency, when he wrote the Emancipation Proclamation and changed the course of the Civil War.

On July 12, 1862, Abraham Lincoln spoke for the first time of his intention to free the slaves. On January 1, 1863, Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, doing precisely that. In between, however, was a tumultuous six months, an episode during which the sixteenth president fought bitterly with his generals, disappointed his cabinet, and sank into painful bouts of clinical depression. Most surprising, the man who would be remembered as "The Great Emancipator" did not hold firm to his belief in emancipation. He agonized over the decision and was wracked by private doubts almost to the moment when he inked the decree that would change a nation....

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What We Say

This solid popular history zeroes in on a crucial moment in the Presidency of Abraham Lincoln, the Civil War and indeed the country. That's the six month period when Lincoln wrestled with the idea of freeing the slaves, what was legally possible, how to frame it, how to sell it, when to make it official and how to avoid ripping the country apart by an action too timid or too bold. Historian Todd Brewster is thorough and solid in his work here, moving steadily from Lincoln first broaching the topic with others to his agonizing writing and rewriting of the actual Proclamation itself and then the tortuous decision about when to tell the world. A tad dry, "Lincoln's Gamble" does however provide the context to make clear how such a move was far from inevitable and fraught with danger. First and foremost, he makes clear that Lincoln believed as a lawyer that freeing the slaves held in captivity by the owners in states that were rebelling was absolutely as far as Lincoln's powers extended and only when framed very carefully as a necessity of war. He simply felt he couldn't free all slaves everywhere in the US, not that he was compelled to do so either. But he also pushed the envelope, stating the slaves so freed would be free forever, not just till the war was ended. Lincoln wrestled at this time with "encouraging" blacks to leave the country and colonize a new home in Africa, among other ideas, bringing scorn from abolitionists and slave owners alike. It's an intellectually interesting work that humanizes the Great Emancipator and the momentous action Lincoln took that was surely not terribly bold on paper but stirring indeed throughout the country. Legally, it was subtly bold. Linguistically, it was generally flat. Emotionally and symbolically, however, it was everything and more and Brewster captures that stirring moment well. Overall, Brewster's work provides a modestly fresh angle from which to approach this period and this President. -- Michael Giltz

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What Others Say

"Brewster brings elegant clarity to the tangle of conflicting ideologies, loyalties, and practicalities that pushed the proclamation forward, ultimately ensuring Lincoln's legacy as the Great Emancipator." - **Publishers Weekly**

"In this historical essay about the Emancipation Proclamation, Brewster explores the six months between Lincoln's July 1862 decision to issue it and actually doing so in January 1863. Inspired by a 1922 article on Lincoln by W. E. B. DuBois, the purpose of which was to portray Lincoln as great but imperfect, Brewster sets as his goal a quest for the "real" Lincoln... Featuring vignettes of figures who met Lincoln during his formulation of the proclamation, Brewster's work illuminates Lincoln's lines of thought during this turning point in American history." - **Booklist**

"Brewster gets inside Abraham Lincoln's mind, revealing his struggles with the limited powers of his office. Here is Lincoln, the man, surprisingly ambivalent about the decision for which he is most remembered. A masterful psychological portrait." - **George Stephanopoulos**

"Readers of this expertly-told tale may note parallels to other times in American history..."

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