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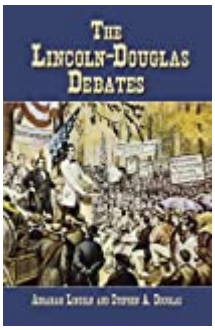

Abraham Lincoln, Stephen A. Douglas. *The Lincoln-Douglas Debates.* Mineola: Dover Publications, 2004. x + 340 pp. $16.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-486-43543-5.

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A Senate Campaign of National Importance

During the 1858 Illinois senatorial campaign, Republican challenger Abraham Lincoln and incumbent Democrat Stephen A. Douglas met in a series of seven debates. Lincoln proposed the debates in a July 24 letter to Douglas seeking an opportunity for the two to "address the same audiences" (p.79). Douglas replied, suggesting seven debates in which he would have four opening speeches and Lincoln three; Lincoln agreed to this arrangement.

The Lincoln-Douglas debates were notable for a number of reasons. The key issues in the campaign, slavery and popular sovereignty, aroused an interest in the debates outside of Illinois. In addition, the candidates were viewed as contenders for the 1860 presidential election. Douglas was the standard bearer for the Democratic Party and Lincoln was the center of the Republican Party; both posed a serious challenge to President James Buchanan. The campaign also set precedents in journalism. Journalists accompanied the candidates and major newspapers hired stenographers to document the speeches given during the debates. Due to the national interest in the campaign, the major newspapers sought to print the debate speeches. On Election Day Lincoln won the popular vote; however, the Illinois state legislature re-elected Stephen Douglas. The people did not directly elect senators until the passage of the 17th Amendment in 1913.

The unabridged contents of the debates can be found in *The Lincoln Douglas Debates*, published by Dover Publications in 2004. Readers may notice the bibliographic note indicating that this edition contains two speeches and seven debates taken from the *Political Debates Between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas*, a collection first published by G. P. Putnam in 1912. The Dover edition is not a complete, unabridged, reprint of the original. When the contents of the two books are compared readers will notice the lack of content. Editors opted to delete two speeches by Lincoln and two by Douglas given prior to the first debate in August 1858 from this collection. Other selections cut from this edition include pre-debate correspondence between the candidates and speeches made by Douglas and Republican Senator Lyman Trumbull referenced by Lincoln during the Charleston debate. Another noticeable difference is

the lack of detail in the table of contents. The first edition indicates pages for each portion of the debate; this edition only indicates the first page of each debate.

This volume offers nothing new, aside from a new introduction by the publisher. The introduction to this edition provides a brief background on the debates and the candidates (ten pages). Each debate is then summarized with a focus on the controversial points of each speech. Today's readers might benefit from additional information that could be included in footnotes or endnotes, such as references to events, people, and legislation. A bibliography or list of related readings and an index would add to the book's value. Readers will need to consult other works and collections of the debates to obtain this information. An index would allow readers to find references to issues, legislation, and people mentioned in the speeches.

Previously published collections of the Lincoln-Douglas debates are numerous and vary in content. The first compilation was published in 1860 by Follett, Foster, and Company under the title *Political Debates Between Hon. Abraham Lincoln and Hon. Stephen A. Douglas in the Celebrated Campaign of 1858 in Illinois.* The content of this collection came from the scrapbook of newspaper clippings and pre-debate speeches by both candidates compiled by Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln submitted the scrapbook to the publisher and indicated that all crowd reactions be deleted. The original Lincoln Douglas Debate Scrapbook is located in the Abraham Lincoln Papers Collection at the Library of Congress. Other early collections include *Political Debates Between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas, in the Celebrated Campaign of 1858 in Illinois* (1887, 1894), *Political Speeches and Debates of Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas, 1854-1861*, edited by Alonzo T. Jones (1895), and *Political Speeches and Debates of Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas, 1854-1861* (1900).

The 1908 edition edited by Edwin Earle Sparks for the Illinois State Historical Library entitled, *The Lincoln Douglas Debates of 1858* contains the seven debates, with reactions from the newspapers; this is considered the definitive edition of the debates. The Chicago Historical Society published a centennial collection edited by Paul M. Angle under the title *Created Equal: The Complete Lincoln Douglas Debates of 1858* (1958, 1985). This compilation includes a substantial introduction (30 pages), the entire texts of the debates, and the pre-debate speeches made by the candidates. Editors restored audience reactions and corrected the newspaper accounts. Angle's edition was republished in 1991 under the title, *The Complete Lincoln-Douglas Debates of 1858* with a forward by David Zarefsky that includes references to relevant works and rhetorical analysis. The text is supplemented with prefatory notes before each speech and footnotes where a reference or clarification is needed. A list of speeches made by both candidates during the entire campaign and detailed index accompany the text.

