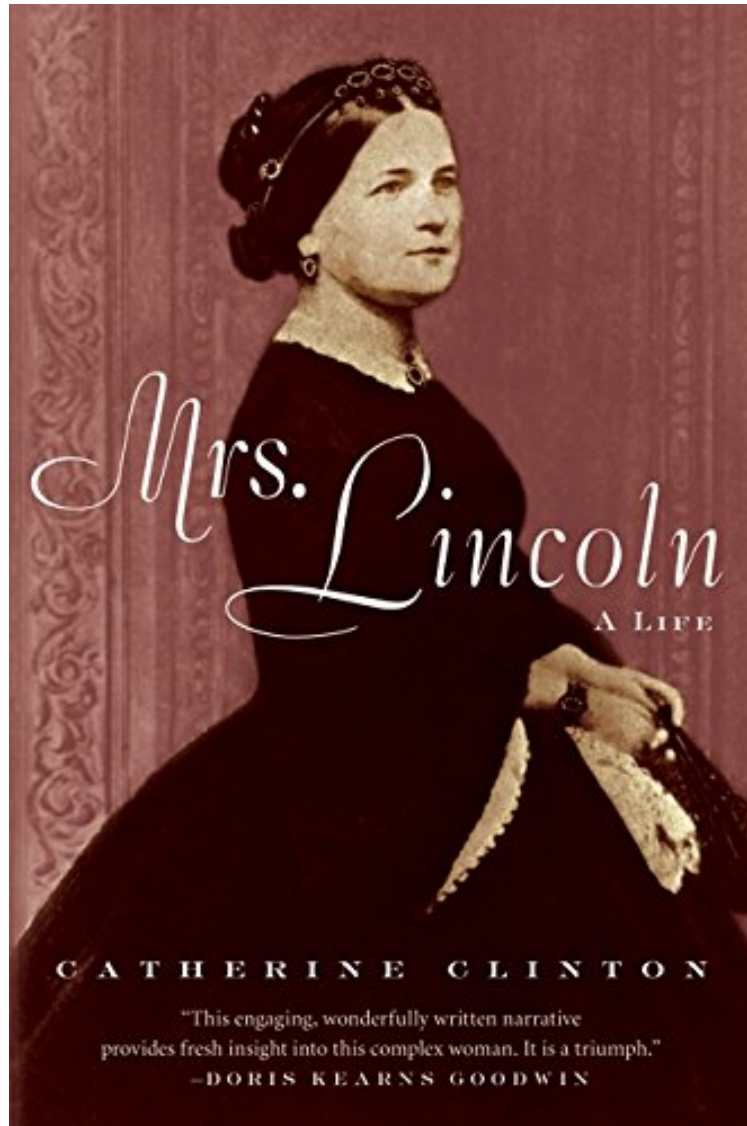


[Free] Mrs. Lincoln: A Life

## Mrs. Lincoln: A Life

*Catherine Clinton*

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#355092 in Books Catherine Clinton 2010-01-19 2010-01-19 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.00 x .97 x 5.311, .70 #File Name: 0060760419415 pages Mrs Lincoln A Life | File size: 55.Mb

**Catherine Clinton : Mrs. Lincoln: A Life** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Mrs. Lincoln: A Life:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. and I like the formattingBy KE Very well written overall, and insightful, and I like the formatting. At times repetitive, with confusing phrasing, and some inaccurate or distorted information. But a needed addition to the field, more concise by means of drawing inferences and directing attention to key quotes, instead of just covering them all. Yet most of the inferences were not in any way a stretch but seemed dead

on, so this wasn't a problem in the way it might have been. It made it a lot more entertaining and was refreshing to read. She connected a lot of dots and has a fun writing style. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Revealing. By Patricia M. Larson Very revealing. Enjoyed it immensely. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Four Stars By CHA JAE WOO lovely book

“This engaging, wonderfully written narrative provides fresh insight into this complex woman. It is a triumph.”  
—Doris Kearns Goodwin Catherine Clinton, author of the award-winning *Harriet Tubman: The Road to Freedom*, returns with *Mrs. Lincoln*, the first new biography in almost 20 years of Mary Todd Lincoln, one of the most enigmatic First Ladies in American history. Called “fascinating” by Ken Burns and “spirited and fast-paced” by the *Boston Globe*, *Mrs. Lincoln* is a meticulously researched and long overdue addition to the historical record. In the words of Pulitzer-Prize winning historian Joseph Ellis, *Mrs. Lincoln* “is distinctive for its abiding sanity, its deft and in-depth handling of the White House years, and for the consistent quality of its prose.”

