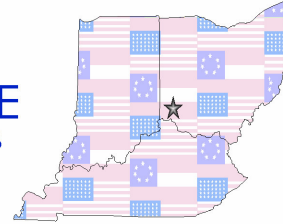




CINCINNATI
CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE
SERVING OHIO, KENTUCKY AND INDIANA SINCE 1956



Book Review by Thomas L. Breiner

The Eloquent President: A Portrait of Lincoln Through His Words by Ronald C. White, Jr.
Random House, New York, NY, 2005. 448 pages, Hardcover \$26.95.

The Eloquent President by Ronald C. White, Jr. is new approach to analyzing the personality of President Abraham Lincoln through a detailed review of his writings and speeches during the period 1861 through 1865. By understanding his approach to writing, we as readers can better understand how he was able to draw his audience into understanding his position and accepting his logic. By gaining this acceptance, he was able to win the hearts of America to his policies and goals.

Lincoln wrote by speaking the text of his writing out loud. In fact, the author recommends that his reader begin each chapter by reading aloud the words of Lincoln to feel the meaning. Lincoln intended for all his writings to be heard not read. The sound of the words was as important to conveying his message as the words themselves. Lincoln spoke in order to be understood by the common American, and with this simple and direct approach to the people, he develop a true eloquence.

Ronald White analyzes the following speeches and writings: Lincoln's Farewell Address at Springfield; Speeches and Remarks from the train trip from Springfield to Washington; the First Inaugural Address; the Message to Congress in Special Session July 4, 1861; Reply to Horace Greeley; Meditation on the Divine Will; Annual Message to Congress December 1, 1862; the Letter to the Rally at Springfield; the Gettysburg Address; the "Little Speech" to Albert G. Hodges; and finally, the Second Inaugural Address. The author goes into great detail on each speech or writing to develop how Lincoln was using his tools of rhetoric to further his policies. We begin to better understand how Lincoln gradually turned the common American from understanding the need to protect and defend the Constitution to understanding that eventually the issue of slavery had to be addressed. Lincoln firmly believed that slavery was the central cause of the conflict and that true unity could never be achieved without the demise of slavery.

The book is a well thought out and written analysis of Lincoln. The author's research and presentation are excellent. While this work may not appeal to all those with an interest in the Civil War, it is a recommended read for those who wish to understand the Lincoln that Americans of the mid nineteenth century knew.