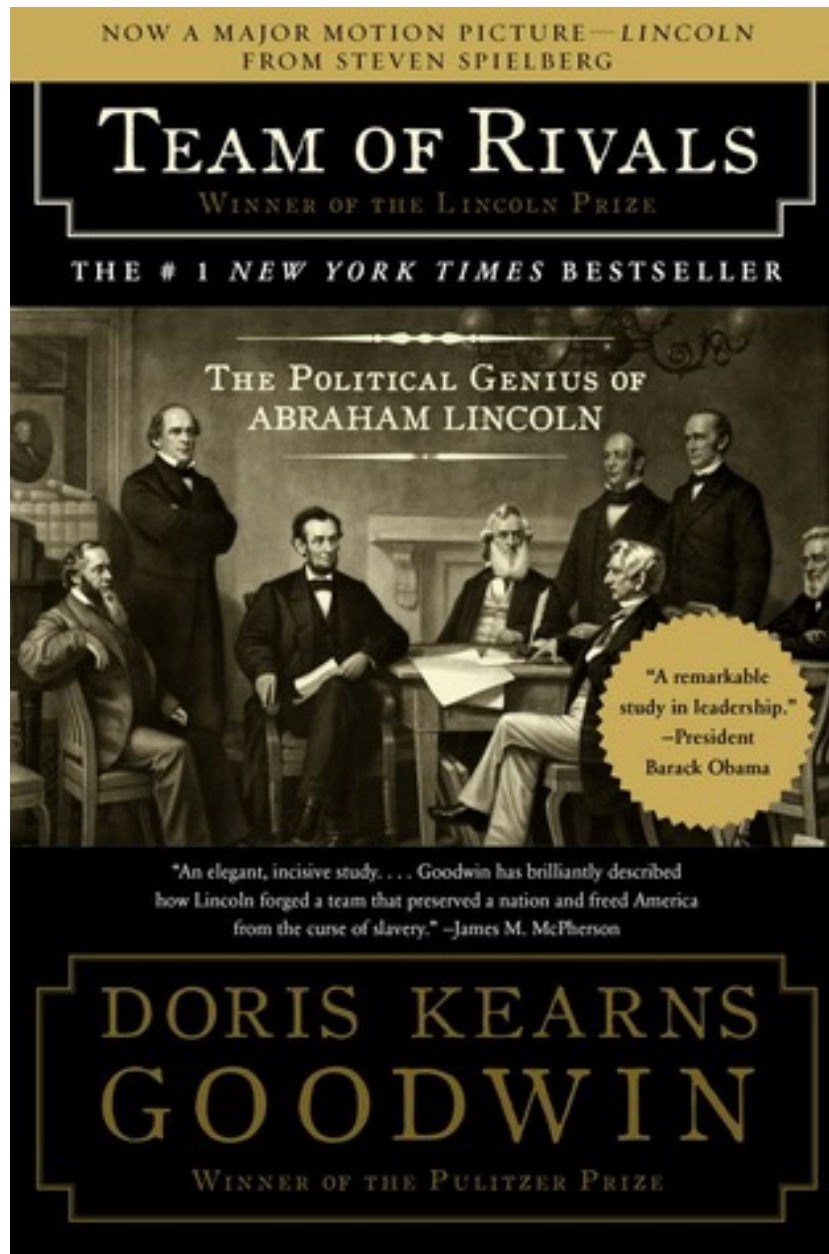


Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln Book PDF Download



By:
Doris Kearns Goodwin

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What people Say:

Dana Stabenow

I heard Goodwin talk about this book on NPR, and she sounded like she'd been an eyewitness to the events. Sold me the book.

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July 17th -- Okay, I finally made myself finish. Abe's dead and I'm a wreck.

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In this book Goodwin puts Abraham Lincoln in the context of his peers, many of whom ran against him for the first Republican nomination for president (remember they'd just invented that party) and one of whom, Stanton, had treated him with outright contempt in a law case years before. Seward accepted the job of Secretary of State thinking Lincoln would be his puppet, and Chase literally ran his second campaign for president out of the Department of the Treasury. Lincoln understood them all, tolerated them all, put them all to work for the nation that needed them so badly, and jollied, coaxed, cajoled and reasoned them all to victory. A reporter asked him how he could take all these vipers to his bosom and Lincoln replied that these were the best and most able men available and their country needed them, and that he wouldn't be doing his job if he didn't put them to work for it. There can't be anyone who has ever occupied the Oval Office more selfless than Abe.

