Facilitator's Guide

USING "OF THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE"

"Of the People, By the People, For the People" was developed by instructors who teach LNCN 100 and 300 at Lincoln Memorial University (LMU) in Harrogate, Tennessee. In these classes, Lincoln's life and leadership is used as a model of good citizenship in the present. To facilitate learning, instructors use William E. Gienapp's text, *Abraham Lincoln and Civil War America: A Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2002). We recommend that you use this book, too, to build context for Lincoln's life. You may choose to present Lincoln's life to the audience prior to discussion on your own, or you may include the book as a part of group discussion along with the provided conversation points.

"Of the People, By the People, For the People" uses primary sources from Lincoln's life to initate discussion about both the past and the present. We recommend the following timeline for managing conversations:

Opening (15 minutes): An overview and initial question set is provided within the conversation kit for you to use.

Historical Context (30 minutes): Depending on your preference, you may give a solo presentation on Lincoln's life and the times he lived in, or you may hold an open conversation on Gienapp's text.

Primary Source Analysis (15 minutes): This is a period of time where the audience can read through the provided primary source texts and/or take a break to stretch and move about.

Primary Source Conversation (20 minutes): Here, the facilitator can ask the audience questions about the provided text. We recommend orienting the audience with questions related to who wrote each document, when and where it was written, the audience it was written for, and the significance of the document as conversation starters. The facilitator may then include additional questions that touch upon the unit's themes.

Connecting the Past to the Present (40 minutes): Use the questions provided at the end of each unit to launch conversations on the present. Each conversation set is purposefully designed to invite the facilitator to customize the conversation as they wish and to flow with changing public concerns.

The following pages also offer a condensed biography of Lincoln's life for your use.

BACKGROUND

LINCOLN'S EARLY LIFE

1809 - 1836

When Abraham Lincoln was asked about his early life, he answered, "It is a great piece of folly to attempt to make anything out of my early life. It can all be condensed into a single sentence . . . 'The short and simple annals of the poor.'" But in fact much has been made of Lincoln's early life, and there is no doubt that this period of Lincoln's life had a profound influence on him.

Lincoln's parent. Thomas Lincoln moved with frequency from one farm to another. Factors included property disputes and the presence of slavery in the newly-settled territories. Thomas Lincoln moved his family across the Ohio River from Kentucky to Indiana when the future president was still a young boy. Keep in mind that when Lincoln moved to Illinois, he was moving to the western frontier. Significant physical and mental demands that were placed on the young Abraham Lincoln because of his father's decision to move and rebuild so often and to do so in a harsh frontier environment.

Aside from these demands, Lincoln faced real tragedies, in particular the death of his mother, Nancy Hanks. Her death due to "milk sickness" had a significant impact on the Lincoln family, and especially on Abraham Lincoln and his sister Sarah. Fortunately, Thomas Lincoln realized that he needed a wife and the children needed a mother, and so he remarried. His second wife, Sarah Bush Johnston, was a widow with three children of her own, and all of them become part of the Lincoln household. Sarah's impact on Lincoln's life was immediate and welcome. She connected to Abraham as a kindred spirit, and she improved the living conditions within the Lincoln home by demanding wooden floors and painted walls, and by improving the state of food and clothing within the home.

By this time, it was already evident that Abraham Lincoln was not going to embrace the life of a frontier farmer, and this fact became a growing source of friction between Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Lincoln, Unlike his father. Abraham Lincoln was much more inclined toward reading and learning, and realized early on that these were keys to a different and, for him, more rewarding life. This created problems, as Abraham Lincoln and his father became more and more distant from each other. Ironically, it was his new stepmother, Sarah Bush Johnston, who encouraged young Abraham to pursue his interest in reading and education. Her encouragement and support represented a dramatic difference from the attitude of Lincoln's own father, and had a profound influences on Abraham Lincoln's life.

Yet while Lincoln lived on his father's farm, he was bound to that lifestyle, and so he became skilled with the tools of a frontier farmer. Not only was he required to work long hours on his father's farm, but Lincoln was also sent to work odd jobs on neighboring farms, and sometimes as a boatman on the nearby rivers. He was legally required to surrender his earnings to his father, but these jobs allowed Lincoln the chance to interact with other people. Most significantly, Lincoln had the opportunity to take a boatload

of produce down the Mississippi River to New Orleans. Imagine the impact such a trip must have had on a young farm boy such as Abraham Lincoln.

Lincoln's second opportunity to travel to New Orleans brought with it an unexpected opportunity to leave his father's farm and strike out on his own, and Lincoln quickly decided to take advantage of the opportunity. This represented the first major turning point in the life of Abraham Lincoln: it brought him the ability to strike out on his own, and it allowed him the ability to witness slavery in the Deep South. This taste of freedom coupled with witnessing the enslavement of others had a profound affect on a young man who, even as someone who was raised in antislavery household, had little opportunity to witness the extent of the "peculiar institution" on the Kentucky and Indiana frontiers.

Couple with this moment, in the early part of 1830, Thomas Lincoln moved yet again, this time to Illinois. Abraham Lincoln was by now approaching adulthood and anxious to strike out on his own. The opportunity presented itself when he was hired to take a second boatload of goods down the Mississippi River to New Orleans. On this trip he caught the attention of the boat owner, Denton Offutt, with his quick thinking and ingenuity when the boat became snagged on a milldam and was in danger of sinking. Offutt offered Lincoln a job as a storekeeper in the new town of New Salem, and Lincoln quickly accepted.

New Salem was not a large town by any means -- probably no more than 100 or so residents -- but it was the first time Lincoln had lived among so many people, and it offered him just the sort of environment he wanted. Lincoln was not only moving away from his father's farm, he was moving away from his father's life. In New Salem, Lincoln could pursue his own dreams and his own ambitions, not those of his father.

When considering Lincoln's New Salem years, it is important to take note of the many new activities, careers, and opportunities that Lincoln found in this small river town. Lincoln accepted various jobs during his years in New Salem, starting with the offer he had to work in Denton Offutt's store. More importantly, Lincoln also attended court sessions and participated in the debate club. He showed an interest in law, and sought out law books to read. His eye also moved to politics, and in a town of Jacksonian Democrats, Lincoln followed the path of his father and embraced the Whig Party. Despite this, Lincoln gained the respect of the residents of New Salem.

Another important event in Lincoln's life during this period was the Black Hawk War. A small war by any standard, it nonetheless represented a major event in the life of Abraham Lincoln. The men of New Salem selected Lincoln as captain of its militia -- this marked Lincoln has being recognized as an important citizen of his New Salem community. Consider how Lincoln must have felt at this, his first real chance to demonstrate and develop leadership skills. Also, consider the many other volunteers from neighboring communities who joined the militia -- Lincoln's interaction with these people allowed him to make important connections, some of which later became important to him.

Perhaps most important, it was in New Salem that Lincoln made two decisions regarding his career -- the first was to run for public office, specifically the state legislature. Lincoln chose to place a letter in the local news paper titled, "To the People of Sangamo County." Within the letter, Lincoln told the voters about himself and his positions. Although he lost this election, there was some reason for optimism on his part when he looked at the returns: the people of New Salem overwhelmingly approved of Lincoln for office despite their different party affiliations.

When he was finished with his service in the militia, Lincoln returned to New Salem and opened a general store with William Berry, someone who, like Lincoln, had fought in the recent Black Hawk War. His time as a storeowner reveals much about Lincoln's interests, as well as his abilities as a businessman. In fact, he was not a very good businessman, and Berry was perhaps worse, so the store eventually failed. Lincoln was out of work and in debt. The second important decision was to begin to study for the law -- Lincoln was encouraged in this by John Todd Stuart, who was already a well-known lawyer. Stuart not only encouraged Lincoln, he served as a mentor and loaned Lincoln the books he needed to study.

Although he lost his first bid for the state legislature, Lincoln was encouraged to try again and this time he was successful. Look at Lincoln's first years in politics -- his political affiliation was with the Whig Party, and as such he generally favored a strong national bank, protective tariffs, and government sponsored system of internal improvements. He started off slowly as a legislator, but over time he became a leader of his party in Illinois. Look for some of the issues he supported and the ways in which he demonstrated his leadership.

In short, Lincoln's years in New Salem were years in which he developed his own personality, followed his own ambitions, and set himself on the course to become the person we know today as Abraham Lincoln. It was a time of personal and professional growth, and it shaped his view of his role as a citizen and as a public leader.

BACKGROUND

LIFE IN SPRINGFIELD

1837 - 1851

Another major turning point in Lincoln's life came when he moved to Springfield in April 1837. This move came about because he had been admitted to practice law, and John Todd Stuart--the same individual who earlier encouraged and mentored Lincoln as he studied law--asked Lincoln to join him as a partner in his firm in Springfield. Lincoln accepted the offer and so began another chapter of his life.

