

Killing Lincoln: The Shocking Assassination That Changed America Forever By Bill O'Reilly and Martin Dugard

About the Book

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 reintegrate 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.

(from Amazon.com)

About the Author

After five non-fiction volumes and a deeply personal memoir called *A Bold Fresh Piece Of Humanity*, Bill (working with historian Martin Dugard) most recently wrote and released *Killing Lincoln*. In *Newsweek*, an article by Peter Boyer said it marked "a bold, even fresh, literary turn." *Killing Lincoln* is indeed real, and it's riveting. A factual, historical thriller, designed to keep you moving through page after page. No one should have been surprised by this literary turn from Bill. After all, it's history. And Bill studied history, taught it in high school, for years has surrounded himself with historical artifacts, and *The Factor* takes a clear-eyed look at history-in-the-making every night. The book, the teaching, the interest, the show-all of it delivered in Bill's unique "No Spin" way.

Bill's beginnings are well known. A childhood on Long Island. BA (in history) from Marist College, a Master's in Broadcast Journalism from Boston University, and a second Master's degree in Public Administration from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. There have been many awards and honors along the way, as well. Of course, the race isn't over; Bill isn't taking a victory lap just yet. There's still plenty of ground to cover, and O'Reilly isn't slowing down, or looking over his shoulder. Only ahead. Though he still takes brief naps when he can.

(from billoreilly.com)

Book Reviews

Bill O'Reilly is a noted conservative television and print commentator but what many people may not know is that in his earlier years he was a history teacher. Over the past year O'Reilly has received critical praise for his historical monograph *Killing Lincoln*, which detailed the events leading up to the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. In *Lincoln's Last Days* O'Reilly and Dwight Zimmerman recreate that research and study in a version of their previous work aimed at a younger audience. As was the case with their more comprehensive historical monograph, *Lincoln's Last Days* provides readers with a highly informative look back at one of the

darkest crimes in American history. In order to do this sad tale justice, O'Reilly and Zimmerman take their readers back to a time when the Civil War had ended but not the evil machinations that provoked it. In telling this story the authors combine an eye for historical detail with fascinating portraits of the parties involved in Lincoln's death. The juxtaposition of Booth and his conspirators who acted with tragically flawed energy aimed at a terrible result, with President Lincoln's stoicism in the face of the heaviest responsibility imaginable represents the core of this book's narrative. As the pages turn the reader almost wishes that Booth will fail but historical facts cannot be changed and the clock may not be turned back. Booth succeeded in his flawed mission and the course of American history was changed. Successful as well are the authors of this swift paced and well written illustrated history that does justice to one of the saddest days in the nation's saga. Reviewer: Greg M. Romanek, Barnes and Noble

Bill O'Reilly is no stranger to controversy. This time, though, his new book is the focus of intense criticism. As Salon's Justin Elliott first reported, "Killing Lincoln", which he co-authored with Martin Dugard, is riddled with factual inaccuracies. The National Park Service outed the mistakes in a recent review and recommended that Ford's Theater bookstores not sell the book. One of the

**bookstores banned, while the other continues to sell it. In one instance, the book claims Ford's Theatre was burned down in 1863 when it was actually destroyed in the end of 1862. The book contains multiple references to Lincoln in the Oval Office, which wasn't built until decades after his death. It also includes the line "He furls his brow"; furl is a nautical term, the correct word is furrows. Despite being second on the New York Times' bestseller list, "Killing Lincoln" has taken heat from a slew of critics. Christian Science Monitor's Jackie Hogan chastises the book for covering up negative aspects of Lincoln's presidency in favor of a good story. As she puts it, "style and image often take precedence over evidence and substance." She also calls the book "sensationalized, suggestive, and overly simplistic." Noted historian Eric Foner told the Washington Post that, "I would not be surprised if there were historical errors as [O'Reilly] is better known as a TV polemicist than as a scholar." In September, O'Reilly told Fox and Friends that he didn't want to write just another "boring history book." Mission accomplished, then.
From the Huffington Post**

Discussion Questions

- 1. Name one or two things you found out through reading this book that you didn't know before.**
- 2. What character(s) surprised you? Why?**
- 3. What character(s) impressed you? Why?**

4. What character(s) aggravated you? Why?

5. Do you feel that hunting Booth was worth the 87 men that were killed in the Maryland swamps?

6. Do you agree with the sentence of hanging the conspirators who actually didn't do much? What about the imprisonment of suspected conspirators who were later released because nothing was proven against them?

7. What do you think might have happened differently if the assassination had happened today? Would it have been easier or harder to catch Booth?

8. Discuss the male-female relationships in the book, particularly the following:

- a) Lincoln and his wife**
- b) Grant and his wife Julia**
- c) Booth and Lucy Hale**

9. Some of the details included in Killing Lincoln have proven to be false (Oval Office didn't exist yet, JWB didn't make the peephole into the box, etc.). Does this discredit the entire book for you? Why or why not?

10. Discuss the diary-like presentation of the book. Did it help or hinder the reader?

11. Discuss the style of writing. Did you find it scholarly? dumbed-down? easy to follow? too

vernacular?

12. Compare what you know of Lincoln's assassination with what you know of Kennedy's assassination.

14. Imagine presenting this book as a work of fiction. What would you have added or changed? Do you think an author could have come up with the flow of the events that actually happened?

15. Compare this book to another nonfiction history book you have read recently (for me, that would be *A Land As God Made It* by James Horn, a book about Jamestown colony).

a) How are they alike and different?

b) Which one was more informative?

c) Which one was more scholarly?

d) Which one was easier to read?

e) Which one will you more easily remember?

From Susan's Literary Café

Read Alikes

***Manhunt: The Twelve-Day Chase for Lincoln's Killer* by James L. Swanson (364.1524 SWA) - A fascinating and vivid account of the escape of John Wilkes Booth, Abraham Lincoln's assassin, takes readers along on the intensive search from the streets of Washington, D.C., through the swamps of Maryland, into the forests of Virginia, and into the**

lives of the men who pursued him.

***The Destiny of the Republic: A Tale of Medicine, Madness and the Murder of a President* by Candice Millard (973.84 MIL) - A narrative account of James Garfield's political career offers insight into his background as a scholar and Civil War hero, his battles against the corrupt establishment, and Alexander Graham Bell's failed attempt to save him from an assassin's bullet.**

***Reclaiming History: The Assassination of President John F. Kennedy* by Vincent Bugliosi (973.922092 BUG) - Best known as the prosecutor of the Manson murders, Bugliosi presents a thorough analysis of the assassination of JFK and its surrounding conspiracy theories draws on forensic evidence, key witness testimonies, and other sources to explain what really happened and why conspiracy theories have become so popularized.**