



Memorable Quotations from Abraham Lincoln

Jim Dell

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Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) was the 16th president of the United States from 1861 to 1865. Born in a log cabin in the backwoods of Kentucky, Lincoln was practically exclusively self-educated. In 1831 he moved to New Salem, Illinois, and labored as a storekeeper, surveyor, and postmaster while learning the law. In 1834 he was elected to the state legislature, and in 1836 he became an attorney. He served one term from 1847 to 1849 in Congress as a Whig and in 1855 he ran to become a senator but lost. He joined the new Republican Party in 1856. Lincoln ran again in 1858 for the Senate against Stephen A. Douglas, and in a vigorous campaign he and Douglas battled in seven debates. Abraham Lincoln was not an abolitionist, but he deemed slavery as an evil and disputed its expansion. Though he lost the election, he had made a name for himself, and in 1860 he was nominated by the Republicans for president. He ran against a split Democratic Party and was elected with a minority of the popular vote. To the Southern states, Lincoln's election was a sign for secession. By Inauguration Day seven states had seceded, and four more seceded once he issued a summons to the militia. It is largely agreed that Lincoln handled the enormous problems of the Civil War with skillfulness and strength. Besides directing the war, he confronted opposition in the North from radical abolitionists, who believed him too moderate, and from conservatives, who were pessimistic over the possibilities of success in the war. His cabinet was divided by internal animosity, and the progress of the war went against the North initially. In 1863 he proceeded to free the slaves by issuing the Emancipation Proclamation, but sustaining the Union remained his foremost war goal. In 1864 Lincoln ran for reelection against George B. McClellan and won, partially because of the satisfactory turn of military affairs after his appointment of General U.S. Grant as commander-in-chief. Lincoln witnessed the end of the war but did not live to realize his plan for Reconstruction. On April 14, 1865, while attending a play at Ford's Theater, in Washington, D.C., he was shot by the famous actor John Wilkes Booth. Abraham Lincoln died the next morning. His wife was Mary Todd Lincoln (1818-1882). Only one of their four sons, Robert Todd Lincoln, reached adulthood.

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