By that time, Springfield was the state capital, a recent development that was due in part to Lincoln's efforts in the legislature. In fact, when Lincoln arrived in Springfield, he was already a well-known legislator and a recognized leader of his political party, and Lincoln built on this reputation to launch his legal career in Springfield.

Lincoln also met people in Springfield who further influenced his life, and looking at his interaction with these individuals tells us much about Lincoln at this point in his life. One of these people was Joshua Speed, perhaps the only close friend that Lincoln had in his entire life. The respective backgrounds of Lincoln and Speed were markedly different: Lincoln was a rough backwoodsman and Speed was an educated gentleman from a slave-owning family, yet they still found common interests on which to build a close friendship -- what explains this?

In Springfield, too, Lincoln attempted to engage in a romantic relationship. He had met heartbreak before in New Salem, with the death of a young woman named Ann Rutledge. This time, he tried his luck with a young lady from Kentucky named Mary Owens. Mary Owens was from a well-to-do family, well-educated, and socially refined, none of which could be said of Lincoln at this point in his life. Their courtship developed along predictable lines and ended with an awkward (and refused) marriage proposal.

As a lawyer, Lincoln found himself spending a great deal of time "riding the circuit" -- following the circuit court across the district to find clients. This was not an easy life, for it meant that Lincoln spent a lot of time on the road travelling from town to town, where he often stayed in crowded, shabby boarding houses and ate poor food. But Lincoln did not complain. In fact, he almost seems to have enjoyed the long hours on horseback to reflect and think, and he appreciated the opportunity to meet other attorneys and new clients. When not on the circuit, Lincoln benefited from his partnership with Stuart, an established attorney from whom Lincoln was able to learn a great deal. Stuart also provided Lincoln with additional insight into politics at the national level. As a politician, Lincoln was clearly one of the leading figures among the Whig members of the Illinois state legislature. Steadily, Lincoln's writing and speaking skills improved.

In 1837, while attending a social event at the home of a friend, Lincoln was introduced to Mary Todd, a young lady from Kentucky. Although Lincoln was still uncomfortable in romantic relationships, he was somehow able to strike up a relationship with Mary Todd. In fact, they became engaged. But as might have been predicted, Lincoln soon had second thoughts and eventually called off the marriage.

Related to Lincoln's relationship to Mary Todd was his controversy with James Shields, the state auditor for Illinois and a Democrat. As Lincoln had done in the past, he attacked his political enemies with his most effective weapons - his words. In a set of letters sometimes called the "Rebecca" letters or the "Lost Township" letters we see Lincoln's satire at its best. But it was also Lincoln at his most vicious, and Shields was outraged. These letters were written anonymously and published in the local newspaper, but Shields immediately began to make inquiries to discover the author. He soon discovered that the author was Lincoln, but at about the same time another letter appeared and this letter infuriated Shields even more. He naturally assumed that Lincoln was the author of both letters (which was in fact not true--Lincoln did not write the last letter), and he challenged Lincoln to a duel.

Fortunately, friends of the two men were able to prevent the duel from actually taking place, but there is still much to learn from the incident. Consider, for example, what Lincoln must have thought when he realized that his words had actually made someone so mad they were willing to kill him. And is there any significance to that fact that about two months after this incident, Lincoln and Mary Todd were quickly and quietly married? Whatever the reason, the moment was a sobering one for Lincoln. Words mattered, and any mention of the Shields incident brought him to embarrassment.

The first years of marriage for Abraham Lincoln and Mary Todd were years of changes and adjustments. This is true for all newlyweds of course, but imagine the circumstances that surrounded this marriage. The couple moved into a small rented room in the Globe Tavern. The room was small, approximately 8 feet by 14 feet, and the Lincolns ate their meals at a common dining area with the other boarders and guests at the tavern. For Mary Todd this was a dramatic lifestyle change. She had been brought up in a fairly prosperous family, living in a large house with private rooms and servants to take care of the house and prepare meals. For her, the small room at the Globe Tavern was easily the worst place she had ever lived.

But for Abraham Lincoln, the small room at the Globe Tavern was the nicest and most elaborate living arrangements he had ever known. In fact, the respective backgrounds of Abraham Lincoln and Mary Todd were about as different as could have been imagined. She was wealthy, educated, and well-trained in the social graces of the day. Lincoln on the other hand was without any real financial resources (and in fact was deep in debt), self-taught with only a year or so of formal education, and his manners and social skills reflected the frontier environment where he was raised.

Yet despite these very real differences in their backgrounds, Abraham Lincoln and Mary Todd were able to form a solid relationship. Much of the reason for this was due to the fact that both were well-read, intelligent, and interested in political developments. Beyond that, Mary Todd saw in Lincoln the potential that eventually would take him to the White House. Indeed, she had once told a friend that she intended to marry someone who would someday become President of the United States. She took it upon herself to help Lincoln learn the finer points of society, and spent a good deal of time explaining to Lincoln the importance of conducting oneself properly in public.

At the same time, their relationship was not without its problems. Mary Todd had a very short temper and she often became irritated at Lincoln for various reasons. For his part, Lincoln had become accustomed to a good deal of solitude and personal time for reflection and thinking, and those days were--at least to some degree-- a part of the past.

The Lincolns did not stay in the Globe Tavern for long. After the birth of their first son, Robert Todd Lincoln, in August 1843, they began to look around for a larger home. Eventually, despite Lincoln's financial limitations, he was able to purchase a home in Springfield. At the same time, Lincoln was improving his status as a lawyer. He had moved on from his first partnership with John Todd Stuart to form a second partnership with Stephen Logan. This relationship lasted until 1844 when Logan decided to go into practice with his son. Until now, Lincoln had been the junior partner, but in 1844 he approached William Herndon, who had only recently been admitted to practice law, and offered to form a partnership. Herndon was a good researcher and would turn out to be a loyal friend. Although Lincoln was now the senior partner and had an established reparation as a skilled attorney, he still choose to continue riding the circuit. This was a proven means of obtaining clients, but it is also possible that Lincoln simply enjoyed the solitude that came with the long hours on the road.

At home, the Lincoln family was growing with the birth of a second son, Eddie in the Spring of 1846. While it is clear that the Lincolns loved their children, it is also obvious that neither Abraham nor Mary was effective when it came to discipline. They found it difficult to punish Robert and Eddie, and neither of the two boys were very well-mannered or controllable. Eventually, both parents simply gave up any attempt to discipline their children. As the two boys became older, it was also apparent that Robert and Abraham Lincoln were not very close. The relationship was nowhere near as difficult as the relationship between Lincoln and his own father, but it was a distant relationship nonetheless.

In national politics, the United States at this time was embarking on an era of westward expansion, and this would have a profound impact on Abraham Lincoln. Characterized by a spirit of superiority and inevitability that is sometimes referred to as "Manifest Destiny," this expansion presumed that the United States was somehow destined to dominate the North American continent. Some, like Lincoln, believed that such an expansion was bound to cause problems, since most of western North America was already in the possession of either the Mexicans, the British, or various tribes of Native Americans. Beyond that, expanding west would almost certainly reignite the issue of slavery, since it was not clear whether or not slavery was to be allowed into any western lands the United States might acquire.

It was at this time that Lincoln decided to set his sights on national political office. He had served with distinction on the Illinois state legislature, but his ambition now drove him to seek something more. When his chance came to run for the United States Congress, he seized the opportunity. The campaign was unremarkable in most regards, but when his opponent accused him of "infidelity" Lincoln chose to respond.

Once elected to Congress, Lincoln set off for Washington DC with enthusiasm and excitement. When he arrived to take his seat, the concept of Manifest Destiny had, as many feared, already taken the United Stares into war with Mexico. Most Americans strongly supported the war effort, and indeed the United States army had been resoundingly victorious on all fronts and the fighting was all but over when Lincoln assumed his responsibilities as a Congressman. Still, Lincoln introduced a resolution in December 1847

that called for Congress to examine the reasons offered by President James K. Polk for going to war in the first place. Polk had stated that Mexico started hostilities by sending soldiers across the border into Texas and firing on US troops. "American blood has been shed on American soil," said Polk, and so the US had gone to war. But Lincoln asked for Polk to identify the exact spot where American blood had been shed. Was it in fact on American soil or was it instead in a disputed area that was claimed by both Mexico and the United States? If the latter were true, said Lincoln, then the United States had gone to war on a false premise. But most of the country was already celebrating the US victory and the resulting acquisition of vast new territories in the West, and Lincoln's charges were generally ignored or, worse, used against him to show he was not patriotic.

