



The Impeachment of Abraham Lincoln

Stephen L. Carter

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From the best-selling author of *The Emperor of Ocean Park* and *New England White*, a daring reimagining of one of the most tumultuous moments in our nation's past

Stephen L. Carter's thrilling new novel takes as its starting point an alternate history: President Abraham Lincoln survives the assassination attempt at Ford's Theatre on April 14, 1865. Two years later he is charged with overstepping his constitutional authority, both during and after the Civil War, and faces an impeachment trial . . .

Twenty-one-year-old Abigail Canner is a young black woman with a degree from Oberlin, a letter of employment from the law firm that has undertaken Lincoln's defense, and the iron-strong conviction, learned from her late mother, that "whatever limitations society might place on ordinary negroes, they would never apply to her." And so Abigail embarks on a life that defies the norms of every stratum of Washington society: working side by side with a white clerk, meeting the great and powerful of the nation, including the president himself. But when Lincoln's lead counsel is found brutally murdered on the eve of the trial, Abigail is plunged into a treacherous web of intrigue and conspiracy reaching the highest levels of the divided government.

Here is a vividly imagined work of historical fiction that captures the emotional tenor of post-Civil War America, a brilliantly realized courtroom drama that explores the always contentious question of the nature of presidential authority, and a galvanizing story of political suspense.

The Impeachment of Abraham Lincoln Details

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From Reader Review The Impeachment of Abraham Lincoln for online ebook

Bart Breen says

Top Historical Fiction

Stephen L. Carter has done a remarkable job of bringing to life a piece of historical fiction creating a scenario of what could have happened had Lincoln survived his assassination attempt, Johnson's assassination attempt been successful and the impeachment faced later by Johnson in real life been brought to bear upon Lincoln himself. Add to this a narrative plot that introduces characters both real and imagined along with a murder mystery and you have all the ingredients necessary for an entertaining novel and a compelling read.

Carter does more than just offer a narrative however. This is clearly a well researched book that brings elements from real history, existing documents and weaves things together in such a way that the reader will not only be entertained but will also come away with an appreciation and better understanding of the historical figures and events that are woven into this alternate scenario.

Throughout the book. there is a clear depiction of the elements of politics, negotiation and the use of political power to mask personal and economic ambition. There is both a clear depiction of racial tensions as well as an illustration of the advanced standing of northern freemen and their status in Northern society that stands in stark contrast to the commonly assumed stereotypes which find their roots in the post-plantation South in the midst of Jim Crow laws.

Whoever comes to this book can expect to be entertained, challenged and to leave the book with several elements of history, that which both real and imagined will leave the reader better for the experience. A compelling and educational read.

5 stars. Recommended without reservation.

bart breen

Matt says

Carter is a masterful writer. I could end the review right there and I would have included all any reader needs to know about this author (and potentially about this book) and would not fall short. That said, perhaps something a little more concrete is needed for those who have an interest in reading this book, or anything penned by Stephen L. Carter. I have said it of other books by Carter and I will repeat it again here, Carter's books can be quite dense and thick, but, if you are able to get through that, you will find how greatly multi-faceted they are and how much there is that one can take away from them, if you give them the time. (Perhaps some of the negative reviews of this book come from Carter reading virgins, who have not been able to get through the complex front and simply judge the book by its peripheral story.)

Carter layers so many topics within the book, the overarching one being the impeachment proceedings of Abraham Lincoln. Also included therein is the role and perception of 'the darker nation' as Carter calls them,

mystery, murder, love, and even some history. Those who love a book that tells many a story will not be left unsatisfied. Carter's ability to layer so many great themes within the one book and still drive the story forward must be applauded, though it can bring about the aforementioned denseness that scares some readers off. The story, which is a form of alternate history, presupposes that the assassination attempt on the 16th POTUS was unsuccessful and that his moves towards Reconstruction after the Civil War were grounds for impeachment. Carter lays out the arguments in a thorough and sensible fashion and brings the idea of an impeachment trial to life.

