



Killing Lincoln: The Shocking Assassination that Changed America Forever

Bill O'Reilly, Martin Dugard

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A riveting historical narrative of the heart-stopping events surrounding the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, and the first work of history from mega-bestselling author Bill O'Reilly

The anchor of *The O'Reilly Factor* recounts one of the most dramatic stories in American history—how one gunshot changed the country forever. In the spring of 1865, the bloody saga of America's Civil War finally comes to an end after a series of increasingly harrowing battles. President Abraham Lincoln's generous terms for Robert E. Lee's surrender are devised to fulfill Lincoln's dream of healing a divided nation, with the former Confederates allowed to re integrate into American society. But one man and his band of murderous accomplices, perhaps reaching into the highest ranks of the U.S. government, are not appeased.

In the midst of the patriotic celebrations in Washington D.C., John Wilkes Booth—charismatic ladies' man and impenitent racist—murders Abraham Lincoln at Ford's Theatre. A furious manhunt ensues and Booth immediately becomes the country's most wanted fugitive. Lafayette C. Baker, a smart but shifty New York detective and former Union spy, unravels the string of clues leading to Booth, while federal forces track his accomplices. The thrilling chase ends in a fiery shootout and a series of court-ordered executions—including that of the first woman ever executed by the U.S. government, Mary Surratt. Featuring some of history's most remarkable figures, vivid detail, and page-turning action, *Killing Lincoln* is history that reads like a thriller.

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Killing Lincoln: The Shocking Assassination that Changed America Forever Details

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Chuck says

I don't often give books five stars, but I found it hard to criticize this book. I received this as a Christmas present from my mother-in-law and she couldn't have picked anything I would have enjoyed more. The book was thoroughly researched and well-written. It did present some interesting theories about a wider conspiracy than history normally reports, but it wasn't overly conspiratorial.

I enjoyed the description of Lee's desperate attempt to avoid Grant's army as he fled Petersburg, VA and tried to escape into the Carolinas. You could feel the Confederate general's disappointment as the realization of his defeat was evident. His decision to meet with Grant at Appomattox Court House and surrender was heart-breaking even for someone with few sympathies for the Confederacy.

Booth's plotting and assassination conspiracy read like a spy novel.

You don't have to agree with O'Reilly's politics to enjoy this. Remember that he was a history teacher before he was a political pundit and this is not written from a Conservative or Liberal perspective.

I really liked this book!

Brian says

Written slightly better than a 6th grade book report, this book manages to drain all the interest from a fascinating topic. It was basically a string of short, wiki-articles in chronological order. I couldn't find a single original thought in the entire 282 pages. It appears that each chapter is actually a watered-down, simplified summary of an article written by someone else.

The fact that Bill O'Reilly's name appears in ALL CAPS and a larger font than the title of the book provides a fairly good insight into the purpose of the book...stroke O'Reilly's ego. I must admit, he does have some friends in high up places who were willing to write good reviews and interesting comments about how amazing the book is...I doubt they read more than a few pages. I was also very impressed to note how O'Reilly's self-promoted credentials includes "perhaps the most talked about political commentator in America." Overall, I was very disappointed and would not recommend this book to anyone.

babyhippoface says

When I walked into the theater to see the movie "Secretariat", I already knew Secretariat had won the Triple Crown. Still, my anxiety (and my pulse) increased during every race scene, and I cheered every victory. I chalk that up to terrific storytelling and a great director. And that's the same way I felt about this book.

Obviously, I knew what was going to happen before I read page one, but I found myself hoping someone

would stop arrogant and narcissistic John Wilkes Booth before he could carry out his plan. Ooh, that guy really made me mad. And that stupid, lazy, and irresponsible guard who left his post at Ford's Theater on April 14, I wanted to smack him. I gained new respect for players in the story I hadn't known much about before, lost some for others, and am still wondering what to think about others (Stanton, I've got my eye on you).

Barring some amazing historical discovery of hidden documents, we will probably never know much more about Lincoln's assassination than we do right now. O'Reilly and Dugard researched thoroughly (resources are referenced, though not in distracting footnotes) and included different theories of the events in their storytelling. Words and thoughts attributed to people in the book come from diaries and personal narratives written by those people or others involved. The authors have done a terrific job of turning history into a thriller. Battle scenes were dynamic and described as though they were being witnessed first-hand. (Of course, that's because those details came from diaries written at the time.) I guarantee, I retained more of the facts surrounding this event than I would have if I'd read a typical historical book on the subject.

