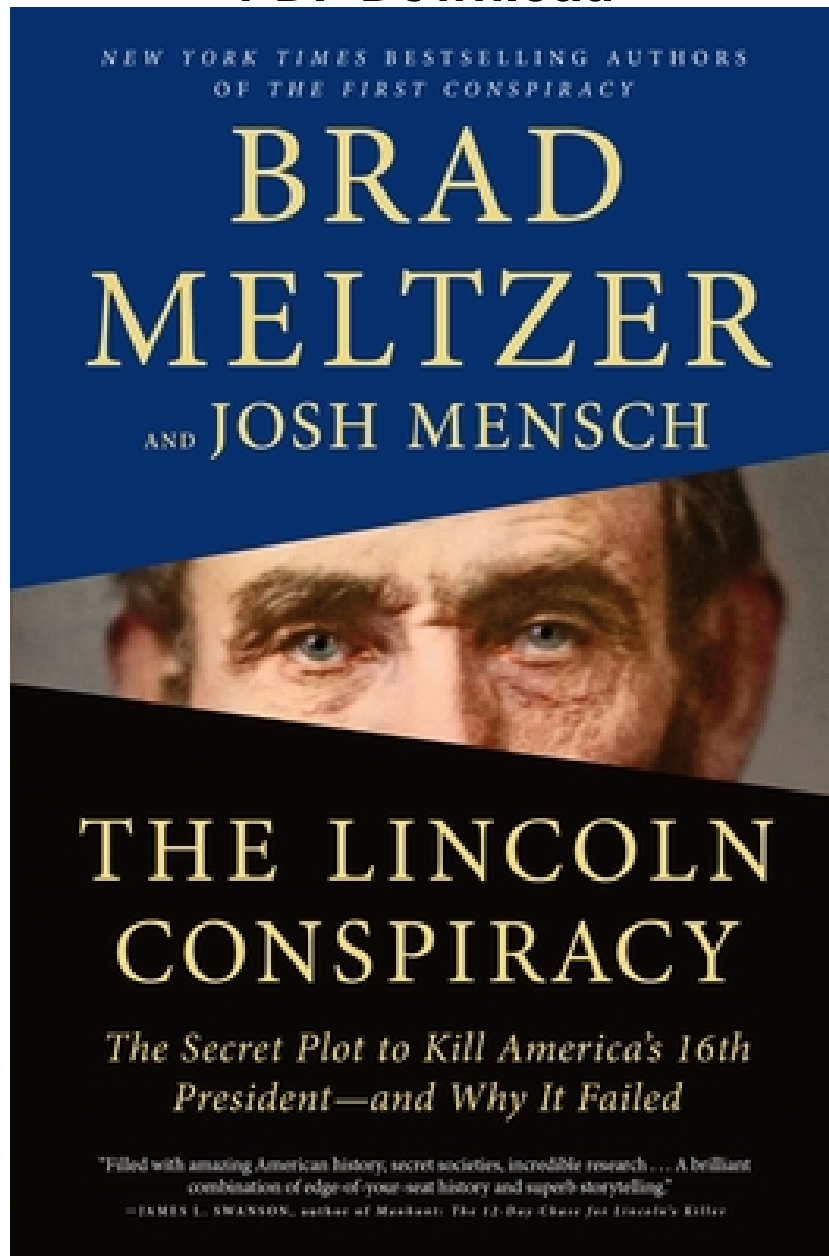


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By:
Brad Meltzer

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What people Say:

Brad Meltzer

I'm biased, but I loved it. Seriously, can't WAIT to share this with you all! xo

Matt

In their second collaborative piece about a little-known assassination plot on a president, Brad Meltzer and Josh Mensch turn to one of the most beloved or hated, depending on your outlook men ever to ascend to the presidency, Abraham Lincoln. Little known by many at the time of his election, Lincoln was not one to shy away from controversy for his strong anti-slavery views. He toppled favourites to win the Republican nomination and then entered a presidential fight that was drawn along more tha

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was drawn along more than state or party lines, woven into the fabric of a still adolescent America. As Meltzer and Mensch illustrate, there was trouble brewing before the ballots were cast, but once Lincoln won, those who did not support him came out in droves. Of those who sought to keep slavery intact and reacted with the most vigour was a group called the Knights of the Golden Circle. This covert group had plans to remove the man and rebalance the American political situation before Lincoln could official spend a day in office, during a stop in Baltimore. While there have been numerous presidential assassination attempts and successes Lincoln included none had been successfully plotted or executed by a group on a president-elect. As news of the Knights plan leaked, a little known detective agency was brought in to help foil the plot and keep the president from being pushed into the crosshairs. This is the story of the Knights, their plot, and how it was stymied by some quick thinking. With wonderful detail and quotes from all parties involved, Meltzer and Mensch keep the reader feeling right in the thick of things of this situation that has barely if ever made mention in any history books. Recommended to those who love a good political drama that's steeped in history and intrigue, as well as the reader who loves learning about some of the parts of American history that are not readily seen in every school primer text.