With many twists and turns throughout, those who love Carter's writing and have a passion for politics as well will not be disappointed. Examination of the race relations in the US, which were surely much more 'heated' than even his Elm Harbour series of the 1950s and 60s, proves to be one of the central issues that pushes the story forward.

Enormous kudos to Mr. Carter. A thoroughly enjoyable book all around.

Scott Rhee says

Abraham Lincoln is chic right now. I'm not sure why, but everybody and their uncle has felt the need to put in their two cents' worth to the growing number of Lincoln books currently on the bookshelves and bestseller lists. Most notably (in the non-fiction entry) are Doris Kearns Goodwin's "Team of Rivals", Bill O'Reilly's "Killing Lincoln", and James L. Swanson's "Manhunt". In the fiction arena, Lincoln has battled vampires in Seth Grahame-Smith's "Abraham Lincoln, Vampire Hunter" and, now, in Stephen L. Carter's science fictional re-imagining of history, Lincoln (who survived the gunshot wound at Ford theatre) faces an impeachment trial.

Carter, whose previous works have dealt with political conspiracies and murder mysteries, was clearly attracted to the potential fun he could have with the subject. And, he has more than succeeded. Carter, a Yale Law Professor and obvious history buff and a top-notch writer of elaborate thrillers, has written one of those books that is sure to appeal to everyone. For the sci-fi nerds, he has written an extremely plausible alternate history. For mystery lovers, he throws in a murder mystery in the first ten pages, and, for the womanfolk, he even has a love story. There is also a conspiracy plot involving secret codes and a courtroom drama. That Carter can weave all these elements together in a way that is immensely readable, entertaining, and fun is a testament to his talent as a writer.

The protagonist of the book, Abigail Canner, is a young black woman who happens to be a college graduate and a law clerk, two accomplishments for which she has had to fight, considering the time in which she lives. She is hired on by the same firm that has taken on the defense of Lincoln during his impeachment trial. While her sex and race often impede her from being a productive member of the firm, she finds ways to be useful. When one of the partners in the firm is found murdered outside a brothel with the body of a black woman, Abigail takes on the role of part-time detective, with the help of Jonathan Hillman, one of the lawyers in the firm with whom she shares a mutual (unspoken) attraction. When she finds out that the woman, whom the police has dismissed as a mere prostitute, was involved in an underground political circle of anti-Lincoln conspirators, and that certain parties are searching frantically for a missing list of conspirators, Abigail and Jonathan quickly find themselves embroiled in a race against time (the trial against Lincoln is quickly coming to a close, and things do not look good for Lincoln) and powerful forces of the upper classes and the wealthy. Mixed in with all this, of course, is a fascinating courtroom drama in which

Lincoln is held accountable for very real impeachable offenses.

As Carter states in an Afterword, Lincoln actually did do things which would have been considered grossly unconstitutional, such as shutting down newspapers, arresting opposition spokesmen, suspending habeas corpus, and refusing to recognize court orders of prisoner releases. He also did place certain cities in the North under martial law and forcibly shut down the Maryland legislature. History tends to forget that, at one point, Lincoln was the most hated man in America, even---and especially---by members of his own party. Who is to say how history would have played out if Lincoln had survived his assassination? Carter makes a compelling case. And an extremely entertaining one.

Grampus says

This was an interesting alternate history book in which Lincoln survives his assassination attempt. So what may have then happened as a result? In this case, the Congress tries to impeach him based upon four different charges that occurred during the war. First, his suspension of habeas corpus, second, taking control of telegrams and newspapers during the war third, charges of not enforcing the rights of freed blacks in the south, and fourth, the most serious charge of attempting to create a “Department of the Atlantic” which would take away Congress’s control of the legislative branch of the government thus giving him near dictatorial control of the country.