So Lincoln's "Spot Resolution," as it came to be known, did little to further his reputation as a politician. Nor was he any more successful in his attempt to introduce a bill that would have ended slavery in Washington DC. With little success as a legislator, Lincoln turned his attention to partisan politics and worked hard to support the election of Zachery Taylor, the Whig candidate for President. Although Taylor was successful, Lincoln received little notice from his fellow Whigs for his hard work and effort.

Lincoln returned to Springfield at the end of his term with the distinct impression that he had failed as a Congressman. Unwilling to return to his former role as a state legislator, Lincoln was uncertain as to what future he had in politics, if indeed he had any future at all.

BACKGROUND

ROAD TO THE WHITE HOUSE

1852 - 1860

Lincoln returned from his term in Congress with the feeling that he had failed. But at the same time, he realized that there was much to learn from the experience. He saw, for example, that he needed more development and intellectual focus as a politician, and that he needed more refinement and "grooming" as an individual. He set about to work on these areas.

In Lincoln's absence, his younger law partner, William Herndon, had demonstrated that he was a very good lawyer. Now, with Lincoln's added stature as a former Congressman, they sought and secured more prestigious and lucrative cases. Most of his legal work revolved around high-paying clients, and his fees increased accordingly. By now Lincoln had achieved a very solid level of financial security. But he continued to struggle with some aspects of his family life. Most notable was his relationship with his father, Thomas Lincoln. Now about seventy years of age, Thomas Lincoln had been living at a small farm in Coles County, Illinois, called "Goosenest Prairie" since about 1840. But Thomas Lincoln had never been very successful financially, and in fact Lincoln had been sending small amounts of money to help out for several years now. Despite such support, there is no indication that Lincoln's relationship with his father improved. In fact, if anything, they became more estranged and it seems likely that Lincoln's financial support to his father was intended to ensure the comfort of his stepmother, Sarah Bush Johnston. When Lincoln learned in 1849 that his father was deathly ill, he rushed to Goosenest Prairie only to find that his father was in fact doing very well. Two years later, Lincoln was again told that his father was ill and near death, but this time he refused to make the trip and was thus not present when Thomas Lincoln died in 1851.

Although there is no record that Lincoln expressed any real remorse at the news of his father's death, he and Mary were clearly distraught when their youngest son, Eddie, died the year before. Within a very short time after Eddie's death,. Abraham and Mary were again expecting a child. William Wallace Lincoln, who was always called Willie, was born in December 1850 and another son was born in the spring of 1853. Named Thomas, the last Lincoln child was always called Tad. His birth had been difficult and Mary apparently suffered a great deal during the delivery. From that point forward, her mood became noticeably more angry, and she complained increasingly of headaches. As Lincoln became more focused on his legal career, Mary found herself alone and isolated. There was no specific problem with their marriage and never any chance of a separation; but there appears to have been a noticeable distance growing between them following Tad's birth.

At the same time, however, Lincoln now demonstrated a newfound attachment to his youngest sons, Willie and Tad. He often took them to his law office, where they ran around without any control or supervision, tossing books on the floor, upsetting the trash cans, and making a general mess of the place. As a result, William Herndon, Lincoln's law partner, came to despise the two boys. But Lincoln refused to discipline them, claiming that they were simply having fun.

Nor did Herndon get along with Mary. No one knows for sure what may have been the cause of their mutual dislike for each other, but Lincoln apparently found it somewhat amusing and made no attempt to reconcile them or improve the relationship.

At the beginning of 1854, Lincoln was uncertain of his future as a politician. He could point to a successful tenure as a state legislator and, although he considered his term in Congress to have been a failure, Lincoln was able to translate his position as a former Congressman into a thriving legal career. In short, he had already achieved a great deal of political stature, his law practice was growing fast, and his family was growing too. It is possible he may never have returned to politics had it not been for an unexpected piece of legislation that emerged from Congress in 1854 and infuriated all those who considered themselves part of a broad but loosely defined anti-slavery movement.

Like many Americans in the northern United States, Lincoln was an opponent of slavery. But there were many different levels of opposition to slavery in 1854, and several different facets of the anti-slavery movement. For most Americans, including Lincoln, every discussion about slavery began with the admission that the institution was protected by the United States Constitution. Thus the anti-slavery movement could not eliminate slavery altogether. But they could prevent it from growing. By containing it to the slave-holding states where it already existed, slavery would, they hoped, eventually cease to be a viable economic institution and simply die a natural death and go away. Until that time, however, there remained the issue of what would be the political and social status of freed slaves; would they become citizens? Lincoln for one favored a different approach: Colonization. This plan would send the former slaves to Africa or some other distant land, where they would create their own government and their own society. As a means of encouraging slave owners to free their slaves so they could then be colonized, some people advocated a plan called compensated emancipation, whereby slaveholders were to be paid for freeing their slaves. There was also a much more extreme segment of the anti-slavery movement called abolitionism. According to the abolitionists, slavery should simply be abolished. Rather than a prolonged debate over the advantages or consequences of various means of ending the institution, they said the best solution from both a practical and a moral perspective was simply to abolish slavery and to do so as soon as possible. The abolitionists were viewed as too radical for most people, even those in the North, and Lincoln was no exception. He readily agreed that slavery should be ended, but he also admitted that slavery was protected by the Constitution. Like most Americans, he was not sure what, if anything, could be done to end it. But he was adamant that it should not be allowed to grow.

Thus, Lincoln was outraged when Stephen Douglas, a US Senator from Lincoln's own state of Illinois, introduced a bill that would organize Kansas and Nebraska as territories and allow the residents there to determine whether or not they would accept slavery through a concept called "popular sovereignty." Such an approach would first require that the Missouri Compromise of 1820 be repealed. The Missouri Compromise had long been seen as the definitive word on the future of slavery, for it established a definite line (36o 30') to divide the slave territories from the free territories. But Douglas's bill was

eventually successful, though not without a highly publicized and bitter debate, and suddenly a compromise that had served as the cornerstone of a delicate balance between free states and slave states was gone. To Lincoln, this was an unexpected and disturbing development and something he felt he could not ignore. With the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, as Douglas' bill was known, it was now theoretically possible for slavery to expand, and there no longer seemed to be any prospect that slavery was going to eventually just die a natural death and go away.

For Lincoln, the Kansas-Nebraska Act was the incentive he needed to return to politics. It represented a serious threat and he believed that something must be done to confront this threat. No longer willing to complacently watch from the sidelines, Lincoln now had a cause, something he believed in very strongly, and he was determined to return to politics and do what he could to prevent the expansion of slavery.

Convinced that the Kansas-Nebraska Act represented a serious threat, Lincoln returned to politics with renewed energy. His target was none other than Stephen Douglas, the author of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. He began a campaign to openly challenge Douglas at public engagements, sometimes following Douglas from one speaking engagement to another and offering a rebuttal to Douglas' claims. But Lincoln's real hope was to secure a seat in the US senate from which he could more effectively challenge Douglas, and when a vacancy occurred in 1855 Lincoln lobbied hard to secure the nomination. By now the Whig Party was no longer an effective organization, and in fact had little influence in naming the nominee. Instead, the process was dictated by a coalition of smaller parties that had recently emerged to oppose the Democrats. Lincoln felt his chances of securing the nomination were good, but in the end the nomination went to someone else. Lincoln's failure to secure the nomination was a bitter disappointment.

By now Lincoln no longer considered himself a member of the Whig Party. In fact, the Whig Party was already unraveling, in part because there was no effort to address the issue of slavery. Lincoln and others began to look for a political party from which they could continue their attack on slavery. More and more they were attracted to a new party called the Republicans. Composed of a variety of former Whigs, anti-slavery Democrats, smaller parties and even abolitionists, the Republicans were a diverse group with a diverse agenda. But the central issue on which all Republicans could agree was that slavery must not extend into the western territories. By the spring of 1856, Lincoln had become a leading figure in the new Republican Party and was instrumental in the development of the Republicans in Illinois. When the presidential campaign began later that year, the Republicans put forward as their first candidate John Charles Fremont, Although Fremont lost he gained more than 33% of the popular vote. His success made it clear that the Republicans were going to assume an important place in the US political system.

The following year, Lincoln decided to run again for the US Senate, this time for the very seat held by Stephen Douglas. This time Lincoln did receive the nomination of his party, only now it was the newly organized Republican Party. In accepting his party's nomination, Lincoln gave a speech that demonstrates his growing effectiveness as a writer and as a political thinker, his "House Divided Speech."

