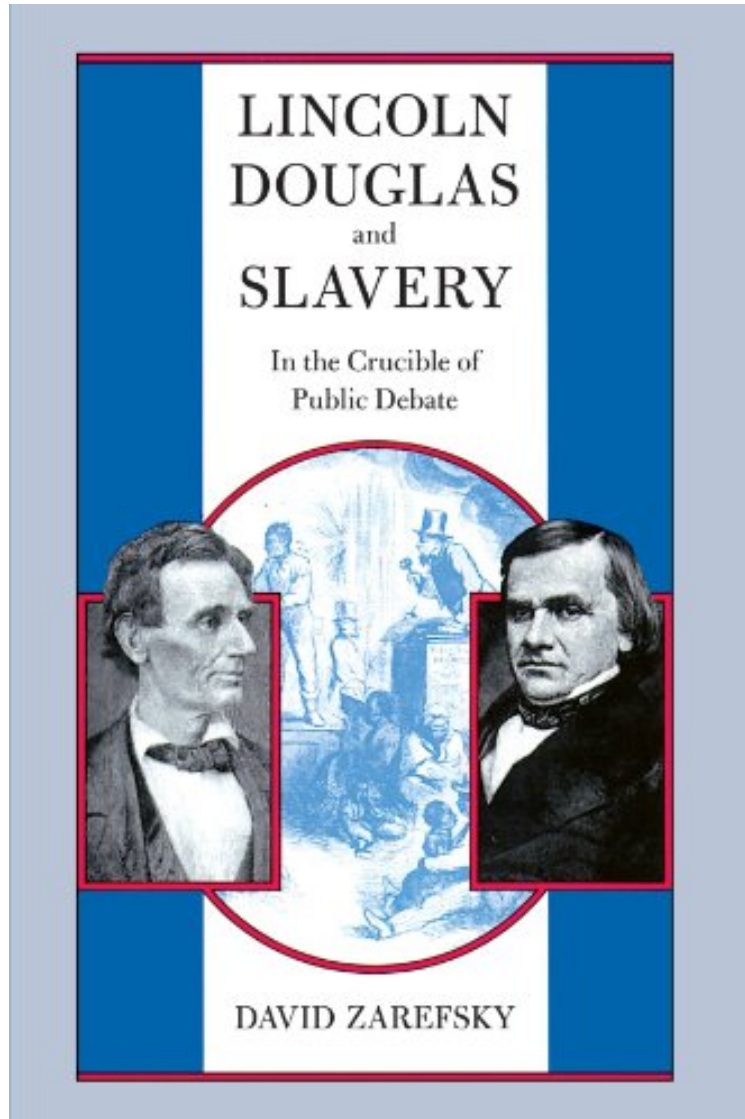


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Lincoln, Douglas, and Slavery: In the Crucible of Public Debate

David Zarefsky

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8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. A LOT of good context for the debates!By Michael GoldmanFirst of all, this does not include the debates themselves. It is solely a discussion of the issues they were debating with

explanations of the Lincoln, Douglas, Republican, and Democratic politics and goals of the time. It covers each issue in its historical context, as it was developed over the course of the debates, pointing out where an issue was raised, in which debate it became critical, and when it was dropped. I thought after reading several biographies of Lincoln and his contemporaries and other histories of the period that I knew something about Lincoln and the debates, but I was wrong. After reading this I looked the debates up in various history books and online references. I see now that a lot of other people have only the vaguest notion of what was really going on. This book is really essential reading if you want to be able to make sense out of much of what they were debating since the debates themselves often assume knowledge that the audience of 1858 would have been aware of but are now too complex or detailed for anyone but a scholar in the field to be aware of. This is a very dense book and I can't read it for very long because the discussions of the complex legal and political issues overwhelm my tiny brain much faster than any other history book I've ever read. I couldn't possibly begin to detail all the many contextual references that you will miss if you rely solely on the text of the debates themselves for your knowledge. If you really want to understand what they were debating, get this book. 1 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Zarefsky would be right, if his facts were correct. By Mark D C Zarefsky has little knowledge of what was going on behind the scenes. If all was on the surface, if Douglas was not helping the killing sprees in Kansas, helping his friend and business partner David Rice Atchison's vile actions in Kansas, maybe Zarefsky would have a point. But to get a narrative right, or even close, you have to first know the facts. Zarefsky has a lot to learn. Anyone interested in Lincoln Douglas debates, or the Civil War, or Lincoln, has to know about Kansas, who killed who there, and why. Jefferson Davis sent David Rice Atchison to Kansas -- Atchison is the US Senator who, with Douglas, got Kansas Nebraska Act passed, then immediately rushed off to Kansas to terrify and later kill, to spread slavery. Read Charles Sumner speech -- the one he was almost beat to death for. Do you know who he was talking about? He was talking about David Rice Atchison. Shame on those who teach history, and do not know that. Atchison and Douglas got KS bill passed, claiming they had no interest whatsoever in spreading slavery in Kansas, but Atchison virtually had his horse saddled up, he left immediately for KS when he got KS bill passed. And there, he would terrorize and kill to spread slavery. This was common knowledge then, Sumner was not the only one to know, of course. And Douglas defended Atchison. Davis defended him. Then and forever more, both men defended Atchison (till Douglas had no choice and called all those he cooperated with before, traitors). Zarefsky is not much different than most people on the Lincoln Douglas debates, because most people do not know what game Douglas was playing.

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From the Back Cover "This book is at once an original look at the Lincoln-Douglas debates and a multi-faceted, deeply layered, and nuanced study of how to analyze public rhetorical action historically. It deepens and alters our view of the debates as historical events, it goes beyond existing treatments of the debates as oratorical performances, and it broadens our sense of the ideas contained and argued over in them." --Donald M. Scott, Eugene Lang College, New School for Social Research
About the Author David Zarefsky is dean of the School of Speech and professor of communication studies at Northwestern University.