I'd recommend this to anyone who is a Civil War buff, a Lincoln fan, or likes thrillers in general. This isn't a typical read for me, but I have the highest respect for Abraham Lincoln and all he stood for in the face of hatred and injustice, so I was interested in this book. I really, really liked it. When I started reading it, I went to the library and checked out a couple of big, coffee table-type books on Lincoln so I could find photos of people and places this book talked about. I read about the same events, the same theories. My guess is that many people who criticized this book harshly did so more because they have a personal problem with Bill O'Reilly than anything else. (Some reviewers here on goodreads complain about "many historical inaccuracies" but fail to mention any specifically, which lends credence to that theory, I think.)

The book is well-written, exciting, and kept me interested until the very end. The only problem was that this time, Secretariat was shot before he could reach the finish line.

Lori McDaniel says

this book was very intriguing. i could not put it down. historical narrative that seriously reads like fiction. but -it's not! i particularly liked the pace of the book as each chapter revealed the timeline laid out before you. you literally feel that you are witnessing history as it is happening. this book chronicles one of the darkest times in our nation's history- the civil war and the disturbing emotions among the north and the south as they battle to the bloody end. i had no idea that general robert e. lee was such an incredibly beloved man who lost everything to the "war of northern aggression" as the south still calls it! i learned so much from this book about the different struggles and challenges the union and confederate armies faced as they continued to battle over the issues which ripped our country apart for four years. over 600,000 soldiers died in the civil war. astounding. while i knew the basic facts about president lincoln and history of the civil war- i grew to understand him and felt his weariness (and the country's) and learned so much more about the war that changed america and it's people. Abraham Lincoln is a man i would like to meet in heaven. this book is titled "killing lincoln" and while it details all of the bizarre events leading up and to the assassination of a sitting president of the United States- i learned more about his life than i will remember about his death. when i finished this book i wanted to start reading it again- i also had an overwhelming sense of sadness as i wondered what he would think of the state of our nation today.

Timothy Lugg says

The assassination of President Lincoln is one of those historical events that makes me cringe every time I think of it because of the tragic consequences. Lincoln would have been a far better man to handle reconstruction than Andrew Johnson by virtue of the fact that Lincoln had fought so hard to preserve the Union and Johnson nothing. Lincoln was already on record as desiring to give the states relatively easy terms to rejoin the Union and likely had a million more ideas in his head that would have been expressed if he had lived until the war was completely over.

O'Reilly does a great job of documenting the climax of the end of major war operations, the celebration immediately after, and the crushed euphoria by John Wilkes Booth. What was new for me was the suggestion of a possible conspiracy that involved Secretary of War Stanton and LaFayette Baker. O'Reilly doesn't endorse the conspiracy theory, though he gives enough information to create interest in it. Most of it is speculation based on data that doesn't make sense without a explanation, thus conspiracies. The two pieces of intriguing data that add to conspiracy ideas are the missing 18 pages from Booth's diary that had been hidden by Stanton for two years and the uncanny way that Baker knew exactly which swamps to search for Booth.

O'Reilly acknowledges that he uses a type of historical writing that is based on facts but is written like narrative and it does make for exciting reading. I have read quite a bit about Lincoln but I still enjoyed reading this book.

Sandra says

I read some of the Goodreads' reviews for this book and honestly, some of them are just stupid commentaries on Bill O'Reilly, the TV talk show host. I already know who Bill O'Reilly is and didn't want anyone to opine - just tell me what you thought of the book, for Pete's sake.

Yes, Bill O'Reilly has written books and no, I hadn't read any of them. This one was on loan to me by a friend and I wasn't inspired to read it until after I saw the movie, "Lincoln." I agree with the reviews that describe the book as readable. It is all that.

I believe that Mr. O'Reilly directed this work toward readers who would not want to be bothered with the old-fashioned intrusive footnotes but might be interested in reading history. I mention this because one of the silly reviews took Mr O'Reilly to task for his lack. The references and resources are listed and reading suggestions are included in the back of the book. Maybe this "intelligent" reviewer missed that because she was too busy looking down her nose. This book is not a doctoral dissertation, nor is it intended to be one. It's for readers who want to be engaged and on the scene in the last days of the war and surrender.

