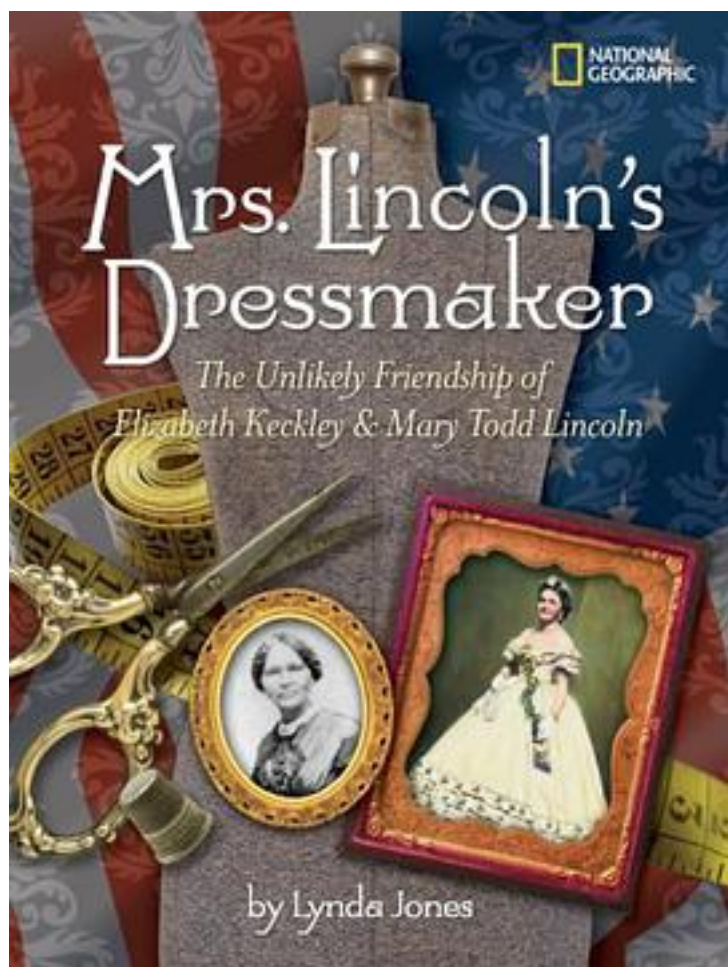


Mrs. Lincoln's Dressmaker



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Few events can stir up a scandal more than an autobiography of a First Lady's confidante. In 1868, a controversial tell-all called *Behind the Scenes* introduced

readers to Elizabeth Hobbs Keckley. Mrs. Keckley was a former slave who had been Mary Todd Lincoln's dressmaker and friend during the White House years, and in the aftermath of President Lincoln's assassination. The book exposed Mary's marriage and her erratic behavior, along with confidential opinions of many in high society. The airing of the Lincoln's "dirty laundry" meant humiliation for Mary and her family, and Elizabeth's reputation was destroyed. This outcome would have been unimaginable in 1867, when Mary declared in a letter, "I consider you my best living friend." How could such a bond have developed between a woman born into slavery and the First Lady of the United States? Mrs. Lincoln's Dressmaker answers this question by chronicling the extraordinary lives of these women.

Readers will be fascinated by a tale of friendship and fate. The pair seem like polar opposites: Lizzie is calm, dignified, with a steely inner strength; Mrs. Lincoln is fragile, unstable and flighty. Yet both share a burning resolve to get what they want. Mrs. Lincoln's Dressmaker examines the strains on such a unique friendship, as it's debated and parodied in newspapers. Lizzie must frequently leave her work to attend to the demands of Mrs. Lincoln. She offers constant support and companionship, particularly after the assassination of the President. In return, the dressmaker enjoys all the prestige and the popularity of those close to power.

Readers witness Elizabeth Keckley in her many roles: from fashion designer to abolitionist to caretaker. They follow her through the Civil War, the evils of slavery, and the many challenges faced alongside the First Lady. Handsome duotone illustrations include daguerreotypes, photos, paintings, and illustrations of the Lincoln's, Mrs. Keckley, and her masters. The book's elegant design emphasizes period fashion and the art of dressmaking.

Mrs. Lincoln's Dressmaker tells the remarkable story of a forgotten figure whose influence ran deep and offers a revealing insight into an extraordinary relationship at the very heart of Abraham Lincoln's presidency.

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