The story pits Lincoln’s lawyers (which includes the story's protagonist, a young, black, female, who is a recent Oberlin graduate) against the "Radicals" and their attempts to sway a handful of Senatorial votes required to acquit the president.

It’s a great “what if” legal battle with mystery and partisanship. The ending however, was one that I never anticipated and not in a good way. I have to say (view spoiler)

Jill says

The premise of Stephen L. Carter’s new book, *The Impeachment of Abraham Lincoln* is so audacious – so fascinating – that it virtually begs to be read.

In this reimagining of the Lincoln assassination, the bullet’s trajectory changes by just a fraction of an inch and Lincoln survives. After the country collectively exhales, the “fun” begins. The radical part of his own party presses for impeachment because he has chosen to not punish the south sufficiently in an effort to reunite the country. He is charged with actions that actually occurred under his presidency as a screen – suspension of the writ of habeas corpus, circumventing Congress while borrowing from the U.S. Treasury, placing portions of Maryland under martial law and trying to establish a military-run Department of the Atlantic.

Heady and rich stuff! Mr. Carter is a professor of law at Yale University and his erudition is on full display. The political maneuverings, the impeachment and trial by House Managers, the nuances of removing a sitting president – all are done beautifully by this skilled author. And the key question – can noble ends ever justify ignoble means when the U.S. is under internal threat – is one that resonates today.

However, the core of Impeachment is a mystery. Mr. Carter's protagonist, Abigail Canner, is a brilliant and beautiful black woman and one of only a dozen black law clerks in the country at that time. Like Miss Marple or Nancy Drew, she is preternaturally able to detect conspiracies, patterns, and intrigues that reach the highest levels of government, even when far more seasoned lawyers can't.

The result is a rather convoluted subplot (or in many cases, primary plot) in which Abigail – along with another law clerk, Jonathan, the white scion of a northern family – single-handedly crack ciphers, deal with Abigail's gangster brother, gain Lincoln's ear (and even meet with him alone), capture the intrigue of high society, and unveil motives of shady politicians.

Real people – such as Dan Sickles, one of Lincoln's lawyers and a real-life scoundrel – and Salmon P. Chase, the Supreme Court Chief Justice and Edwin Stanton, Lincoln's trusted secretary of war, are all part of this novel. Lincoln himself, a man given to spun homilies and a far more adept politician than is generally acknowledged – is also portrayed very credibly. When the book delves into legal thriller and political drama, it soars to 5-stars. But the convoluted mystery and too one-dimensional Abigail and Jonathan tether it to earth.

Tamora Pierce says

I am a bear for interesting alternate history, and the American Civil War period seems to generate some of the best. This has a truly mind-bending premise: Lincoln survives his attempted assassination, to be brought up on impeachment charges two years later for his suspension of habeas corpus during the war and three other charges. The chief motive driving his main foes is that his "malice toward none and charity toward all" policy is a kind of treason in its kinder treatment of the South than the legislators who were notorious in real history for their waving the "bloody shirts" of the Union dead want.

The principal characters are the attorneys who are to defend Lincoln, in particular a law clerk who comes from a wealthy family and the unusual (to say the least) potential law clerk who is a recent graduate of the radical Oberlin college, not at all well off, possessing two siblings who are definitely criminals, and who is both female and black (or colored, as the custom of the time had it). She is determined to succeed, a worshipper of Lincoln (unlike her criminal brother), very well thought of by the Oberlin president who put her up for the job, and she is not about to let anything--pride, prejudice, romance, Lincoln's enemies, murderers, Confederate spies--stop her. By sheer doggedness and intelligence she means to convince those she meets, be they lawyers, Congressmen, or the many brilliant women who worked behind the scenes in the Washington of the time--that she can do what she sets out to do, if she dies trying.

Carter does a very good job of keeping Lincoln in the picture without letting him overshadow his main characters. He is absolutely fascinating, as is Carter's view of those would-be great men who think they are greater than Lincoln.