The ensuing campaign between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas ranks as one of the most memorable campaigns in American political history. The reason for this is largely because of a series of

debates between the two candidates. Keep in mind that elections to the Senate were conducted very differently in 1858. Senators were not elected directly by voters, but were instead appointed by the state legislature. Even so, Senatorial candidates could influence their election by campaigning in support of legislators who would in turn support them for the Senate. Thus, the debates between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas provided an opportunity for the two candidates to clarify their opinions about the only significant issue of the campaign, slavery -- or more specifically the expansion of slavery. Douglas was the author of the Kansas-Nebraska Act and a well-known political figure who wanted to be president, so his views on slavery were of real interest to the entire nation -- newspapers from across the country covered the debates and often printed transcripts of the exchanges between the two men. In the end, neither candidate could actually be said to have "won" the debates. But Lincoln definitely held his own against the much better known Douglas, something that was apparent to readers across the country. They may have picked up the newspaper to see what Stephen Douglas had to say, but in the end they also read what Abraham Lincoln had to say. Although Douglas was eventually selected by the state legislature to return to his seat in the Senate, Lincoln still profited from the campaign. Almost overnight, Lincoln had gained national recognition, and many people were impressed with the campaign he had run against Douglas.

For the next year, Lincoln spoke at every opportunity and worked to build on the momentum he had gained in the debates. His greatest opportunity came early in 1860 when he was invited to speak in New York City. This was an opportunity for Lincoln to appear before an East Coast audience, where he was not well-known, and gain visibility in the Eastern newspapers. Delivered at Cooper Union Hall, Lincoln's address was a resounding success. He successfully positioned himself as a moderate, someone who was opposed to the expansion of slavery but at the same time was not an abolitionist.

From that point forward Lincoln was a serious contender for the Republican presidential nomination in 1860. The first step in that process was to gain the nomination from his own state, and it was no surprise that Lincoln received the overwhelming support of the Illinois delegation in early May. It was there that he received one of the nicknames that has endured: the "Railsplitter." Later that month, the national convention met and although Lincoln was not at first among the frontrunners, his position as a moderate eventually allowed him to gain support and he was nominated on the third ballot.

The general election itself was held in an atmosphere of sectional strife and tension. Republicans, as the anti-slavery party, had no support in the South -- in fact, Lincoln's name did not even appear on the ballots there. But the Democrats were badly divided. Eventually, they split into two parties -- the Southern Democrats with John Breckinridge as their nominee, and the Northern Democrats, who nominated Stephen Douglas. In addition, a new party appeared, the Constitutional Union Party, and they nominated John Bell. Thus, in a field of four candidates, Lincoln suddenly seemed to have a viable chance of being elected. His campaign was very low-key and when all the ballots were counted, he had less than 40% of the popular vote, but an overwhelming victory in electoral votes. In a matter of only about two years, Lincoln had gone from a virtual unknown to become the President of the United States.

BACKGROUND

THE PRESIDENCY

1861 - 1865

Lincoln's election in November 1860 launched a series of events that took the nation very quickly toward Civil War. For the South, Lincoln's victory represented an end to their influence in the political process, since he had won without receiving a single electoral vote from a Southern state. If they were no longer able to influence the outcome of elections, many Southerners began to wonder if they could continue to protect their interests, and quickly concluded that they could not. Within days of Lincoln's election, South Carolina initiated steps toward secession and officially withdrew from the Union in December. By the end of February 1861, six other states from the "Deep South" had also seceded: Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, and Texas. Representatives from these seven states later convened in Montgomery, Alabama, and created a new government called the Confederate States of America. For the moment, the so-called "border states," refused to secede, but they were slave states and so Lincoln had to be concerned that the border states may yet decide to join the Deep South. Lincoln was now president-elect of a divided nation. But until he actually took office in March, the crisis was the responsibility of President James Buchannan, who, although he believed secession was illegal, did not believe he had the right to interfere forcefully and prevent it. Instead, Congress began to work on various compromise measures, none of which appeared to hold much prospect of success.

Privately Lincoln let it be known that he opposed all attempts to compromise, especially on the issue of expanding slavery into the territories. But publicly he maintained that he should not interfere in the situation until he was actually in office. Instead he began to assemble his cabinet. As you look over the cabinet members that he selected in this period, consider why he made the particular selections he made. What factors led him, for example, to select Simon B. Cameron as secretary of war when Cameron had a reputation as being incompetent and dishonest, yet the nation was seemingly on the brink of war?

Before leaving for Washington, Lincoln found time to travel to Coles County to say good-bye to his stepmother. It was she who had first encouraged him to study and read, and a special bond had developed between them as a result. While there, Lincoln also went to visit the grave of his father, Thomas Lincoln. This was the one and only time that Lincoln visited the grave of his father. Imagine what must have been going thorough Lincoln's head as he stood there. Surely he must have thought back to his youth and remembered his own determination to educate himself, only to have his father tell him that education was useless and a waste of time. The rift between Lincoln and his father was real, and it is not difficult to imagine that Lincoln was still resentful and angry at his father's attitude toward education. Now Lincoln was about to leave Illinois to become President of the United States. Lincoln noted while he was at his father's grave that there was no headstone and he promised to buy one. But he never did.

Meanwhile, Mary was likewise getting ready for the trip to Washington. She knew that she was going to be closely scrutinized as First Lady, and the ladies of the Eastern elite would automatically assume she, as a westerner from Illinois, could not measure up to their standards. So Mary decided she must be prepared, and to do that she must go shopping. She went with Robert to New York and later to St. Louis to purchase a new wardrobe. Unfortunately, she went deeply into debt to do so, never telling Lincoln just how much she had spent.

Lincoln's train route from Springfield to Washington followed a circuitous route through several major northern cities in order to give as many people as possible a chance to see their new president. At each stop, Lincoln stood on the rear of his railroad car and addressed the crowd. As the train approached Baltimore, Lincoln learned of a potential plot against his life. On the advice of his advisors Lincoln decided to adjust his schedule so as to arrive earlier than expected in Baltimore, and to travel in disguise. He thus made it safely into Washington, but was forced to endure charges that he had been required to sneak into town.

Lincoln's inaugural address focused on the crisis that confronted the nation. Lincoln had little time to enjoy his inauguration, however, for the crisis was quickly coming to a head at Fort Sumter in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina. Like other seceded states. South Carolina had seized all federal property within their state boundaries, but when they attempted to seize Fort Sumter, the federal garrison there refused to surrender. Now, the commander of the garrison told Lincoln that there were not enough soldiers in the fort to defend it in the event of an attack. Nor could he endure a prolonged siege, since they had no more than a month's worth of supplies remaining, and when those were gone he would have no choice but to surrender the fort. Lincoln must either resupply the fort or allow it to be surrendered, and neither were good options. In the end he attempted to simply send in more food and water, but even this was seen as provocative by Confederate authorities, and on April 12, 1861, they opened fire on the fort and forced it to surrender the next day. The Civil War had begun.

Lincoln immediately responded by calling for 75,000 troops with which to put down the rebellion. Each state was expected to send in their share of this number. But four of the "border states" -- Virginia, Arkansas, North Carolina, and Tennessee -- decided to join the Confederate government rather than support an attack on the South. Lincoln then followed up this call for troops with a series of aggressive steps. First, he declared a naval blockade around the South. This was only a "paper blockade" at first, since the United States at the time had only a token naval force with which to patrol the Southern coast. But as the war progressed, the blockade became a stranglehold, since the South had very little industry. Lincoln also was concerned that if the state of Maryland seceded, the United States capital of Washington DC would in effect be situated in enemy territory. To prevent the secessionist leaders from gaining influence in Maryland, he suspended the writ of habeas corpus and authorized the arrest and imprisonment of any one speaking out against the United States government. At first this applied only to those secessionists living along the critical rail road lines in Maryland, but Lincoln later extended the suspension to include the entire nation. He also authorized the enlistment of an additional 100,000 troops to serve for three years. Lincoln was heavily criticized for these measures, especially the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus, but he felt he had little choice.

With an army now assembled, Lincoln and others began to call for the invasion of the South and an attack on the newly designated Confederate capital of Richmond, Virginia. But a poorly prepared Federal army was soundly defeated in July 1861. At that point Lincoln realized the volunteer army needed training, supplies, and equipment before marching into battle again. He appointed Major General George B. McClellan to this task and at first he seemed to be the perfect choice. McClellan's training of the army immediately raised morale and Lincoln anticipated the army would soon set off again toward Richmond.

Meanwhile, Mary was given the responsibility of refurbishing the White House and a $25,000 budget with which to operate for the next four years. She went to work and soon spent that much and more, purchasing new china, curtains, carpets and other fancy furnishings for the White House. When Lincoln found out how much she had overspent he was furious, but, aware that such a revelation could lead to a scandal, agreed to a secret Congressional appropriation to cover Mary's over spending.