The power of this book is the story, the larger-than life Lincoln, the pivotal time in the history of our country and the forces of evil personified by John Wilkes Booth. Mr. O'Reilly doesn't stand in the way, he takes you there to experience the days preceding and following Lincoln's assassination. Don't read this unless you want to experience this era and the people who helped to shape our destiny as a country.

Sheila DeChantal says

In the spring of 1865, after a long day of meetings, Abraham Lincoln alongside his wife Mary, took to the theater. While Lincoln knew that he had a lot of enemies and had even thought there was a good chance he would be assassinated, he had no idea that his life was about to end.

John Wilkes Booth was an anchor and charismatic ladies man as well as an impenitent racist. His hatred for Lincoln burned so strong it was obsession. He stressed over the details for months... working out accomplices in the mission. It started as a kidnapping plan... and lead to a much deadlier conclusion.

Ok... here's my thing about Lincoln. He is my all time favorite president. And here was my uneducated reasons why:

1. freeing of the slaves
2. He was the 16th president and 16 is my favorite number
3. He was honest

After listening to this audio I realize - I did not know him at all. He was only 56 when he died. More surprisingly to me... Booth was 26.

I did not know about all the background of Booth and the Lincoln conspiracy. Out of their three sons, I had not realized that 3 had died by the age of 18. And while I suspected the role this took on Mary (Todd) Lincoln I did not realize that after her third child's death their remaining son put her in a home.

What I am saying here is I found this audio to be very informative and interesting. I learned much about Lincoln's life, General Grant, and John Wilkes Booth.

I leave this audio feeling like I now know more about the president I adored from afar.

Christina says

The only things I remember about the Lincoln assassination were that he was shot in the back of the head at the theater by John Wilkes Booth, so this was an educational as well as an entertaining read.

The book begins at towards the end of the civil war and so the battle scenes were a real attention grabber. Things get a bit dull during the build up to the assassination, but are absolutely heart stopping during the murder and aftermath.

I had some problems with the writing style. I really liked that it was written in the present tense, but the authors would often go off point. They would interject some factoid or allude to a future event that made the story a bit disjointed and jarring. I wondered at the accuracy of the intimate thoughts and emotions attributed to these historical figures by the authors. Some of it was from writings from the actual person, but it seemed

like the rest was probably artistic license. I don't know the details about how the book was written, but it sure did make for interesting reading.

The authors are big Lincoln fans and it shines right through in the writing. It didn't detract from the book...at least it didn't for me. Even without the gushing about Lincoln in the book, I can't say I ever remember hearing anything bad about his character and have always thought of him as a great president. If facts put forward in this book are correct, he just may be the only politician in history who was actually a decent person and worthy of being looked up to.

Leslie says

Just for the record - Bill O'Reilly is a conceited ass. His book jacket description of himself (gag) almost made me not read the book, but alas, it's this month's bookclub choice, and since I attend every book club without fail I did indeed give in to peer pressure.

Other than being terribly sad and kindof a downer obviously, it wasn't that bad. Lots of interesting details were included I'd never heard of before, and the novel form made it easier to read even if they did wildly speculate some of the time. I wouldn't expect anything less of O'Reilly though so no surprises there. Anyone who says he's the most popular political commentator of all time is really good at spewing bullshit, er I mean, wildly speculating.

Britany says

I kept hearing about this book and no matter what your politics are, this story is worth reading. I listened on audio- the author, Bill O'Reilly narrates (which can be grating at times if I'm being truly honest, but he is passionate!). I found myself on the end of my seat (literally!). Even though, we all know the story about the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, I never knew all the details that led up to that detrimental night. This felt more like a narrative thriller than a historical non-fiction account. I also came to find out that I am related to Samuel Arnold (a confederate sympathizer, one that was involved in the conspiracy to capture Lincoln)!

This is a book that everyone should read in their lifetime, one that I think should be taught in high school history class. A book that I constantly found myself sharing interesting tidbits with every person that I came across. John Wilkes Booth was a handsome actor and only 26 years old! I can only imagine what went through his head...

Jennifer says

LOVED this book! I don't love that a great man was killed, but I love the way this book was put together. It did feel like a suspense novel...but full of history and truths that I have never heard about.

I liked how the chapters headed with the date and the time, and switched back and forth between Pres. Lincoln and JW Booth. I feel it gave both sides very well. You could almost understand the feelings Booth

had and his reasoning for what he did, in his mind anyway.