It is an adult book, and the time is more raw, so the language is more so. The female hero is subjected to plenty of hazing. There is sexual material, but not in excess of the period. I definitely recommend it, not just for alternate history fans, but for those who are already familiar with the issues and the personalities of Washington during and at the end of the war and would like to see another, thoughtful, examination of them.

Joseph says

This book could have been interesting. It could have painted a picture of the subtle and drastic ways in which the world might have changed had Lincoln survived Ford's Theater. It doesn't, choosing instead to focus on an impeachment trial that doesn't really say much about Lincoln's impact on the world other than to point out that the government would still be splintered by petty factionalism. The biggest differences seem to be nothing more than a matter of narrative choice, rather than consequences of Carter's big idea.

The book could have presented interesting characters, and it's here, I think, that Carter comes closest to succeeding. His main character is not a political figure or a freed slave, as one might expect, but a middle-class black woman who was never a slave. It's an interesting perspective, given how easy it is to forget that such people actually existed. The best thing I can say about the book is that it made me want to learn more about what life was like for those African-Americans who were struggling to prosper in a white world, even before the Civil War and the abolishment of slavery.

Sadly, this good idea is wasted. Carter's characters are paper-thin caricatures. His Lincoln is embarrassing, incapable of expressing himself in anything other than barely-relevant anecdotes. Yes, Lincoln is famed for using anecdotes to get to the heart of the problem, but I'm pretty sure his conversations were not limited to anecdotal recitation. The other historical figures fare little better, as it seems Carter learned one fact about each of them and based his characterization on that alone. Stanton is angry! Chase is ambitious!

As for the invented characters, the less said the better. The romance between Jonathan and Abigail is painfully dull, in no small part due to the fact that the characters themselves are boring. Abigail, in particular, is maddening. We can see that she is determined, but aside from that ... We're constantly told that she is brilliant, but we never get to see it. Jonathan comments about how she has a wonderful way of explaining things, and at another time, he claims she has the best mind of the entire legal team. Reading this, all I could think was to wonder if I hadn't skipped several chapters in the book. When did he arrive at these judgments? She is completely prevented from playing any role in Lincoln's defense, and she seems to spend more time biting her tongue for the sake of decorum than she does demonstrating the kind of wit and intelligence that apparently has everyone in the District of Columbia talking about her. I mean, honestly, I read this book quickly, but did I seriously miss all the examples that would actually have made her interesting? Am I that poor of a reader? Jonathan is no better. His infatuation with Abigail seems to come out of nowhere and he seems like little more than a spineless puppet throughout the book.

Finally, there's the plot, which doesn't seem to make a lot of sense. There's a conspiracy to impeach the President, and the inner workings of the conspiracy seem to involve maintaining the secrecy of the conspirator's desire to impeach the President. Again, I might have missed something, but if the conspirators had not stooped to murdering people to maintain their secret, I don't think they would have actually done anything wrong. Even the list that serves as the book's macguffin turns out to be nothing more than a list of potential conspirators, yet for reasons I cannot fathom, it's treated as something particularly damning. In fact, whenever one of the book's many mysteries is resolved, it seems to lead to nothing of importance.

Maybe Carter is just trying to do too many things. In order to write a compelling thriller with a legitimately shocking secret at its heart, he would have had to throw away any pretense at historical accuracy. If he wanted to write about what Lincoln's second term might have actually looked like, he would have wound up with nothing more than a scholarly tome, instead of the blockbuster sensation he seems to be looking for, with murder, intrigue, and scandal. And through the whole thing, I couldn't escape the feeling that Carter was really looking to make some sort of sly commentary on modern politics, given his emphasis on the excessive

influence of money and party loyalty on government.

The weird thing is that I may have gotten more worked up writing this review than I actually did at any point while reading the book (which goes a long way towards explaining the above disjointedness). The short version: poorly written characters in a book that is neither titillating, nor particularly enlightening; it doesn't do what it says on the tin.