As Lincoln waited, it became clear that getting the army to move would not be easy. In fact, McClellan seemed altogether disinterested in marching his army off to fight. Lincoln tried every measure at his disposal to force McClellan into battle, but nothing worked. In fact, it soon became apparent that McClellan had little respect at all for Lincoln and even criticized the president openly. But Lincoln had little choice at this point in the war, since he knew nothing about how to prepare and conduct a military campaign, and so he quietly accept McClellan's insults. Lincoln did, however, begin to notice other generals in other theaters of war who seemed willing to fight. One of these, Ulysses S. Grant, gained the first major victory of the war at forts Donelson and Henry in Tennessee. As Lincoln became more and more frustrated at McClellan's lack of movement, he decided to keep his eyes on Grant.

The year 1862 started off with tragedy for the Lincolns when their son Willie died in February. Willie had generally been regarded as the most precocious and brightest of the Lincoln boys. Witty and even a bit mischievous, Willie was often compared to Abraham Lincoln himself. His death was especially hard for the Lincolns to take. Note the different reactions of Abraham Lincoln and Mary Todd Lincoln. In the past, such a loss would easily have sent Abraham into a depression. Why does this not happen now? As for Mary Todd, Willie's death was devastating, understandable of course, but her grief extended over a very long time.

Lincoln was also frustrated with the war effort in the early part of the year. While there were significant victories in the Western theater of operations, the highly visible Eastern theater saw little action. Finally, McClellan moved his army to the Yorktown Peninsula and moved toward Richmond, but his progress was excruciatingly slow. When McClellan was at last poised on the outskirts of Richmond, a sudden and aggressive counterattack by the Confederate commander Robert E. Lee forced him to retreat and eventually to abandon the campaign altogether.

Convinced that he himself must take aggressive strokes to strike at the heart of the rebellion, Lincoln now determined to push more forcefully toward emancipation. Sometime in the summer he began crafting the draft of a document that would become known as the Emancipation Proclamation. Lincoln's intention was to abolish slavery in those areas where the state governments were still in rebellion against the Federal government. Border states were not affected, since Lincoln remained concerned that those states may yet decide to secede and join the Confederacy. Nor did the proclamation apply to those areas of the South where Union forces were already in control. But even so it was a radical shift in war aims and

Lincoln knew it -- instead of fighting only to preserve the Union, the war was now a fight to end slavery as well. He presented a draft of the proclamation to his cabinet for their input and on their advice agreed to wait until the Union had won a significant victory. Such a dramatic shift in the aims of the war, it was reasoned, may come across as an act of desperation unless it came in the aftermath of a Union victory.

That victory came the following September when Lee's Confederate army invaded Maryland and was turned back at the Battle of Antietam. Lincoln immediately thereafter announced his preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, to go into effect on January 1 of the following year, 1863. While it was true that the proclamation did not immediately free any slaves, since it only applied to those areas where it could not be enforced, it is also true that it paved the way for eventually abolishing slavery altogether. An important side effect of the proclamation was to once and for all prevent foreign intervention on behalf of the Confederacy. Foreign intervention was a real possibility, since both Great Britain and France desperately needed access to Southern cotton in order to keep their textile mills in operation. But once the proclamation was announced, neither of those countries were likely to intervene since they would in effect be intervening on behalf of slavery, something their own constituents would not support. Not only did Lincoln preclude foreign intervention with his Emancipation Proclamation, he gave the war an important moral component. For many northerners, the war was now much more than a political debate on the issue of secession -- it was a moral crusade against slavery with a sense of mission and urgency.

While most Northerners supported Emancipation, there was also a sizable minority that opposed the measure, and who also opposed Lincoln's overall prosecution of the war. Already by the end of 1862 these opponents had gained strength and were grouped together under the name "Copperheads." Almost exclusively from the Democratic Party, they were never particularly numerous -- although some estimates placed their numbers as high as 25% of the electorate -- but they were very vocal. Most Democrats, however, continued to support the war effort and even to support Lincoln at least to some degree.

Convinced at last that George B. McClellan would never understand his determination to pursue the Confederate army aggressively, Lincoln finally relieved him of command once and for all. He was replaced with Major General Ambrose Burnside, but Burnside's decision to attack a well-entrenched Confederate army at Fredericksburg proved to be disastrous. In the west a stalemate at Vicksburg and a tactical draw at Murfreesboro offered little encouragement. Likewise, Lincoln's political opponents became more of a concern as they found a leader in Clement Vallandigham, a former congressman from Ohio who openly criticized Lincoln and the war, and called for a renunciation of Emancipation. His leadership led to a growth of the Copperhead movement, particularly in Indiana and Illinois. Acting under the authority of the suspension of habeas corpus, the Union commander of the Ohio district had Vallandigham arrested and imprisoned. Following an outcry of opposition to the arrest of a former member of Congress, Lincoln was forced to intervene. Vallandigham was released from prison but exiled to the South where he had little impact on public opinion.

In the late spring of 1863, Lincoln was frustrated on several fronts, including in his own home. Mary continued to be distant, still mourning for Willie, and was consulting spiritualists on a regular basis. She was little comfort to Lincoln, nor was their oldest son, Robert, who was away at Harvard and had never enjoyed a particularly good relationship with his father anyway.

Lincoln remained focused on the war effort. Among the changes he now introduced into the army was the enlistment of Black troops. Overall recruitment was beginning to decline and Lincoln knew that Blacks were eager to serve and could offset the decline in enlistment. Equally important, Blacks needed to be a part of the war effort now since the war had Emancipation as one of its aims.

But Lincoln's main objective was to find a competent commander for his armies. He turned now to Joseph Hooker, someone who openly suggested that a dictator should lead the United States in such a crisis as the country now faced, and even hinted that he was ready to assume such a position if called upon to do so. Even so, Lincoln appointed him to command the Army of the Potomac. Look through your assigned readings and explain why Lincoln was willing to make such a seemingly dangerous appointment. What was Lincoln's rationale?

But as it turned out, Hooker was defeated at Chancellorsville in May and Lincoln was forced once again to look for a general. The situation took on a sense of urgency when Lee once again invaded the north. Quickly, Lincoln appointed George Meade to command the Union army and the two generals met in the Pennsylvania town of Gettysburg in early July 1863. After three days of vicious fighting, the Confederate army was defeated and forced to retreat back into Virginia. At almost the same time, Vicksburg, the last Confederate stronghold on the Mississippi River, was captured by Ulysses S. Grant. These two dramatic victories, coming within hours of each other, seemed to indicate to many that the war effort had at last turned and the Confederacy was in fact bound for defeat. Even a sudden Confederate victory at Chickamauga did little to change the overall impression that the Union was at last winning the war.

In November of that year, Lincoln was invited to deliver a few "appropriate remarks" at the Gettysburg battlefield as part of the dedication of the national cemetery there. Lincoln agreed, in part because he knew the event would be covered by the national media, and he was anxious to let a national audience hear his views on the new direction the war had taken. Lincoln's brief remarks that day, now known as the "Gettysburg Address," rank among the most effective political speeches of all time. Short, concise, and written with a Biblical lilt that was comfortable to his listeners, the brief address summed up in less than two minutes the essence of the Civil War, the reasons it was being fought, and connected the war directly to the ideology of the American Revolution. Read this selection from your assignments very carefully. What is there about this brief speech that makes it so effective? Why was is so important for Lincoln to connect the Civil War to the American Revolution?

When Lincoln returned from Gettysburg, he named Ulysses S. Grant to command all Union armies. At last, Lincoln felt he had a general who understood the necessity of aggressive fighting.

With Union victory now seemingly only a matter of time, Lincoln turned his attention to the post-war years. What would the country be like after the war was over? How would the defeated South be reconstructed and brought back into the Union?

As the year came to a close, Lincoln presented his initial plan for Reconstruction. His plan was that a state could ask to be readmitted when ten percent of the population (as numbered in the 1860 census) took an oath of allegiance to the United States, and formed a new state government that prohibited slavery, at which point the president would readmit that state to the Union.

Certain Confederate officials were exempted from taking the oath, but otherwise Lincoln's "Ten Percent Plan" as it came to be called was a very generous policy. Consider what might have motivated Lincoln to offer such generous terms to people who were guilty of nothing less than treason, and many of whom were even then engaged in hostility against the United States government? Keep in mind that this was only a proposal -- it could not become law until it was acted upon by Congress and they had other ideas.

As Congress and the nation considered his proposal, Lincoln turned his attention to reelection. The victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg now seemed to be forgotten as the nation once again became disillusioned with the apparent lack of progress in the war. Although the South was beginning to show clear signs of wearing down, many people were unaware of this and felt that the war had settled into an unwinnable stalemate.

Lincoln easily won his party's nomination to run for president, but the Democrats nominated none other than George B. McClellan, and included in their platform the provision that the war must be brought to a close. Read Lincoln's "Memorandum Regarding the Probable Failure of Reelection," and see if you can determine why Lincoln was so convinced he would lose. Significantly, what does Lincoln advocate for the period following his anticipat4ed defeat in November 1864, and the inauguration of his successor in March, 1865?

