



**Lincoln in His Own Time: A Biographical
Chronicle of His Life, Drawn from Recollections,
Interviews, and Memoirs by Family, Friends, and
Associates (Writers in Their Own Time)**

Harold K. Bush Jr.

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More than any other American before or since, Abraham Lincoln had a way with words that has shaped our national idea of ourselves. Actively disliked and even vilified by many Americans for the vast majority of his career, this most studied, most storied, and most documented leader still stirs up controversy. Showing not only the development of a powerful mind but the ways in which our sixteenth president was perceived by equally brilliant American minds of a decidedly literary and political bent, Harold K. Bush's *Lincoln in His Own Time* provides some of the most significant contemporary meditations on the Great Emancipator's legacy and cultural significance.

The forty-two entries in this spirited collection present the best reflections of Lincoln as thinker, reader, writer, and orator by those whose lives intertwined with his or those who had direct contact with eyewitnesses. Bush focuses on Lincoln's literary interests, reading, and work as a writer as well as the evolving debate about his religious views that became central to his memory. Along with a star-struck Walt Whitman writing of Lincoln's "inexpressibly sweet" face and manner, Elizabeth Keckly's description of a bereaved Lincoln, "genius and greatness weeping over love's idol lost," and William Stoddard's report of the "cheery, hopeful, morning light" on Lincoln's face after a long night debating the fate of the nation, the volume includes selections from works by famous contemporary figures such as Hawthorne, Douglass, Stowe, Lowell, Twain, and Lincoln himself in addition to lesser-known selections that have been nearly lost to history. Each entry is introduced by a headnote that places the selection in historical and cultural context; explanatory endnotes provide information about people and places. A comprehensive introduction and a detailed chronology of Lincoln's eventful life round out the volume.

Bush's thoughtful collection reveals Lincoln as a man of letters who crafted some of the most memorable lines in our national vocabulary, explores the striking mythologization of the martyred president that began immediately upon his death, and then combines these two themes to illuminate Lincoln's place in public memory as the absolute embodiment of America's mythic civil religion. Beyond providing the standard fare of reminiscences about the rhetorically brilliant backwoodsman from the "Old Northwest," *Lincoln in His Own Time* also maps a complex genealogy of the cultural work and iconic status of Lincoln as quintessential scribe and prophet of the American people.

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