



The Story of the Lincoln-Douglas Debates

By Henry William Elson

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Originally published in 1910 as a portion of the author's larger "Side Lights on American History," this Kindle edition, equivalent in length to a physical book of approximately 16 pages, tells the story of the Lincoln-Douglas debates—a series of seven debates between Republican challenger Abraham Lincoln and incumbent Democrat Stephen A. Douglas during the 1858 campaign for a U.S. Senate seat from Illinois. The central issue of these debates was the question of the extension of slavery into new territory.

Sample passage:

At the first joint meeting, at Ottawa, Douglas propounded to Lincoln several important questions bearing on the subject under discussion. This was a fatal mistake on the part of Douglas, as he soon discovered. Mr. Lincoln evaded giving direct answers at the time, saying, however, that he would do so on condition that Douglas would answer an equal number of interrogatories propounded by him. Six days later they met for their second discussion, at Freeport. Lincoln, on rising to speak, answered his opponent's questions seriatim [point by point]. He then read a series of questions that he had framed, and called upon Douglas to make answer before the audience as he had done. The second of these, as follows, was the fatal one: "Can the people of a United States Territory, in any lawful way, against the wish of any citizen of the United States, exclude slavery from its limits, prior to the formation of a state constitution?"

About the Author:

Henry William Elson (1857-1935) was a professor of history at Ohio State University. Other works include "History of the United States of America" and "Four Great American Presidents."

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