



# ILLUMINATIONS

## Great Writers on Writing

# abraham lincoln

“When men are framing a supreme law and chart of government, to secure blessings and prosperity to untold generations yet to come, they use language as short and direct and plain as can be found, to express their meaning. In all matters but this of Slavery the framers of the Constitution used the very clearest, shortest, and most direct language. But the Constitution alludes to Slavery three times without mentioning it once! The language used becomes ambiguous, roundabout, and mystical. They speak of the “immigration of persons,” and mean the importation of slaves but do not say so. In establishing a basis of representation they say “all other persons,” when they mean to say slaves—why did they not use the shortest phrase? In providing for the return of fugitives they say “persons held to service or labor.” ...Why didn't they do it [refer to slavery]. We cannot doubt that it was done on purpose.”