Lincoln also at this time learned that some members of Congress had their own plans for Reconstruction. They rejected his Ten Percent Plan and instead passed a bill called the Wade-David Bill in July 1864. The driving force behind the Wade-Davis Bill was an increasingly powerful group of Republicans known as "Radicals" who believed that it was a mistake not to punish secession harshly. Under their plan, the defeated Confederate states would be governed first by the military. Then, rather than Lincoln's modest ten percent of voters who were required to take the oath of allegiance, the Radical plan called for fifty percent of voters to take the oath of allegiance. Not only that, they required a much stronger oath, an "ironclad" oath that was so strict it excluded most former Confederates. Clearly, the Wade-Davis Bill was much more vindictive than Lincoln's Ten Percent Plan. But although it was passed by Congress, the Wade-Davis Bill could not become law until it was signed by the president, and this Lincoln refused to do, since he knew Congress was poised to override his veto and turn the bill into law anyway. Instead, he used the little-known "pocket-veto" and simply refused to do anything at all to the bill.

Thus, Lincoln not only prevented the Wade-Davis Bill from becoming law, he also denied Congress the opportunity to override his veto. But what does this struggle between the Executive branch and the Legislative branch tell us about Reconstruction? More importantly, what was the status of Reconstruction as the elections of 1864 approached?

Lincoln's fears regarding his reelection in 1864 proved to be ill-founded. Despite the brief threat to Washington DC from a small Confederate army (during which Lincoln himself came under fire), there were some significant military successes in the summer of 1864 that swayed public opinion. Lincoln was easily reelected. Among the issues to which he now gave his attention was the status of Blacks. The Thirteenth Amendment, which completely abolished slavery in the United States, was passed by Congress in February 1865. Equally important for former slaves was the question of how they would survive economically. Most slaves had not been allowed to learn to read or write, and few had any job skills other than as agricultural laborers. To address this, Lincoln urged the creation of the Freedman's

Bureau, an agency designed to provide economic and legal assistance to former slaves in their transition from slavery to freedom.

By the time of his Second Inauguration in March, Lincoln was ready once again to urge the adoption of a moderate and speedy plan for Reconstruction. In one of the shortest but most memorable Inaugural addresses ever given by a President, Lincoln summarized the differences that had led to war, and pointed out that both sides shared at least some of the blame. Therefore, it was time to put those differences aside and move forward.

Unfortunately, Lincoln would not live to implement any of his plans for a reunited America. Standing in the crowd that day was a young actor named John Wilkes Booth, and he was already making plans of his own.

Lincoln knew the end of the war was close at hand, and he was determined to be at the battlefield when the end came. Together with Mary he traveled in April to City Point, Virginia, where General Grant was preparing for the final assault on Richmond. While there, Lincoln was embarrassed when Mary lost control of her temper in front of several other officers and their wives. Mary returned to Washington shortly thereafter, but Lincoln remained and waited. Finally, on April 2, Grant's army forced the Confederates from Richmond. Surprisingly, Lincoln determined to visit the fallen capital and together with his youngest son Tad, toured the city only two days after the last Confederate troops had fled. What might have motivated Lincoln to take such a risk? Do you think he was guilty of "gloating"? After all, he did make a point of visiting the office of Confederate President Jefferson Davis and sitting in Davis's chair.

Lincoln returned to Washington and was there on April 9 when the news of Lee's surrender arrived in the capital. The entire city erupted in celebration. Lincoln too was excited and relieved, convinced now that the war was finally over after four years of bloodshed and heartache. For Lincoln, of course, the dangers of war were not over yet. His safety had long been a concern of his advisors . There was no secret service to provide protection, nor was Lincoln particularly worried about his safety. Sometimes guarded by a contingent of Washington DC policemen, and at other times by a detachment of cavalry, Lincoln had survived four years of war and now, with hostilities at an end, there seemed even less reason to be concerned for his safety.

In fact, John Wilkes Booth, a well-known actor and an ardent Southern sympathizer, had been putting together a plan to kidnap the president for several months. Now, with the Confederate situation desperate, Booth decided it was time to turn to more desperate measures. Working with an odd group of coconspirators, Booth put his plan into effect on April 14, when he learned that Lincoln intended to attend a performance at Ford's Theater that night.

In attempting to understand the motives of John Wilkes Booth, keep in mind that he was actually a well-known individual, a famous actor from a famous family of actors. Booth was the glue that held together the team of assassins, and he alone had the character and leadership skills to ensure that all the pieces of the plan came together. Even with the war already effectively over, Booth was still determined to press forward with his plan.

Booth's plan included attacks on Vice-President Andrew Johnson, and also on Secretary of State William Seward. Booth assigned those tasks to two of his associates, but although Seward was attacked and seriously wounded, he survived. Only Lincoln himself was killed, and that was because Booth reserved for himself the role of attacking the President. Booth had little trouble entering the theater -- he was a famous actor and worked there often. Nor did he have difficulty entering Lincoln's private box -- the policeman assigned to guard the president that night was not at his post. Booth crept quietly up behind Lincoln, placed his small derringer behind the president's left ear, and pulled the trigger. Booth then jumped from the president's box to the stage, breaking his leg in the process, and delivered a line "Sic Semper Tyranus!" which translates roughly to "Thus always to tyrants!" Then he hobbled off the stage to the back alley where he had a horse waiting, and galloped off into the night.

Lincoln lived until 7:22 the next morning, April 15. The hunt for his assassins was by that time already underway. Booth was obviously the prime suspect, and when the police searched his room they discovered letters and papers that implicated all the other conspirators. Everyone except Booth and his companion, David Herold, were arrested fairly soon. Booth and Herold managed to stay on the run until April 26, when they were cornered in a Virginia barn. Herold surrendered immediately, but Booth refused and was shot. He died a few hours later.

Lincoln's body was placed on a special train, along with the body of his son Willie who had died three years earlier, for the trip back to Springfield. The route followed pretty much the same route Lincoln had taken four years earlier when he came to Washington. The purpose for taking such a long route was in many ways similar as well: to give as many people as possible the chance to see their President.

As might be expected, Mary Todd Lincoln was completely devastated by the death of her husband. She had already suffered many personal losses, most recently with the death of Willie, but the murder of her husband as he sat beside her was almost overwhelming. Still, she managed to do fairly well in the coming years as she cared for herself and Tad. But Tad was never a healthy child, and he died when he was 18 years of age from complications arising from a respiratory disease. Mary continued to spend money extravagantly and often seemed to be irrational. In fact, her oldest son Robert became convinced that his mother was insane and arranged to have her committed to an asylum. She later was able to present evidence to defend herself and secure her release. Mary suffered a stroke in July 1871 and died the next day. Robert Todd Lincoln, despite the distance that had developed between him and his father, became the protector of his father's image and name. He collected as many papers and documents as he could find and eventually donated these to the Library of Congress. He went on to become a successful businessman, and a leader in the Republican Party. Robert Lincoln lived to see the dedication of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC, and died in 1926 at the age of 83.

BACKGROUND

LINCOLN'S LEGACY

1866-Present

Lincoln's death, unexpected and coming as it did at the moment of triumph, shocked the nation beyond belief. The national outpouring of grief was real and extensive. It seemed as if the nation was fixated on Lincoln in a way that was not evident when he was alive. Indeed, Lincoln's death propelled him into a special level of American heroism and gave him an iconic stature that cannot be matched by any other president except for George Washington himself. Almost immediately following Lincoln's funeral, biographers began to chronicle his life in books that became every more detailed. Many of these early books were, as might be expected, filled with half-truths, myths, and legends. Others however, attempted to take a more responsible approach. Among these were biographies prepared by people who had known and worked closely with Lincoln, such people as his law partner, William Herndon; his bodyguard,, Ward Hill Lamon: and Lincoln's personal secretaries in the White House, John Hay and John Nicolay.

Later, Ida Tarbell, a well-known journalist of the late nineteenth century, and Carl Sandburg, also a journalist, wrote biographies, both of which included good research efforts. Sandburg's biography in particular is generally regarded as among the best early works on Lincoln.

