Chasing Lincoln's Killer

Tessa McMillan

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan  
Reading Level: Young adult  
Rating: Dependable  
Genre: Informational books;  
Subject: Booth, John Wilkes, 1838-1865--Juvenile literature; Lincoln, Abraham, 1809-1865--Assassination--Juvenile literature; Assassins--United States--Biography--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;  

John Wilkes Booth was a dashing actor who hated the Union cause. He planned with Confederate spies to capture President Lincoln in order to help the South succeed. However, Lincoln emerged as a triumphant leader when the Civil War ended in April 1865. As a result, Booth would no longer be satisfied with kidnapping Lincoln. He wanted to murder him. With the help of his Confederate friends, Booth plotted the assassinations of President Lincoln, Secretary of State William H. Seward, and Vice President Andrew Johnson. On the evening of April 12, Booth succeeded in shooting Lincoln at Ford's Theater. That same night, the man chosen as Seward’s assassin, Lewis Powell, critically wounded Seward and members of his family and staff. Only Johnson was able to avoid harm from his assigned assassin, George Atzerodt. For twelve days, Booth and fellow conspirator David Herold evaded Union troops and detectives. In the end, officials caught Booth in a burning barn and shot him down. They brought Booth’s body back to Washington D.C., and his fellow conspirators were hung a few months later.

Swanson adapted his New York Times bestselling book, *Manhunt*, for young adult readers. Swanson creates vividly detailed characters and settings. The original photographs and newspaper clippings help to solidify the time period of the book. However, there are no official sources cited in the book to show where Swanson obtained his information. Nonetheless, catalogers have classified this book as non-fiction. This is an enjoyable book for learning about Lincoln and Booth, but it is not a dependable book for helping teenagers write research papers about this event in history.

Volume 29, no. 6 (July/August 2009)