.com Book Description Abraham Lincoln is the most revered president in American history, but the woman at the center of his life, his wife, Mary, has remained a historical enigma. In this definitive, magisterial biography, Catherine Clinton draws on important new research to illuminate the remarkable life of Mary Lincoln, and at a time when the nation was being tested as never before. Mary Lincoln's story is inextricably tied with the story of America and with her husband's presidency, yet her life is an extraordinary chronicle on its own. Born into an aristocratic Kentucky family, she was an educated, well-connected Southern daughter, and when she married a Springfield lawyer she became a Northern wife—an experience mirrored by thousands of her countrywomen. The Lincolns endured many personal setbacks—including the death of a child and defeats in two U.S. Senate races—along the road to the White House. Mrs. Lincoln herself suffered scorching press attacks, but remained faithful to the Union and her wartime husband. She was also the first presidential wife known as the “First Lady,” and it was in this role that she gained her lasting fame. The assassination of her husband haunted her for the rest of her life. Her disintegrating downward spiral resulted in a brief but traumatizing involuntary incarceration in an asylum and exile in Europe during her later years. One of the most tragic and mysterious of nineteenth-century figures, Mary Lincoln and her story symbolize the pain and loss of Civil War America. Authoritative and utterly engrossing, *Mrs. Lincoln* is the long-awaited portrait of the woman who so richly contributed to Lincoln's life and legacy. Questions for Catherine Clinton Q: Why did you decide to write about Mrs. Lincoln in this book? A: Of course, it was a daunting task to take on this project in the wake of so much new information on Lincoln and his world, and with the Lincoln Bicentennial looming on the horizon. But I knew that Mary Lincoln was being lost in the shuffle of the new Lincoln literature. With an outpouring of new work on Abraham Lincoln every year it's been over twenty years since the last biography of Mary. When it was written, we did not have the cache of new letters (uncovered by Jason Emerson) which showed Mary's state of mind during her incarceration. We also did not have the past quarter century of Civil War scholarship which has contextualized and expanded our appreciation of what it truly meant when families were divided by war. Q: Was Lincoln's wife a southern sympathizer? A: No, and this is one of the misconceptions I hope to counter in my study, although I do portray her as a daughter of the Bluegrass, and brought up to be a proper southern lady. However, she had always been unconventional--temperamental, articulate, not only better read than her husband (and conversing with diplomats on state occasions in French) but she had more than ten years of formal education. She also became a partisan abolitionist when he befriended Charles Sumner, and was opposed to anyone who advocated disunion. At the same time, when Elmer Ellsworth, the war's first casualty--shot while tearing down a rebel flag in Virginia in May 1861--was killed, his murderer was shot dead--a brother of a Dr. Jackson from her hometown of Lexington. So in this first armed encounter when Virginia seceded, the Lincolns mourned Ellsworth's passing, but Mrs. Lincoln could appreciate as well the sorrow of the Jacksons in Kentucky at losing a brother, a son, and the fratricidal nature of the conflict. Q: So were the Lincolns racist as some modern critics have suggested? A: I think both Abraham and Mary reflected the prejudices of their era, but not only the wealth of new work on race and gender over the past few decades has informed my approach in *Mrs. Lincoln*, but some of the real, human aspects of life in the White House were new to me. Q: How so? A: Mary Lincoln's relationship with the black women who were a part of the White House staff, as well as her crucial relationship with Elizabeth Keckly (whose biography appeared in 2003) needed a fresh approach. I used memoirs and interview material drawn from the lives of those who knew the Lincolns in the White House. I was especially impressed to discover that Abraham Lincoln, who doted on his sons, had taken his son Tad to the Slade house on Massachusetts Ave. N.W., where he might play with the African American children of his father's trusted aide, William Slade. So it was really these kind of details that I hope will bring both the Lincolns to life. Q: A lot of people want to know if Mrs. Lincoln was crazy? A: My degrees from Harvard and Princeton are not in medicine--so I cannot diagnose. I can say that I felt she did deteriorate mentally during her time in the White House and my study attempts to place into context some of her challenges and failings. But I also wanted to show her relationship with the press, her relationship with her children, and especially the many trials she faced as a widow...which is why I begin the book with Lincoln's assassination as the defining moment of her life. Q: Do you think Mary Lincoln could give any advice

to Michelle Obama? A: Many of Lincoln's critics went after his wife to get at him--using the folk wisdom, if you want to destroy a house, set fire to the thatch. The wife of our 44th President has shown wit and humor and intellect that mirrors perhaps many attributes Mary Lincoln brought to the White House, but Michelle Obama has advantages that Mrs. Lincoln did not have. But the one thing I think the campaign has already taught our newest occupant of the White House is to not let those who hang on her every word and focus on fashion define her. From Publishers Weekly Any biographer of Mary Lincoln has a tough act to follow in Jean H. Baker's groundbreaking and definitive *Mary Todd Lincoln: A Biography*, published two decades ago and reissued in paperback in 2008. Queens University (Belfast) history professor Clinton (*Harriet Tubman: The Road to Freedom*) fails to rise to the occasion. For starters, the book seems to have no *raison d'être*: Clinton offers no revisionist interpretation and has uncovered no new sources. Add to this Clinton's annoying style, such as a penchant for ESP, narrating Mary Lincoln's thoughts through various key moments in her life, such as this upon the day in April, 1865, when her husband triumphantly visited the Confederate capital of Richmond: "Mary found a sense of serenity that was distinctly new and uncharacteristic ... she imagined that she might be reconciled with those alienated..." The author also too frequently paraphrases the contents of diaries and letters, without quoting them directly. Although Clinton's book provides an adequate summary of an important life, readers can find a far more than adequate rendition elsewhere. Bw illus. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist\*Starred\* This biography of the wife of the sixteenth president is perfectly timed: it will be published in the first month of the bicentennial of Lincoln's birth. It is certainly not a rush job—Clinton's careful research and thoughtful presentation result in the best treatment of the troubled life of Mary Lincoln in recent memory. It is important to approach Mrs. Lincoln with not only respect but also balance, to not only understand her eccentricities but also sympathize with them while making no unwarranted excuses for her. This Clinton does brilliantly. Mary Lincoln's mercurial, insecure personality and "crimes"—namely, overspending on clothes and White House improvements—were hot fodder for journalists during her husband's administration and even during her peripatetic widowhood. Clinton sees Mary making many wrong choices in behavior that simply fueled the smear campaign against her and gives witness to Mary's "deteriorating mental condition" after the shock of her husband's assassination played havoc with her already fragile stability. The issue of whether she went insane—her only living child, Robert, had her committed for a while to an asylum to stop her waywardness—is sensitively analyzed. She was, and continues to be, controversial, but, as Clinton submits, she remains a figure of great color, worthy of continued interest. --Brad Hooper