Another source is *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, edited by Roy P. Basler (1953) and its supplement containing documents from 1832-1865 (1974). This collection includes the texts of all the debates with Lincoln's changes and the variations between the newspaper reports of each speech. Historian Robert W. Johannsen edited *The Lincoln Douglas Debates of 1858* (1965). The volume contains an introduction (ten pages), Lincoln's speech in Springfield, Douglas's speech in Chicago, and the entire content of all seven debates in the format of the 1860 publication. Johannsen also adds notes identifying people mentioned in the speeches and a bibliographic essay highlighting further readings. The Library of America's 1989 compilation, *Abraham Lincoln Speeches and Writings 1832 - 1858: Speeches, Letters, and Miscellaneous Writings the Lincoln Douglas Debates*, offers the full text of the debates and indicates the newspaper source. In addition, this volume has a chronology, notes, and an index. Harold Holzer's collection, *The Lincoln Douglas Debates* (1993), contains the transcripts of the speeches published by the opposition party newspapers and sets the scene for each of the debates. Images and transcriptions of Lincoln's letters to Douglas can be found in the Abraham Lincoln Papers in the American Memory Collection at `http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/alhtml/malhome.html`.

Of the previously mentioned collections, Basler's work is the most useful because the debate speeches are placed in chronological order with Lincoln's correspondence and other public remarks. Holzer's collection is the most recent and supplements Basler, however it can be difficult to read because comments from more than one newspaper are combined. The Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress are the least useful because the collection does not include the debate speeches.

Two authors have studied the debates for their rhetorical qualities. Lionel Crocker's 1968 rhetorical study, *An Analysis of Lincoln and Douglas as Public Speakers and Debaters*, is divided into three sections. Section one is a collection of essays that examine the speeches and orators for the effectiveness of their skills. This is

followed by the full text of the speeches with the audience responses and key sections highlighted in bold print. Readers will also find illustrations of debate techniques compiled from various textbooks that study the Lincoln-Douglas debates. Crocker's work also includes the full text of the correspondence between Lincoln and Douglas prior to the debates. David Zarefsky examined the debates in his book *Lincoln, Douglas, and Slavery: In the Crucible of Public Debate* (1990). The emphasis of this work is the evolution of the debates and how it affected the campaign. It is also a rhetorical study that focuses on the patterns of arguments used by the candidates. In addition readers will find detailed background information about the debates, candidates, issues, and the history of the campaign. Crocker relies on examples culled from numerous textbooks while Zarefsky uses the more recent approach to rhetoric examining the patterns of argument in the debates and compiling a readable and useful study.

Other scholars have examined the political context of the two men and the issues they addressed in their debates. Harry V. Jaffa's *Crisis of the House Divided: An Interpretation of the Issues in the Lincoln-Douglas Debates* (1959) is a study of the issues discussed in the debates, beginning in 1854 through the Civil War. Jaffa examines the political principles guiding Lincoln from the time he resumed his political career in 1854 through the Senate campaign in 1858. Richard Allen Heckman's *Lincoln vs. Douglas: The Great Debates Campaign* (1967), like many of the previously mentioned works, includes an examination of the background, issues, and significance of the debates. He supplements Jaffa's work by casting a critical look at the debates and dispelling the myths surrounding the candidates and the issues. Readers looking for a work that combines the studies of Jaffa and Heckman should consult Saul Sigelschiffer's *The American Conscience: The Drama of the Lincoln-Douglas Debates* (1973). This readable volume provides detailed backgrounds for both Lincoln and Douglas including how their opinions on key issues developed prior to the debates. He concludes with a discussion of the reasons for the outcome of the debates. Appendices in the volume include chronologies of the candidates' lives, the debates, the institution of slavery, and notes about the various editions of the debates.

This Dover collection, like its many predecessors, is not comprehensive and is even more selective in its content. This text is recommended for those who are either familiar with the events surrounding the debates or solely interested in reading the speeches. Researchers interested in the debates are strongly encouraged to consult other collections in addition to this compilation.

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