Bryce says

The premise of *The Impeachment of Abraham Lincoln* instantly grabbed my interest: Lincoln survives Booth's assassination attempt in 1865, only to be impeached by congress and put on trial two years later. Abigail Canner is a young black woman, recently graduated from Oberlin with a dream of passing the bar and becoming a lawyer. She's hired as a clerk – little more than a glorified secretary – at the law firm charged with Lincoln's defense. But Abigail soon finds herself caught up in murder investigations, multiple conspiracies and a little romance.

I love both historical fiction and alternate history, but both genres come with their own common shortcomings. In mediocre historical fictions, authors fail to catch the “tone” of the time period, so characters speak and think like modern people transplanted in earlier eras. In mediocre alternate histories, authors fail to puzzle through the full scope of their timeline change. Stephen Carter avoids both pitfalls; Abigail especially is acutely aware of her assigned place, as a woman and as a black person, and although she bucks conventions of the day, she does so in ways the feel true to the period. And his attention to historical detail is exceptional; it helps that he had Andrew Jackson's own impeachment trail to model characters and arguments on, but does add a unique spin on them.

This novel follows the impeachment trial in incredible depth, which isn't surprising given that Carter clerked for Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall. He writes about the legal tactics, but also how political agendas and legal strategies clash with each other. For those with an interest in court procedures, this is fascinating... but I imagine for those who just want a light legal thriller, this would get tiresome.

The only thing that kept this book from receiving five stars from me was the ending. (view spoiler)

Linda says

This book had it all--the good, the bad and the ugly.

The Good

The Impeachment of Abraham Lincoln had a very interesting premise. Who doesn't like an alternative history? The two main characters were endearing and interesting. From the Afterword, I learned that the novel is filled with accurate historical details, most of which I could not appreciate, but I'm sure that a historian would have loved.

The Bad

The problem I had with this book is the same problem that I have with many books now days. It was too long. The writing was verbose. To me, modern authors seem to have little discipline. Less is usually more, and more is usually just too much.

The Ugly

(view spoiler)

The Impeachment of Abraham Lincoln is a book that I can recommend, but it could have been better executed.

Glen says

Written in 2012, this is a strange book to read today.

After the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln survives his assassination. Two years later, he is accused of overstepping his constitutional authority. Somebody kills his lead counsel. Then a Black woman attorney and a White clerk try to get to the bottom of things.

Very strange in today's atmosphere.

Monique says

Well I was hyped to read this book..so hyped I ordered it from another library because hey I have read all of Carter's books: The Emperor of Ocean Park, Jericho Falls, Palace Council and now this I believe and always find his writing intelligent, a little verbose and wordy but extremely clean and intriguing..And the premise for this book drew me in like a moth to a flame especially after seeing the movie Lincoln starring the amazing Daniel Day Lewis and the surprising standout supporting castmate Tommy Lee..I was all into reading this book about the most improbable and fascinating of scenarios: what if Lincoln survived the assassination at Ford's Theater by John Wilkes Booth, would he still be the revered president, Negro savior or would the South come for him and his questionable Reconstruction tactics to include shutting down newspapers, limiting the support to freedmen and the diehard slavery enthusiasts and the Klan. So the book starts from there with two law clerks assisting the President's counsel defending the impeachment charges and fighting the rival Radicals..I admit in this aspect of the law and politics there were just too many names and positions to keep up with for five hundred plus pages..I must confess to being muddled up more than a few times, I pulled through and though sometimes I felt like it was a chore to read there were flashes of brilliance, and a sense of suspense that made you want to finish..add to this plot the side story of one of the law clerks, the extraordinarily ambitious Abigail-a free black woman with her heart set on becoming one of the first women admitted to the bar despite the obstacles and blatant discrimination she faces at every turn..She was endearing and you root for her and feel her embarrassment and shame in fresh post slavery America before the Civil Rights movement. Abigail's determination, the conspiracy/murder plot and the curiosity of wanting to learn what would theoretically happen to Lincoln kept me reading and if you can take time to

savor, write notes and reread certain parts it is worth the time..I can actually say though it was tough at times it could have been longer to allow Carter time to get more into each character, they just came at you LOL..

