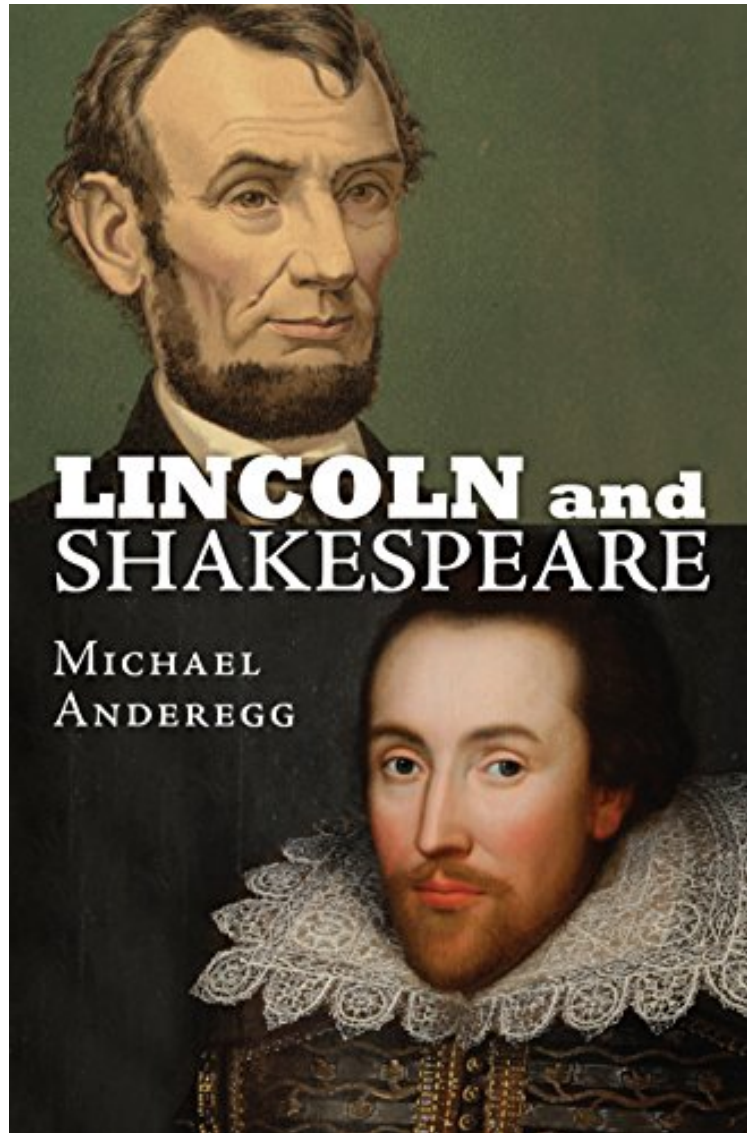


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Lincoln and Shakespeare

Michael Anderegg

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Michael Anderegg : Lincoln and Shakespeare before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Lincoln and Shakespeare:

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Springfield to StratfordBy Christian SchlectPeople with an interest in the life of Abraham Lincoln are aware that as an adult he enjoyed both attending the theater and reading the plays of William Shakespeare. This is the ideal book for the reader who wishes to explore this connection further. Professor Anderegg writes knowledgeably and well. His book not only covers the historical record related to Mr. Lincoln's direct reading of the great Englishman's works, but also the Shakespearean actors and theater of the early to mid-19th

century America. The book is strengthened by useful end-notes and a comprehensive bibliography. I especially enjoyed the epilogue. It references the many appropriate quotes mined from Shakespeare and used by saddened contemporaries in the aftermath of the assassination at Ford's Theatre.³ of 3 people found the following review helpful. An insightful view of Lincoln and the role of Shakespeare in 19th Century America By Roland Menge I enjoyed this book by Michael Anderegg. The author presents a broad and detailed view of the role of Shakespeare in Lincoln's life, and in doing also presents an interesting picture of the cultural life of 19th century America. This was the time when many American small towns had lyceums where speeches and cultural programs were available to the intellectually minded. It was a time when famous Shakespearean actors traveled alone to small town theaters to join with local casts in staging plays that the audience often had seen before and yet chose to see again. Anderegg tells how the boy Lincoln read and memorized Shakespearean quotes as part of the standard reading available in the grammar schools of the era, and how Lincoln built upon and continued this familiarity throughout his life. I thought the particular plays and passages that Lincoln loved said a great deal about his mental and psychological makeup as he struggled with the burden of the Civil War. For example, Lincoln was fond of the soliloquy spoken by Hamlet's uncle, King Claudius, "Oh, my offense is rank it smells to heaven; It hath the primal eldest curse upon't, A brother's murder." As with other passages Lincoln loved, much in them seems related to Lincoln's remorse at having to prosecute the war. Among the many interesting details that the author conveys in this book is that Lincoln loved Shakespeare so much that he often read passages to his personal secretary, John Hay, or to his guests, and that Lincoln was so aware of the original script of plays that he was disturbed when scenes or passages were omitted or changed in plays he attended. In presenting and describing such details with obvious love and regard for both Lincoln and Shakespeare, Anderegg has made a fine contribution to our understanding of American culture at a time when America was divided by war and had only expanded half way across the frontier with exposure to culture something that had to be actively sought. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Lincoln and the Bard By Albert A. Nofi A summary of the review on StrategyPage.Com.rof. Anderegg (emeritus, North Dakota), author of several works on Shakespeare and American culture, looks at Lincoln's relationship to the Bard. In the process, he reminds us that Lincoln was a great admirer of Shakespeare, and although he rarely quoted the man in his own writing, he often did so in conversation and speeches. Anderegg opens with a discussion of Shakespeare's widespread presence in early nineteenth century America, where his plays were well known, albeit in truncated or wildly modified form, and printed editions of his works were widely circulated. Anderegg then discusses Lincoln's reading of Shakespeare, his exposure to staged versions of the plays, noting that "Hamlet", "Macbeth", and the history plays were the President's favorites. We even learn that not only did Lincoln often attend performances by many of the stars of the theatre, among them John Wilkes Booth, but, rather surprisingly also corresponded with at least one actor, the comedian James H. Hackett, who often played Falstaff. This is an entertaining read, as it is as much about theatre in Lincoln's America as it is about Shakespeare and Lincoln, and helps us understand how the 16th President came to be a master of the English language, and in the process tell us some interesting and amusing anecdotes about theatre in mid-nineteenth century America. For the full review, see StrategyPage.Com