This book is wonderfully written, accessible even to the most casual reader, full of humor and choler and kindness and vitriol, and wisdom. Goodwin has that ability known only to the best historians (David McCullough does, too) to pluck the exact quote necessary from the record to illuminate the scene she is describing, and make the transition from past to present seamless. Listen to Goodwin on Lincoln in his 1862 state of the union address (pp. 406-7):

The American Dream, articulated, in words guaranteed to be understood by everyone. You close this book knowing not just about these people, you actually feel like you know them, especially Abe.

Matt

As a history lover, I'm a bit of a snob. While everyone is rushing to purchase the newest warm-milk entry from David McCullough, I make a show of purchasing turgid, poorly edited treatises put out by university presses about some guy who did something long ago that doesn't really matter anymore. Of course, as every snob eventually learns, being snobbish is like slamming a hammer down on your thumb: you only hurt yourself; and everyone thinks you're an idiot.

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became the "it" book of popular fiction, achieving something of the mass audience of McCullough's . That meant, of course, that I put on my beret, grew a pencil mustache, and turned up my nose at the very notion of reading it.

While I was ignoring

, however, it did something more than sell millions of copies: it added something to the cultural lexicon.

The phrase "team of rivals" is this year's "perfect storm." Used by Doris Kearns Goodwin to describe Abraham Lincoln and his Presidential sounding-board, it has been hijacked by cable newscasters as a quick way to add false insight into President Obama's selection of the Cabinet. To demonstrate my belief that the phrase was overused, I decided to play the "team of rivals" drinking game while watching Wolf Blitzer one afternoon. At some point, I blacked out. Before I did, however, my pillow came to life and told me that Stephen A. Douglas cheated during his debates with Lincoln by using a teleprompter. Then I threw up in the fireplace.

Anyway, my point is, I've forgotten what I was talking about, due to the short-term memory loss I have from playing the "team of rivals" drinking game.

Kemper

(Please forgive me resorting to a tired trick and leading off with a definition from the dictionary, but there is a point to it.)

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(Please forgive me resorting to a tired trick and leading off with a definition from the dictionary, but there is a point to it.)

Americans these days seem to think that 2B is the only definition for the word, and even the first meaning is considered an insult because if you actually know how the government works, then you're guilty by association. Hell, politicians now deny being politicians as they try to get reelected to political office while screaming about how all politicians suck. (Or the Tea Party just finds the angriest moron around to run.)

It's weird that it's become such a dirty word because one of the greatest Americans by almost any sane person's standard was Abraham Lincoln. While the myth may be that he was just this humble log splitter and backwoods lawyer who bumbled into the White House during one of the country's darkest hours and fortunately turned out to be the perfect leader for the time, the truth is that Abe was one super bad-ass politician in the sense of definitions #1 and #2A, but luckily 2B didn't apply at all.

All American kids hear about Abe in school. We learn about the Civil War and the Emancipation Proclamation and the Gettysburg Address and the 13th Amendment, but they never really tell you how Abe managed to win a war that should have permanently split the country and end an evil institution that even the Founding Fathers had just left as some future generation's problem.

Reading

gives you an understanding of how Lincoln accomplished this, and the simple answer is that he was a politician of uncanny skill. He had a great sense of timing as well as being empathetic enough to see the other side of any argument while never swaying once he had fully committed himself to a course of action he thought right or necessary. The thing that made him unique was the almost inhuman way he could put his own ego and anger aside to find ways to work with people he had every reason to distrust or even hate.

As this book details, Lincoln's selection and handling of his own cabinet highlight what made him such a great president. He managed to convince some of the biggest power brokers and politicians of his day, many of whom he had beaten out for the presidency, to work for the common good as members of his administration. Even though this meant dealing with constant bickering and political intrigue, Lincoln still got outstanding achievements from all of them, and most of the men who once saw him as an overmatched fool eventually came to regard him as one of the smartest and most honorable men of the age.

Well researched and written in an entertaining style, this book also shows how little has changed in

American politics. The tactics of the kind of people who would defend slavery and smear Lincoln seem familiar in many ways. They just used newspapers instead of a cable news channel and talk radio.

Ellis

I would have given this book more stars if I could have. I think I loved this book so much because Abraham Lincoln was such an absolutely amazing person. We are all taught that Lincoln was one of America's great presidents, and we know that he issued the Emancipation Proclamation, but he is so much greater of a man than I ever knew. Lincoln was super smart, wise, and incredibly compassionate and empathetic. While unsure of his own faith, Lincoln, through his own care for others, was so much more

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This book showed Mary Lincoln in a better light than I had expected. I had always had the impression that Mary was a real stinker, and while she definitely had her faults that must have been caused real difficulties for the president, she also had many good qualities. One thing that impressed me is how she personally gave service to soldiers while not allowing any of her kind actions to be made known to the Washington social elite. While Mary may not have always been easy to live with, I felt kind of bad for her since she suffered from such severe migraines and depression. Who's to say for sure, but this book left me with the impression that Mary probably really tried to be a good gal despite her mental/physical problems.