Then, in the mid-1900s, a new wave of scholarship appeared, this time looking at Lincoln from a more critical perspective. Some of these examined Lincoln's views on slavery and Blacks, others approached Lincoln from a psychological angle, noting the important influences in his childhood and early youth. Eventually, almost every aspect of Lincoln's life, including his leadership, his writing, his politics, and even his family members, has been the subject of one or more books. All in all, more than 14,000 books have been written about Lincoln or a topic very closely related to Lincoln (and that number is a conservative estimate). And of course his legacy does not end with the printed word. Lincoln has been memorialized in monuments and statues across the country. He has been the subject of several major motion pictures, his image appears on currency and has also been appropriated by hundreds of businesses. He is honored as a namesake of naval ships, countless towns and counties, as well as educational institutions. Among these is of course Lincoln Memorial University. This came about as a result of a conversation Lincoln once had with General Oliver O. Howard, in which he wondered if something might be done to honor the loyalty of East Tennesseans who had largely remained loyal to the Federal government during the Civil War. Howard remembered this comment and later, many years after the war when he was visiting the Cumberland Gap region, learned that an effort was underway to establish a college on the grounds of a former hotel and resort in Harrogate. He immediately offered his support and with his involvement, Lincoln Memorial University was founded in 1897.

Such attention over the years underscores Abraham Lincoln's profound legacy and his prominent place in the American story. But at the same time, it is not always easy to see past the image and understand

why Lincoln has achieved such stature. One writer who has done this as well as anyone is Merrill D. Peterson in his book Lincoln in American Memory (1994). Peterson looked at all the many ways in which Lincoln is remembered – books, statues, monuments, paintings, plays, novels, movies, everything – and came up with five broad images of Lincoln that are common in American memory:

Savior of the Union – Lincoln is often portrayed as second only to Washington as the man responsible for the existence of the United States;

The Great Emancipator – This is probably the most enduring and strongest of the images of Lincoln, and for good reason;

Man of the People – Lincoln undoubtedly rose from the "plain people" of America, which suggests that he was a democratic hero, someone who knew instinctively what people were thinking and how to relate to them;

First American – This suggests that Lincoln was the ultimate example of the perfect American because he represents all aspects of the nation. Consider for example that he was born in the South, yet raised in the Midwest. He looked to the West as the future of the country, but he was also connected intellectually to the northeast;

Self-Made Man – Self-educated and self-motivated, Lincoln obviously personified this concept well. In fact Lincoln himself seemed to have taken some pride in his accomplishments and encouraged this image of himself.

In the end, however, each of us takes Lincoln--or any other heroic figure--and fashions what we need from that person. As a result, Lincoln will always have his admirers as well as his critics. But overall, Lincoln seems to answer well to the needs of the nation as a whole. Certainly he has provided a positive example that resonates with many Americans; his legacy is useful and in many ways comforting and reassuring. As long as those things are true, Lincoln's stature and prominence in American culture is assured.

DISCUSSION ONE

AN INTRODUCTION

to Abraham Lincoln and Citizenship

Introduction to Lincoln

In the first session of "Of the People, By the People, For the People," you will be introduced to the life of Abraham Lincoln. Who was Lincoln? Where did he come from? How did his background affect how he reacted to his world and the news around him? How did his life compare to a political opponent, Stephen Douglas? The answers to these questions can help us think about our reactions to events in our own lifetime. It can also provide us with a better understanding of how our fellow citizens may react in different ways from us.

Introduction to the Primary Source: "House Divided Speech"

Lincoln's "House Divided Speech" focuses on Lincoln's view of the effect of slavery on the nation. This speech was crafted in response to Stephen Douglas, his opponent in the 1858 Illinois Senate race. Douglas, an Illinois Democrat who championed "popular sovereignty," had known Lincoln for most of his political life. The two men both lived in Springfield, Illinois, and both had at one time courted Mary Todd of Lexington, Kentucky. Their differing views on the subject of the expansion of slavery (among other topics), brought them into competition more than once – after losing to Douglas in the 1858 Senate race, Lincoln defeated Douglas in the 1860 presidential election. Despite losing, Douglas proudly held Lincoln's hat during his First Inaugural Address in 1861.

Essential Questions

- How would you define citizenship? What makes a *good* citizen?
- How does society, our families, and even chance affect our views?
- How can a desire to act as good citizens help opponents find common ground?
- What actions by citizens in the present can produce positive community dialogue?

PRIMARY SOURCE

HOUSE DIVIDED SPEECH

June 16, 1858

If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could then better judge what to do, and how to do it.

We are now far into the fifth year, since a policy was initiated, with the avowed object, and confident promise, of putting an end to slavery agitation.

Under the operation of that policy, that agitation has not only, not ceased, but has constantly augmented.

In my opinion, it will not cease, until a crisis shall have been reached, and passed.

"A house divided against itself cannot stand."

I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free.

I do not expect the Union to be dissolved -- I do not expect the house to fall -- but I do expect it will cease to be divided.

It will become all one thing or all the other.

Either the opponents of slavery, will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward, till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new -- North as well as South.

Have we no tendency to the latter condition?

Let any one who doubts, carefully contemplate that now almost complete legal combination -- piece of machinery so to speak -- compounded of the Nebraska doctrine, and the Dred Scott decision. Let him consider not only what work the machinery is adapted to do, and how well adapted; but also, let him study the history of its construction, and trace, if he can, or rather fail, if he can, to trace the evidence of design and concert of action, among its chief architects, from the beginning.

But, so far, Congress only, had acted; and an indorsement by the people, real or apparent, was indispensable, to save the point already gained, and give chance for more.

The new year of 1854 found slavery excluded from more than half the States by State Constitutions, and from most of the national territory by congressional prohibition.

Four days later, commenced the struggle, which ended in repealing that congressional prohibition.

This opened all the national territory to slavery, and was the first point gained.

This necessity had not been overlooked; but had been provided for, as well as might be, in the notable argument of "squatter sovereignty," otherwise called "sacred right of self government," which latter phrase, though expressive of the only rightful basis of any government, was so perverted in this attempted use of it as to amount to just this: That if any one man, choose to enslave another, no third man shall be allowed to object.

That argument was incorporated into the Nebraska bill itself, in the language which follows: "It being the true intent and meaning of this act not to legislate slavery into any Territory or state, not to exclude it therefrom; but to leave the people thereof perfectly free to form and regulate their domestic institutions in their own way, subject only to the Constitution of the United States."

Then opened the roar of loose declamation in favor of "Squatter Sovereignty," and "Sacred right of self-government."

"But," said opposition members, "let us be more specific -- let us amend the bill so as to expressly declare that the people of the territory may exclude slavery." "Not we," said the friends of the measure; and down they voted the amendment.

While the Nebraska Bill was passing through congress, a law case involving the question of a negroe's freedom, by reason of his owner having voluntarily taken him first into a free state and then a territory covered by the congressional prohibition, and held him as a slave, for a long time in each, was passing through the U.S. Circuit Court for the District of Missouri; and both Nebraska bill and law suit were brought to a decision in the same month of May, 1854. The negroe's name was "Dred Scott," which name now designates the decision finally made in the case.

Before the then next Presidential election, the law case came to, and was argued in, the Supreme Court of the United States; but the decision of it was deferred until after the election. Still, before the election, Senator Trumbull, on the floor of the Senate, requests the leading advocate of the Nebraska bill to state his opinion whether the people of a territory can constitutionally exclude slavery from their limits; and the latter answers: "That is a question for the Supreme Court."

The election came. Mr. Buchanan was elected, and the indorsement, such as it was, secured. That was the second point gained. The indorsement, however, fell short of a clear popular majority by nearly four hundred thousand votes, and so, perhaps, was not overwhelmingly reliable and satisfactory.

The outgoing President, in his last annual message, as impressively as possible, echoed back upon the people the weight and authority of the indorsement.

The Supreme Court met again; did not announce their decision, but ordered a re-argument.

The Presidential inauguration came, and still no decision of the court; but the incoming President, in his inaugural address, fervently exhorted the people to abide by the forthcoming decision, whatever might be.

Then, in a few days, came the decision.

The reputed author of the Nebraska Bill finds an early occasion to make a speech at this capital indorsing the Dred Scott Decision, and vehemently denouncing all opposition to it.

The new President, too, seizes the early occasion of the Silliman letter to indorse and strongly construe that decision, and to express his astonishment that any different view had ever been entertained.

At length a squabble springs up between the President and the author of the Nebraska Bill, on the mere question of fact, whether the Lecompton constitution was or was not, in any just sense, made by the people of Kansas; and in that squabble the latter declares that all he wants is a fair vote for the people, and that he cares not whether slavery be voted down or voted up. I do not understand his declaration that he cares not whether slavery be voted down or voted up, to be intended by him other than as an apt definition of the policy he would impress upon the public mind -- the principle for which he declares he has suffered much, and is ready to suffer to the end.

And well may he cling to that principle. If he has any parental feeling, well may he cling to it. That principle, is the only shred left of his original Nebraska doctrine. Under the Dred Scott decision, "squatter sovereignty" squatted out of existence, tumbled down like temporary scaffolding -- like the mould at the foundry served through one blast and fell back into loose sand -- helped to carry an election, and then was kicked to the winds. His late joint struggle with the Republicans, against the Lecompton Constitution, involves nothing of the original Nebraska doctrine. That struggle was made on a point, the right of a people to make their own constitution, upon which he and the Republicans have never differed.

