

ESSENTIAL CIVIL WAR CURRICULUM

Abraham Lincoln's Cabinet

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Resources

If you can read only one book

Author	<i>Title</i> . City: Publisher, Year.
Donald, David Herbert	<i>Lincoln</i> . New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995.

Books and Articles

Author	<i>Title</i> . City: Publisher, Year. "Title," in <i>Journal</i> ##, no. # (Date): #.
Bradley, Erwin Stanley	<i>Simon Cameron, Lincoln's Secretary of War: A Political Biography</i> . Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1966.
Burlingame, Michael	<i>Abraham Lincoln: A Life</i> , 2 vols. Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008.
Conroy, James B.	<i>Lincoln's White House: The People's House in Wartime</i> . New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016.
Crofts, Daniel W.	<i>Lincoln and the Politics of Slavery: The Other Thirteenth Amendment and the Struggle to Save the Union</i> . Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016.
Freehling, William W.	<i>Becoming Lincoln</i> . Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2018.
Goodwin, Doris Kearns	<i>Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln</i> . New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005.

Hearn, Chester G.	<i>Lincoln, the Cabinet, and the Generals</i> . Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010.
Holt, Michael F.	“Abraham Lincoln and the Politics of Union,” in Holt, <i>Political Parties and American Political Development from the Age of Jackson to the Age of Lincoln</i> . Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992, 323–53.
Holzer, Harold	<i>Lincoln President-Elect: Abraham Lincoln and the Great Secession Winter, 1860–1861</i> . New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008.
Meacham, Jon	<i>And There Was Light: Abraham Lincoln and the American Struggle</i> . New York: Random House, 2022.
Neels, Mark A.	<i>Lincoln's Conservative Advisor: Attorney General Edward Bates</i> . Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2024.
Niven, John	<i>Gideon Welles: Lincoln's Secretary of the Navy</i> . New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.
Oakes, James	<i>Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States, 1861–1865</i> . New York: W. W. Norton, 2012.
Paludan, Phillip Shaw	<i>The Presidency of Abraham Lincoln</i> . Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994.
Parrish, William E.	<i>Frank Blair: Lincoln's Conservative</i> . Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1998.
Stahr, Walter	<i>Seward: Lincoln's Indispensable Man</i> . New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012.
_____.	<i>Stanton: Lincoln's War Secretary</i> . New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017.
_____.	<i>Salmon P. Chase: Lincoln's Vital Rival</i> . New York: Simon & Schuster, 2021.
Williams, T. Harry	<i>Lincoln and the Radicals</i> . Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1941.

Organizations

Organization Name	Description, Contact information including address, email
Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum	The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum houses the world's largest archive of papers and artifacts on Abraham Lincoln and a large collection on the history of Illinois. 112 North Sixth Street Springfield, IL 62701 (217) 558 8844 M-F 9:00-5:00 http://www.alplm.org/

Web Resources

URL	Name and description
http://www.papersofabrahamlincoln.org/	The Papers of Abraham Lincoln is a long-term project dedicated to identifying, imaging, and publishing all documents written by or to Abraham Lincoln during his lifetime (1809-1865).

Other Sources

Scholars

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Topic Précis

While historians have viewed Abraham Lincoln's cabinet as important for understanding wartime politics, they also highlight the cabinet as one of the more fraught aspects of his presidency. Divisions and rivalries among the cabinet members and with Lincoln reflected a range of wartime issues. Lincoln's management of his cabinet has also been cited as evidence of his political genius. The 1860 cabinet consisted of William H. Seward, Salmon P. Chase, Simon Cameron, Edward Bates, Montgomery Blair, Gideon Welles, and Caleb Smith, a cross section of prominent Republican Party members, rivals for the 1860 Presidential nomination, and other men from across the political spectrum. Lincoln chose

his cabinet with a view to securing the political future of the Republican Party. The first crisis the cabinet faced was the need to resupply Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor. The initial plan was to reinforce the more accessible Fort Pickens in Pensacola, Florida, in an effort to show strength but avoid bringing on war. Ultimately, Lincoln reinforced Sumter, and war began. Another crisis was fomented by the corruption of Secretary of War Simon Cameron whom Lincoln replaced with Edwin Stanton in 1862 when the extent of Cameron's fraud and mismanagement of government contracts became known. Confederate victories led to sweeping Democratic victories in the mid-term congressional elections in the fall of 1862 and the disastrous defeat at Fredericksburg in December 1862 brought flagging confidence in Lincoln's administration, particularly with Seward, to a head. Salmon Chase had been working behind the scenes to foment dissent, offering a long list of complaints to his Republican colleagues. A delegation of Senate Republicans met and called for a reorganization of the cabinet. Lincoln met with the delegation but requested the presence of the entire cabinet. Faced with publicly stating his complaints, Chase chose to support the administration. Both Seward and Chase offered their resignations and Lincoln declined to accept them. Part of the tensions that produced this cabinet crisis resulted from Lincoln's administrative style—irregular cabinet meetings, consulting some advisors but not all or not consulting any cabinet members about decisions. Following this crisis Lincoln became more careful about involving his cabinet in his decisions. But tensions in the cabinet continued, particularly Salmon Chase who disagreed with Lincoln's decision not to extend the Emancipation Proclamation to areas of the Confederacy under Union control and was resentful of Lincoln's relationship with Seward. As the election of 1864 approached, Chase's Republican allies began a campaign to support his candidacy for President and to undermine Lincoln. The campaign failed and Chase withdrew his candidacy and offered to resign, Lincoln again declining. After Lincoln was renominated, their relationship deteriorated and Chase again offered to resign, this time Lincoln accepted. Following his reelection Lincoln formed a new cabinet, a stark contrast to his first. Rather than turning to established party leaders and presidential aspirants who frequently clashed with him politically and even occasionally undermined him, the cabinet Lincoln put in place for his second term was far more loyal to him personally. Lincoln did not live to see the start of his second administration. Andrew Johnson retained Lincoln's entire cabinet in 1866 with several cabinet members remaining in place until the end of Johnson's presidency in 1869.

The relationship between Abraham Lincoln and his cabinet reveals Lincoln's evolution as president and his mastery of the nineteenth-century political world. Though some scholars have argued that Lincoln's initial cabinet selections reflected his lack of confidence, Lincoln's ability to navigate numerous political crises throughout the war while simultaneously using his cabinet as a proxy to manage the larger divisions and factions within the Republican Party illustrate just how skilled Lincoln was as a politician. Ultimately, that political skill aided Lincoln in his management of the war effort, eventually producing a Union victory.