I did like the point of view of this book. Telling the history of Lincoln's political and personal life inclusive with the lives of his opponents-turned-collaborators not only gave a more complete view of the times and happenings of the mid 1800s, but it demonstrated in a few cases what Lincoln did so widely, humbly, and deftly; turn those against him into believers and supporters of his work.

One interesting thing that Lincoln did that I loved about him, and can't stand about George W. Bush,

is that Lincoln, while not being dishonest, again unlike our current president, used much political slide-of-hand to get things done. I guess the biggest difference between Lincoln and some of our modern politicians is that while this technique is used today to cover up wrongdoings or cheating, Lincoln used it to help bring unity back to the nation and freedom to all people.

Steve

When Rod Blagojevich was impeached and hauled off to prison, that made four of the previous seven Illinois governors to have done time. Countless representatives and aldermen have been locked up, too. Then there was my wife's favorite: a former Secretary of State found after his death to have \$800,000 stuffed in shoe boxes. Our reputation for corrupt politicians is, I dare say, unsurpassed. Fortunately, we here in the Land of Lincoln (as we call it on our license plates) have one historical figure

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I've taken a real interest in Abe and his legacy in recent months (more on why in a minute). Of the books I've read, this one and David Herbert Donald's

are my favorites. They both deserve credit for finding unique space within what is arguably the most densely populated expanse of American history. Goodwin focused on Lincoln's clever leadership in bringing together a group of his former opponents, thinking them to be the most capable cabinet members at a very challenging time. We get thoroughly researched sketches of:

Naturally, most of the spotlight fell on Lincoln himself. Goodwin showed us the tricky waters that led

to the Emancipation Proclamation on 4/1/1863 â€“ a Good Friday in every way â€“ as well as other less famous but still important milestones that required a masterful helmsman. I give her ample credit for underscoring his sound judgment, his political savvy, his wry sense of humor, and his superabundant humanity.

So why my sudden interest in Lincoln? I thought youâ€™d never ask. Aside from the fact that he is probably the most analyzed and lionized figure in American history, it looks like I have a personal connection as well. I was revisiting some genealogical research Iâ€™d started years ago, knowing that the internet now reveals more ties than those dusty tomes I used to find in libraries and court houses ever did. One of my ancestors, Joseph Hanks, had a sister named Lucy who Iâ€™d never bothered following up on before. Anyway, according to ancestry.com, she was the mother of an illegitimate daughter named Nancy who was, by all known accounts, Abeâ€™s mother. It was one of those can-this-really-be-true moments. But I triple-checked every link and am as sure as anyone can be given existing records that Abe is my second cousin six times removed. Iâ€™d originally thought to look into a DNA test like the one they did to explain all those red-haired, brown-skinned kids running around Monticello, but then decided against it. I wouldnâ€™t know who to contact, it would likely be expensive, and Iâ€™d rather just

that itâ€™s true.

Of course I realize this is a watered down relationship, and for all I know hundreds if not thousands of other people can make this same claim. I have to confess, though, that for a while I thought of myself differently. My gaunt face and hollow cheeks were no longer flaws, but indicative family traits. And though I havenâ€™t tried to grow a beard in years, Iâ€™m certain if I did, it would be scraggly. I even looked for examples where I could count myself as a cut above in probity, eloquence and fair-mindedness.

Before I got to the point of imagining Daniel Day-Lewis playing me in a biopic of my soon-to-be famous life, I realized that I was still just me â€“ a guy who needs to remember that humility is one of his few attractive traits. Besides, (this is the really weird part) I did more digging into my family roots and discovered that my great-great-grandmother, Cora Claudine Flickinger from Byhalia, Ohio had a sister named Lula Dell Flickinger who the internet shows was the grandmother of one Barbara Pierce Bush. That makes me a somewhat less diluted third cousin once removed of George W. Bush. Suffice it to say I now think of these genealogical ties as less meaningful. I lack the power and initiative to unshackle an oppressed segment of society, but then I donâ€™t feel any compulsion to invade Iraq either.

So please understand Iâ€™m not obsessed by my connections, but today of all days, after reviewing this wonderful book, I feel enough of a kinship to quote my famous cousins. As Lincoln said, â€œYou can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time.â€• Cousin Dubya modified the quote (for real) observing that, â€œYou can fool some of the people all the time, and those are the ones you want to concentrate on.â€•