It was the measure of Shakespeare's poetic greatness, an early commentator remarked, that he thoroughly blended the ideal with the practical or realistic. "If this be so," Walt Whitman wrote, "I should say that what Shakespeare did in poetic expression, Abraham Lincoln essentially did in his personal and official life." Whitman was only one of many to note the affinity between these two iconic figures. Novelists, filmmakers, and playwrights have frequently shown Lincoln quoting Shakespeare. In *Lincoln and Shakespeare*, Michael Anderegg for the first time examines in detail Lincoln's fascination with and knowledge of Shakespeare's plays. Separated by centuries and extraordinary circumstances, the two men clearly shared a belief in the power of language and both at times held a fatalistic view of human nature. While citations from Shakespeare are few in his writings and speeches, Lincoln read deeply and quoted often from the Bard's work in company, a habit well documented in diaries, letters, and newspapers. Anderegg discusses Lincoln's particular interest in *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* and in Shakespeare's historical plays, where we see themes that resonated deeply with the president—the dangers of inordinate ambition, the horrors of civil war, and the corruptions of illegitimate rule. Anderegg winnows confirmed evidence from myth to explore how Lincoln came to know Shakespeare, which editions he read, and which plays he would have seen before he became president. Once in the White House, Lincoln had the opportunity of seeing the best Shakespearean actors in America. Anderegg details Lincoln's unexpected relationship with James H. Hackett, one of the most popular comic actors in America at the time: his letter to Hackett reveals his considerable enthusiasm for Shakespeare. Lincoln managed, in the midst of overwhelming matters of state, to see the actor's Falstaff on several occasions and to engage with him in discussions of how Shakespeare's plays should be performed, a topic on which he had decided views. Hackett's productions were only a few of those Lincoln enjoyed as president, and Anderegg documents his larger theater-going experience, recreating the Shakespearean performances of Edwin Booth, Charlotte Cushman, Edwin Forrest, and others, as Lincoln saw them.

"Anderegg's account of American access to and reception of Shakespeare during the middle of the nineteenth century enriches our understanding of Lincoln, but this book is at least equally satisfying read as a volume on the intellectual, literary, and theatrical history of America."—American Political Thought
"This is an entertaining read, as it is as much about theatre in Lincoln's America as it is about Shakespeare and Lincoln, and helps us understand how the 16th President came to be a master of the English language."—New York Military Affairs Symposium
"This book performs a real service to those interested in Abraham Lincoln, the theater, and William Shakespeare."—Civil War Book
"While Lincoln's love of Shakespeare is well documented, Michael Anderegg has produced the first full-scale study of that important subject. In addition to skillfully examining the ways that the dramas that Lincoln read or saw were published and performed, Professor Anderegg plausibly analyzes his responses to them. This is a most welcome addition to the Lincoln literature."—Michael Burlingame, author of *Abraham Lincoln: A Life*
"Marvelously in-depth research. Anderegg has effectively turned mined archives into an engaging account—smoothly written with a refreshing lack of jargon. There is much to learn here."—Robert Bray, author of *Reading with Lincoln*
"This deeply researched and engaging book thoroughly explores Lincoln's lifelong 'Shakespearean journey' and helps us see even more complexity and nuance in our most admired president."—Martin P. Johnson, author of *Writing the Gettysburg Address*
About the Author
Michael Anderegg is professor emeritus of English at the University of North Dakota. His books include *Orson Welles, Shakespeare, and Popular Culture* and *Cinematic Shakespeare*.