I was doing very well just reading the book without much emotion until after Pres. Lincoln was shot and they were trying to take care of him. The sadness of Mrs. Lincoln is unimaginable to me, and they way the people around realized that this was a moment in history that the world would know. Some people took advantage of it for their own gain, and others were only thinking about the president.

One part that got me crying was after they had Pres. Lincoln out of the theatre and trying to figure out where to take him. A tavern was near by and they were about to take him there, but the owner, Peter Taltavul, was smart enough to realize that "It shouldn't be said that the president of the United States died in a saloon." What a great man Taltavul was to think of things like that at such a horrible time. People who think of others are always heroes in my mind.

I am going to have my teenage son read this. He loves history, and will love this book.

Jeff Richey says

Unfortunately, I think many may pass this novel by because co-author Bill O'Reilly is such a polarizing voice in political commentary today. Quite frankly, *Killing Lincoln: The Shocking Assassination that Changed America* is one of the most riveting examples of historical non-fiction that I have ever read. Anyone with an interest in the U.S. Civil War, U.S. politics, and/or the U.S. Reconstruction era would be amiss in not taking advantage of the obviously laborious research and effort put forth in writing this book. At times, historical non-fiction can be uninteresting reading. A reader must dredge through fact after fact of dry information, i.e. dates, names, documents, settings, etc. The novel format that O'Reilly and co-author Martin Dugard use here creates a page-turner that allows the reader to almost be there, whether the setting is the battlefield during the last few days of the U.S. Civil War, the streets of Washington, the shadows of the Ford Theatre, or in the swamps chasing after one of the most wanted and infamous men in U.S. History. This novel is laden with intricate storytelling, and a wealth of interesting facts. Well done, Mr. Dugard and Mr. O'Reilly.

Kelli says

Lincoln's assassination was a devastating event following the deadliest war in American history. It is so unfortunate that President Lincoln, a man portrayed as being deeply distraught over the massive divide in our country, was never able to participate in the reconstruction and unification of that broken nation. Always interested in this topic, I watched this while visiting my dad last summer and subsequently grabbing the book from his bookshelf, only to recently opt for the audio version from the library. I just now thumbed through the book to see the pictures of some of the people mentioned but I'm not sure that really added much value for me. I managed through the audio well despite the news reporter intonation applied to every sentence. I found this version of the events to be interesting and I didn't take issue with the speculation employed throughout. Still, I wish this story was fiction rather than part of our history. 3.5 stars.

Stephanie says

You know what my biggest problem with this book is? Bill O'Reilly. I just can't get past the fact that a pompous, bombastic talk show host gets to write a best-selling historical non-fiction book when there are real historians (you know, the kind with Ph.D.s that know how to use footnotes) that can't even find jobs.

To be fair, it's very readable. O'Reilly and his co-author (who, alas, no one will remember) write in a very engaging manner. They do fall into the trap of over-speculating, saying that people did or said things that I really can't imagine anyone knowing for sure (those aforementioned footnotes could have helped). It's equally clear to me that uber-conservative O'Reilly can't help but view and portray the entire Lincoln assassination through his own very biased lens. I hope that readers don't mistake this for an impartial, scholarly history.

In the end, I preferred Sarah Vowell's *Assassination Vacation*. It's just as entertaining and readable as *Killing Lincoln*. It also lacked footnotes, and Vowell's own more liberal tendencies are equally evident. The difference is that Vowell doesn't even suggest that her book is a true history book; it's more of a travelogue or memoir or long essay. I would have liked *Killing Lincoln* better if it were classified as something like "speculative non-fiction."

Michael says

I loved this book. I cannot get enough from authors who write good historical narratives. Reading a book by Bill O'Reilly I wasn't sure what to expect. The real question is what part did Martin Dugard the co author play in the writing of this book? Whatever, the books writing reads like a story. This book does not bore you on dates, military battles, who is my right or left flank. No the reader is thrust into the last few months of the Civil War. The fall of Richmond and the surrender of Lee. What follows is the main theme the assassination of Honest Abe by John Wilkes Booth. Here the authors impressed me with there simple flow of words that kept me turning the page. Although I knew the outcome of this book, it was hard to put this book down. If you like reading history as a story read this book you will not be left disappointed
