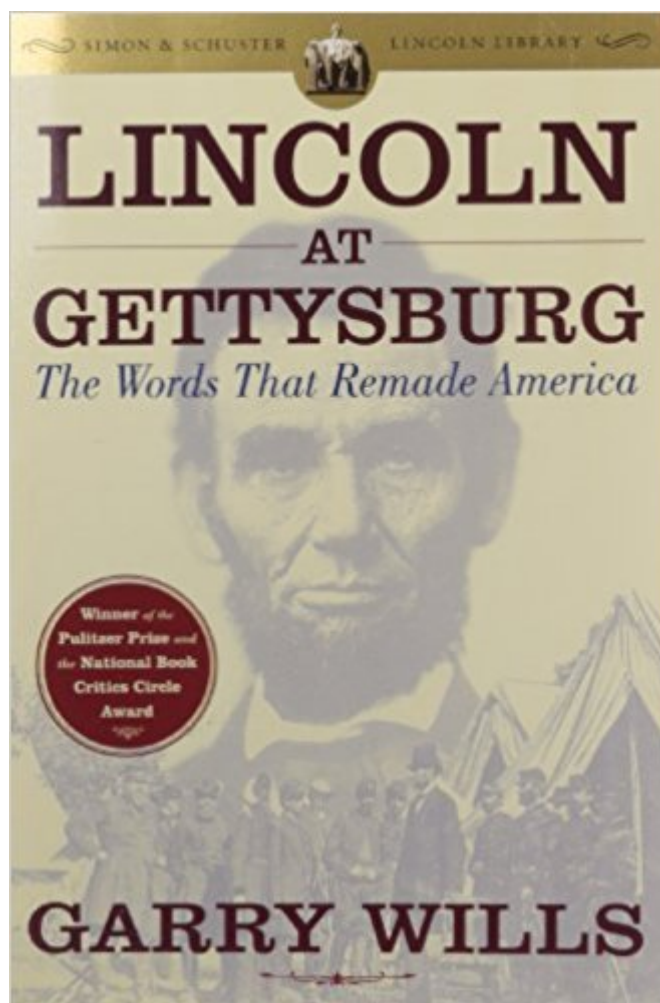


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Lincoln At Gettysburg: The Words That Remade America (Simon & Schuster Lincoln Library)



Synopsis

In a masterly work, Garry Wills shows how Lincoln reached back to the Declaration of Independence to write the greatest speech in the nation's history. The power of words has rarely been given a more compelling demonstration than in the Gettysburg Address. Lincoln was asked to memorialize the gruesome battle. Instead he gave the whole nation a new birth of freedom in the space of a mere 272 words. His entire life and previous training and his deep political experience went into this, his revolutionary masterpiece. By examining both the address and Lincoln in their historical moment and cultural frame, Wills breathes new life into words we thought we knew, and reveals much about a president so mythologized but often misunderstood. Wills shows how Lincoln came to change the world and to effect an intellectual revolution, how his words had to and did complete the work of the guns, and how Lincoln wove a spell that has not yet been broken.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In his book, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, Garry Wills sets about debunking the myths, legends, and rumors concerning Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address." Wills seeks to show that because of the Gettysburg Address " . . . the Civil War is what Lincoln wanted it to mean." (pg. 38) Wills helps the reader understand what events, speeches, and speakers had impacted Lincoln in the past, which ultimately influenced Lincoln's selection of words for the speech itself. Wills notes that the speech had influences from such diverse sources as Daniel Webster, Thomas Jefferson, as well as Greek

figures such as Pericles. The book also describes the rural cemetery movement that was beginning to rise at the time of the speech, which was influential in the design of the Gettysburg Cemetery. The book also answers many of the critics of Lincoln, who argue the speech and the Emancipation Proclamation were weak, and illustrate Lincoln's propensity of clever evasions and key silences concerning key issues. Willis also notes how the style of the address was the forerunner of a new way of communicating, a way fit for the machine age. One of the first topics Willis addresses is the myth that the man who spoke before Lincoln, Edward Everett, imposed the audience with a two-hour long speech that bored the listeners. Willis notes long speeches were common, and expected for the day. He gives reference to the Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858, which illustrate that Lincoln himself was capable and comfortable speaking at length before groups of people. Willis also emphasizes that Everett was the invited speaker for the dedication, and Lincoln had been asked simply to give some remarks. Willis also demystifies the story that Lincoln wrote the address on a napkin, or while sitting on the stand during Everett's speech.

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