I have long loved the work of Brad Meltzer and am thoroughly impressed with the work that he does alongside Josh Mensch. Some bemoan that the book is too outlandish, though I think the fact that this was a real event and not something pulled from the fictional archives of a stellar writer of which Meltzer surely is makes it all the more exciting. Laying the groundwork, the authors provide the reader with some backstories on all the key characters involved in the situation, including a few about whom I knew nothing before reading this book. With this and a healthy dose of the political situation at the time, the reader can see the developing plot to kill Lincoln during his ride towards Washington for the inauguration in early March 1861. The details of the story are clear and flow so well, keeping the reader on the edge of their seat, as one would expect in a piece of well-crafted fiction, though this is surely steeped in reality. The authors use a great narrative style that removes much of the stuffy nature that can be found in recounting historical happenings without losing the importance of the events being shared. With a mix of short and longer chapters, the reader can learn what they need to without getting bogged down in too much minutiae, though the information was plentiful on each page. The eventual assassination plot and its execution by the likes of John Wilkes Booth dominate the history texts, but Meltzer and Mensch bring to life this earlier attempt to shed some light on just how hated Lincoln and his beliefs were to many within the country, as well as to the extent to which parts of the American public were happy to see their as-yet official president killed and left as an asterisk in the history texts. No president will match the character and actions of Abraham Lincoln, though some will try to spin it to make their megalomaniacal ego glow even more!

Kudos, Messers. Meltzer and Mensch, for this refreshing look at America on the brink and one of its leaders who dodged a literal bullet to effect change.

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A Book for All Seasons, a different sort of Book Challenge:

KC

This is the great story of how a small-time detective firm and its agents (men & women) were able to infiltrate, gather information, and befriend the members of a well established pro-Southern secret society who were plotting to assassinate President-elect Abraham Lincoln. For history and true-crime buffs.

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Monnie

True story: A college history class was so bad that I changed my major to avoid taking another one - and changed the course of my career (for the better, fortunately, but that's another story). Suffice it to say I'm not a history buff. So why in the world would I even consider reading a book like this?

Good question, and three answers come to mind: First, I'm familiar with, and respect the work of, the authors; second is an enticing title and description. The third is perhaps happenstance; being

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Good question, and three answers come to mind: First, I'm familiar with, and respect the work of, the authors; second is an enticing title and description. The third is perhaps happenstance; being mostly stuck at home to avoid catching the deadly COVID-19 and thus having time to read more books than usual, I simply needed a break from the mystery/thrillers that I favor almost to the exclusion of other genres.

Now that I've finished this one, I've come to a couple of conclusions: First of all, this is a well-written, easy-to-read and informative book. It also made me realize that I should venture outside my reading comfort zone more often. Put another way, maybe - just maybe - I don't hate history nearly as much as I thought I did.

As the subtitle suggests ("The Secret Plot to Kill America's 16th President - and Why It Failed"), there was a little-known plan to assassinate Abraham Lincoln before he could be inaugurated - in fact, as he traveled to Washington, D.C., for the event. It's no secret that many Americans, especially those in states that supported slavery, weren't happy with Lincoln's election. While at the time he didn't promise to abolish slavery outright, he was personally against the practice and said he would not support slavery in new western states that wanted to join the Union. Apparently, a few fringe groups - perhaps forerunners to today's Ku Klux Klan - decided that the best defense was a good offense. They would, they vowed, prevent the newly elected President from even getting a foot in the Oval Office door.

The story reveals their plan and the subsequent investigation of it, led by noted detective Allan Pinkerton, as he and his team infiltrate the groups to learn specifics and, most important, develop a plan of their own to foil the instigators. Readers then follow Lincoln and his traveling companions as they almost literally inched their way toward the nation's capital city (transportation was, shall we say, a bit slower than now; at one point, lacking a railroad bridge over a river, rail cars had to be disconnected and ferried across the river to be reattached on the other side). Stops in cities large and small, like Cincinnati and Westfield, New York - home of the little girl who, we all should recall,

suggested to Lincoln that he grow a beard to improve his appearance - add a different and welcome dimension to the events of the days. Just as an aside, I must say I'm familiar with Westfield for a very different reason - it's the site of Barcelona Harbor (Lake Erie) and a unique lighthouse we've visited and photographed many times.

More than that I'll leave for other readers, saying only that I enjoyed the book immensely; just the revelation that heretofore mostly boring history actually could be interesting was enough to make me happy. But I also learned a lot - just ask my husband, who endured my interruptions of, "Wow, honey, did you know..." until he gave up and started reading the book for himself (bless his heart). I should also note that substantial documentation and sources are included at the end of the story (helpful for those who might like to learn even more).

All told, I highly recommend this book - even if you aren't a fan of history, it's likely you'll think of it in kinder terms after you read this. Kudos to the authors for undertaking such a meaningful project!

Martin Strouse

Fantastic

This book is three stories in one. We learn about President Lincoln's early life. Also, Allan Pinkerton, a detective, hired to investigate a threat to a railroad, instead discovers a threat on Abraham Lincoln's life. Also, we learn about white supremacists bent on preserving the southern way of life.

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Abraham Lincoln's early life was a difficult one. His mother and sister both died when he was young. He had an uncaring father who forced him to work on the family farm. Lincoln had no formal education. He taught himself to read and write. Needless to say he was very tall and awkward as a

teenager. Yet, he overcame these obstacles to become one of the greatest presidents.

Samuel M Fulton, a railroad tycoon, got word that white supremacists might sabotage his train and/or tracks to prevent Abraham Lincoln from leaving Baltimore and going to Washington D.C. and thus stopping his inauguration Fulton called Allen Pinkerton.

Allen Pinkerton ran a successful detective agency. He was also an abolitionist. Pinkerton and his associates started digging for information. They traveled to Baltimore and Virginia to infiltrate various secret southern societies. Allen Pinkerton found something truly frightening. A secret society was planning to assassinate Abraham Lincoln.

A barber named Cypriano Ferrandini was a local leader of Baltimore's chapter of a secret society called Knights of the Golden Circle. Ferrandini's plan was to murder Abraham Lincoln. Pinkerton's agents were able to infiltrate the society and prevent the future president's death.

I have no doubt that many white Supremacist would gladly give their lives for their sick beliefs