Jaylia3 says

What might have happened if Abraham Lincoln had survived Booth's assassination attempt? Impeachment? That's what novelist and historian Stephen L. Carter imagines in this riveting alternate history. Abigail Canner, a young black woman recently graduated from Oberlin College, is working for the law firm defending Lincoln from accusations that he overstepped his constitutional authority during the war. Interestingly, these charges are brought by grandstanding Radical Republican members of his own party who are displeased with how the reconstruction of the South is going. Abigail hopes to become a lawyer, but being black and female there are numerous obstacles in her way and even the law firm that hired her isn't making full use of her careful, meticulous intelligence.

Many of the historical figures of the post-Civil War era have roles in this wide-ranging drama, both the well-known like Lincoln himself, Edwin Stanton, Charles Sumner and Salmon Chase, and the new to me but fascinating lawyers, war heroes and society doyennes that set me off on more than a few internet searches. Although Abigail is one of the fictional characters she feels like flesh and blood, and the mood and conditions of the age she lives in are portrayed with captivating skill. This is a time when Washington, DC is Washington City with dirt roads and only a few of today's landmarks, and high-end Georgetown is George Town, a mostly black neighborhood of newly freed slaves. I couldn't put this engrossing, suspenseful book down—it held my interest to the very last page.

TL says

edited slightly Read this awhile ago so writing down what I can remember.

I remember being really excited to read this, an alternate history of Lincoln surviving the assassination, sign me up!

It started out well, I liked the female MC and the author's description of DC back then.

He went over Lincoln surviving the bullet quickly, not going into much detail at all only a couple pages. . First red flag but I decided to read on, hoping it would get better.. for me it didn't.

He killed off Mrs. Lincoln early on in the novel but the way he wrote it, it felt kind of brushed off to me ... Seward was given mention but only briefly.

Lincoln's lawyers were interesting characters but I wanted to read more about Lincoln and he wasn't in the book much and when he was, he didn't 'feel' like Lincoln, the spirit of him wasn't there. . If that makes sense.

Sone parts of the novel felt rushed, as if he wanted to get to the other parts of the plot...

The impeachment to me felt contrived, Mr. Carter writes well but I just couldn't buy what he was trying to

sell me.

I wouldn't say this was a bad novel, I loved the idea but it wasn't executed very well.
And the ending from what I remember pissed me off...

Would not recommend.

Mary says

Bewildering Mess of a Book

Stephen Carter is a good storyteller, which is why I kept turning all 500 pages, but I was hugely disappointed in the ending. In a way, it was three endings: an ending to the mystery, to the romance, and to the impeachment, and I found each ending disappointing. The main characters, a team of lawyers, lose their case; the romance is put on indefinite hold; and the solution to the mystery turns out to be meaningless. The last-minute murder may or may not have been committed by any of several people. Maybe the author was setting up a sequel?

Perhaps I was just bewildered by the abundance of characters and plots and story lines within story lines. And I never found any of the characters three-dimensional. Lincoln's folksy stories came off as lifeless groaners, and, while Carter repeatedly told us the heroine was brilliant, I for one never saw it.

switterbug (Betsey) says

What if the president survived the assassination attempt, only to face an impeachment trial two years later? That's the premise of this stout, absorbing tale. But Carter, with an almost mesmerizing touch, weaves more than a "what if" story here. What most engaged me is the way that Carter liberated himself from any stilted, biased or passive political ranting of his own. Instead of telegraphing his views into the characters, he allowed history to inform us, while never forgetting to hook us with an invented story within the framework of an intense and complex time in history.