The several points of the Dred Scott decision, in connection with Senator Douglas' "care-not" policy, constitute the piece of machinery, in its present state of advancement. This was the third point gained.

\ The working points of that machinery are:

First, that no negro slave, imported as such from Africa, and no descendant of such slave can ever be a citizen of any State, in the sense of that term as used in the Constitution of the United States.

This point is made in order to deprive the negro, in every possible event, of the benefit of this provision of the United States Constitution, which declares that--

"The citizens of each State shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of citizens in the several States."

Secondly, that "subject to the Constitution of the United States," neither Congress nor a Territorial Legislature can exclude slavery from any United States Territory.

This point is made in order that individual men may fill up the territories with slaves, without danger of losing them as property, and thus to enhance the chances of permanency to the institution through all the future.

Thirdly, that whether the holding a negro in actual slavery in a free State, makes him free, as against the holder, the United States courts will not decide, but will leave to be decided by the courts of any slave State the negro may be forced into by the master.

This point is made, not to be pressed immediately; but, if acquiesced in for a while, and apparently indorsed by the people at an election, then to sustain the logical conclusion that what Dred Scott's master might lawfully do with Dred Scott, in the free State of Illinois, every other master may lawfully do with any other one, or one thousand slaves, in Illinois, or in any other free State.

Auxiliary to all this, and working hand in hand with it, the Nebraska doctrine, or what is left of it, is to educate and mould public opinion, at least Northern public opinion, to not care whether slavery is voted down or voted up.

This shows exactly where we now are; and partially, also, whither we are tending.

It will throw additional light on the latter, to go back, and run the mind over the string of historical facts already stated. Several things will now appear less dark and mysterious than they did when they were transpiring. The people were to be left "perfectly free" "subject only to the Constitution." What the Constitution had to do with it, outsiders could not then see. Plainly enough now, it was an exactly fitted niche, for the Dred Scott decision to afterward come in, and declare the perfect freedom of the people, to be just no freedom at all.

Why was the amendment, expressly declaring the right of the people to exclude slavery, voted down? Plainly enough now, the adoption of it would have spoiled the niche for the Dred Scott decision.

Why was the court decision held up? Why even a Senator's individual opinion withheld, till after the presidential election? Plainly enough now, the speaking out then would have damaged the "perfectly free" argument upon which the election was to be carried.

Why the outgoing President's felicitation on the indorsement? Why the delay of a reargument? Why the incoming President's advance exhortation in favor of the decision?

These things look like the cautious patting and petting of a spirited horse, preparatory to mounting him, when it is dreaded that he may give the rider a fall.

And why the hasty after indorsements of the decision by the President and others?

We can not absolutely know that all these exact adaptations are the result of preconcert. But when we see a lot of framed timbers, different portions of which we know have been gotten out at different times and places and by different workmen -- Stephen, Franklin, Roger, and James, for instance -- and when we see these timbers joined together, and see they exactly make the frame of a house or a mill, all the tenons and mortices exactly fitting, and all the lengths and proportions of the different pieces exactly adapted to their respective places, and not a piece too many or too few -- not omitting even scaffolding -- or, if a single piece be lacking, we can see the place in the frame exactly fitted and prepared to yet bring such piece in -- in such a case, we find it impossible not to believe that Stephen and Franklin and Roger and James all understood one another from the beginning, and all worked upon a common plan or draft drawn up before the first lick was struck.

It should not be overlooked that, by the Nebraska Bill, the people of a State, as well as Territory, were to be left "perfectly free" "subject only to the Constitution."

Why mention a State? They were legislating for territories, and not for or about States. Certainly the people of a State are and ought to be subject to the Constitution of the United States; but why is mention of this lugged into this merely territorial law? Why are the people of a territory and the people of a state therein lumped together, and their relation to the Constitution therein treated as being precisely the same?

While the opinion of the Court, by Chief Justice Taney, in the Dred Scott case, and the separate opinions of all the concurring Judges, expressly declare that the Constitution of the United States neither permits Congress nor a Territorial legislature to exclude slavery from any United States territory, they all omit to declare whether or not the same Constitution permits a state, or the people of a State, to exclude it.

Possibly, this is a mere omission; but who can be quite sure, if McLean or Curtis had sought to get into the opinion a declaration of unlimited power in the people of a state to exclude slavery from their limits, just as Chase and Macy sought to get such declaration, in behalf of the people of a territory, into the Nebraska bill -- I ask, who can be quite sure that it would not have been voted down, in the one case, as it had been in the other.

The nearest approach to the point of declaring the power of a State over slavery, is made by Judge Nelson. He approaches it more than once, using the precise idea, and almost the language too, of the Nebraska act. On one occasion his exact language is, "except in cases where the power is restrained by the Constitution of the United States, the law of the State is supreme over the subject of slavery within its jurisdiction."

In what cases the power of the states is so restrained by the U.S. Constitution, is left an open question, precisely as the same question, as to the restraint on the power of the territories was left open in the Nebraska act. Put that and that together, and we have another nice little niche, which we may, ere long, see filled with another Supreme Court decision, declaring that the Constitution of the United States does not permit a state to exclude slavery from its limits.

And this may especially be expected if the doctrine of "care not whether slavery be voted down or voted up, shall gain upon the public mind sufficiently to give promise that such a decision an be maintained when made.

Such a decision is all that slavery now lacks of being alike lawful in all the States.

Welcome, or unwelcome, such decision is probably coming, and will soon be upon us, unless the power of the present political dynasty shall be met and overthrown.

We shall lie down pleasantly dreaming that the people of Missouri are on the verge of making their State free; and we shall awake to the reality, instead, that the Supreme Court has made Illinois a slave State.

To meet and overthrow the power of that dynasty, is the work now before all those who would prevent that consummation.

This is what we have to do.

But how can we best do it?

There are those who denounce us openly to their own friends, and yet whisper us softly, that Senator Douglas is the aptest instrument there is, with which to effect that object. They wish us to infer all, from the facts, that he now has a little quarrel with the present head of the dynasty; and that he has regularly voted with us, on a single point, upon which, he and we, have never differed.

They remind us that he is a great man, and that the largest of us are very small ones. Let this be granted. But "a living dog is better than a dead lion." Judge Douglas, if not a dead lion for this work, is at least a caged and toothless one. How can he oppose the advances of slavery? He don't care anything about it. His avowed mission is impressing the "public heart" to care nothing about it.

A leading Douglas Democratic newspaper thinks Douglas' superior talent will be needed to resist the revival of the African slave trade.

Does Douglas believe an effort to revive that trade is approaching? He has not said so. Does he really think so? But if it is, how can he resist it? For years he has labored to prove it a sacred right of white men to take negro slaves into the new territories. Can he possibly show that it is less a sacred right to buy them where they can be bought cheapest? And, unquestionably they can be bought cheaper in Africa than in Virginia.

He has done all in his power to reduce the whole question of slavery to one of a mere right of property; and as such, how can he oppose the foreign slave trade -- how can he refuse that trade in that "property" shall be "perfectly free" -- unless he does it as a protection to the home production? And as the home producers will probably not ask the protection, he will be wholly without a ground of opposition.

Senator Douglas holds, we know, that a man may rightfully be wiser to-day than he was yesterday -- that he may rightfully change when he finds himself wrong.

But can we, for that reason, run ahead, and infer that he will make any particular change, of which he, himself, has given no intimation? Can we safely base our action upon any such vague inference?

Now, as ever, I wish not to misrepresent Judge Douglas' position, question his motives, or do ought that can be personally offensive to him.

Whenever, if ever, he and we can come together on principle so that our great cause may have assistance from his great ability, I hope to have interposed no adventitious obstacle.

But clearly, he is not now with us -- he does not pretend to be -- he does not promise to ever be.

Our cause, then, must be intrusted to, and conducted by its own undoubted friends -- those whose hands are free, whose hearts are in the work -- who do care for the result.

Two years ago the Republicans of the nation mustered over thirteen hundred thousand strong.

We did this under the single impulse of resistance to a common danger, with every external circumstance against us.

Of strange, discordant, and even, hostile elements, we gathered from the four winds, and formed and fought the battle through, under the constant hot fire of a disciplined, proud, and pampered enemy.

Did we brave all then to falter now? -- now -- when that same enemy is wavering, dissevered and belligerent?

The result is not doubtful. We shall not fail -- if we stand firm, we shall not fail.

Wise councils may accelerate or mistakes delay it, but, sooner or later the victory is sure to come.