In 1867, the war has been over for two years. Andrew Johnson, not Abe Lincoln, was shot and killed by Booth. And Secretary of State William Seward has been so wounded that he doesn't leave his house anymore. And the president's wife has died a year ago from a mysterious accident. This is the alternate history that Carter has meticulously woven together. Lincoln faces an impeachment trial from Congress on four counts due to his policies (or lack thereof) and intercessions (or lack thereof) during Reconstruction: 1) suspension of habeas corpus, 2) seizing of telegrams and shuttering a handful of newspapers 3) not sufficiently protecting the freedmen in the southern states 4) conspiring with the military officers to overthrow the constitutional forms of government.

This finely nuanced and well-paced novel is packed with fully realized characters and situations. Of course, with a cast this extensive, and numerous plots within plots, some characters are there to lend background and

color, or to promote a larger connection. There are plots and subplots, romance, adventure, conspiracies, and even murder. How Carter tightly brings it all together in this capacious novel is superbly tight, with room for ambiguity, and he always remains a step ahead of the reader. Half of the fun was trying to catch up and tease out the disclosures before he did!

Abigail Canner is a twenty-one-year-old black graduate from Oberlin who lives with her aunt, a freed slave named Nanny Pork, in Washington City. She aspires to become a lawyer, and shrewdly procures a job as a clerk in the law office that represents Lincoln. It is a win-win, too, because the personnel know it looks good to practice what they preach. All too often, it is known that "like so many people of liberal persuasion, they value their own progressive opinions more than they value the people they hold those opinions about."

Abigail is the polestar of this book, and Carter has drawn her with an able and agile hand. Whatever a reader might fear could occur with a character like Abigail--such as too much PC, or implausibly heroic--those fears will be allayed by the subtle sharpness of Miss Canner. Yes, there's romance in the air, and it doesn't take the reader long to foresee its possibility, but Carter wins you over with his credible storyline and keen restraint. And, not all is as doubtless (or doubtful!) as it may initially seem.

The book was like a web, or a circle with vectors projecting in every direction. As the author demonstrates, there are no easy answers, and often, both sides imbibe elements of hypocrisy and criminal behaviors, as well as righteousness and nobility. At this time, during the impeachment proceedings, Lincoln states that he would be ready to step down, but doesn't feel that his work is finished until he brings the Union together. The radical Republicans--who are men of his own party who could be seen, on the one hand, as fanatical, or on the other, as dedicated and true--want to oust him now.

I was concerned that the story would be clumsy, with a ham-handed Lincoln and a heavy-handed story. It has to be difficult to portray an icon known as "Honest Abe," two years beyond his actual survival time, a president most known for freeing the slaves. But this isn't just the Lincoln we learned about in our history textbooks in high school. Here we have a troubled, complicated man, always at the ready with an amusing anecdote, a sometimes dour but witty and enigmatic presence. And a flawed human being who nevertheless understands the times he is facing.

There is nothing black and white in this racially charged novel of American history. Besides the conflict of race, there are the businessmen with greedy propositions about tariffs; egos; political ambitions; social issues of women and class; and more.

"The cost of war," says Lincoln in 1867, "is impossible to estimate in advance...wars continue long after one side surrenders. Every conflict plagues the peace that follows it."

"There is a tradition," says retired Union General Dan Sickles, one of Lincoln's staunchest supporters, "that once a great war has been won, the leader must at once be deposed. The Romans used to do it. The British, too."

In the Author's Note, a must-read at the end of the book, Carter provides important information regarding his source material, and a fascinating peek at how he braided fact and fiction together. Like his first novel, *THE EMPEROR OF OCEAN PARK*, he slyly evinces the skullduggery in the chess games of politics, as well as the toll of personal loss to the cause and commitment of justice. Moreover, he doesn't forget that his story is, principally, to entertain, and seduce his readers into believers. He makes the most of his characters and their individual and shared passions, and renders a deeply felt and plausible history, back to the future.
