

Lesson Title: 1858 Lincoln-Douglas Debate in Ottawa, IL.

Lesson Class Name and Grade Level: This lesson is intended for an Illinois State History class in either the 11th or 12th grade.

Lesson Type: Lecture, Questioning, Discussion.

NCSS Themes: I Culture

II Time, Continuity, and Change

IV Individual Development and Identity

Illinois Learning Standards:

16.A.3b: Make inferences about historical events and eras using historical sources.

16.A.5b Explain the tentative nature of historical interpretations.

14.D.3: Describe roles and influences of individuals, groups and media in shaping current Illinois and United States public policy (e.g., general public opinion, special interest groups, formal parties, media).

Introduction: Lincoln is remembered as the Great Emancipator, and for good reason. While it is true that Lincoln, as President, was a driving force behind the movement to end slavery, the temptation becomes too strong to see this as indicative of Lincoln's conception of racial equality. Indeed, Lincoln has become, in the minds of the American public, a standard-bearer for racial equality and understanding. Historical scholarship suggests Lincoln's views on the race and slavery were far more complicated—and troubling. In examining two excerpts from speeches delivered by Stephen Douglas and Abraham Lincoln at Ottawa during the 1858 Illinois Senatorial campaign, we can see Lincoln's position quite clearly.

This lesson should be handled carefully. The goal is not to denigrate Lincoln; rather, it is to undermine the way in which we remember the debate on slavery as a binary opposition—black and white, good or bad. The past was, at one time, the present, and just as today, people's opinions and beliefs are never perfectly delineated. To make Lincoln more human, then, is one very real goal of this lesson.

Goals: When students complete this lesson, they should be able to:

1. Summarize and discuss the difference between Douglas and Lincoln's views on slavery.
2. Distinguish between Lincoln's opinions/ideas on slavery and race.
3. Identify current popular perceptions of Lincoln's views on slavery and race, comparing them with what he expresses in the primary source reading.

Materials/Equipment:

1. Primary Source Readings
2. Computer Access
3. Screen/Projector
4. PowerPoint
 - Lecture Notes

Procedures:

Pre-class Preparation:

- Make PowerPoint Presentation
- Check computer/projector
- Make photocopies of primary source reading

Anticipatory Set

Begin the class by giving a short PowerPoint presentation on the Lincoln-Douglas debates. It isn't necessary for the notes to be too intensive; the goal is to give the students an introduction and the end result of the election. Try to collect as many pictures as possible of the debates to give the students a visual in their minds as they perform the group activities using the texts.

Statement of Objectives

1. Analyze reliable primary sources and relate them to a historical narrative.
2. Work together in groups toward the completion of lesson activities.
3. Develop analytical skills by examining a text and interpreting its meaning.

Outline of Lesson Contents

1. After the short PowerPoint introduction, explain the lesson and its objectives to the students.
2. Have the students count off and break the class into groups of 2-3, depending on size. Next, have the class get into their groups and assign the task of "writer" or "recorder."
 - a. Be sure to remind the students that every member of the group is expected to participate and that you will be checking on the groups occasionally to see this is done.
3. Hand out the primary source texts to each group.
 - a. Give the students twenty minutes to read the documents and discuss it in their group.
4. Now give the groups 8-10 minutes to draw up a summary of each speech. The format of the summary is up to the individual teacher, though bullet points written in complete sentences would certainly be appropriate.
5. After this, have the class come together and discuss the speeches they've read as a whole.

- a. **Ask:** What did they think of the excerpts they read? (this is an informal sort of question, more intended to break the ice and get the students thinking/talking)
 - b. **Ask:** Is there a difference between Lincoln's views on slavery and race?
 - c. **Ask:** How are Lincoln's views about slavery and race different? In what ways, specifically?
 - d. **Ask:** Given what we've read in the documents, how is Lincoln's position different from normally held perceptions?
 - e. **Ask:** How should we judge Lincoln's views? Should we even judge them? (This is perhaps the question with the potential to be the most engaging for the students. This addresses the often tenuous position of the historian who deals with delicate subject matter. Be sure to be sensitive in allowing the students to express themselves—as appropriately as possible, of course).
6. Keep the discussion going until the end of class by prompting or by directing and guiding the flow. In the few minutes before class ends, review briefly the day's lesson, asking questions to students as an informal assessment of their reception.
 7. Be sure to collect the group summaries before they leave class.

Evaluation: The group answer sheets will be collected and taken for a daily grade. Students will be expected to know about the Lincoln-Douglas debates for the next unit test. The discussion/end of class review will be used to informally assess student apprehension of the material.

MIVCA:

This lesson is Meaningful because it allows a structured opportunity for students to question and reinterpret their commonly held perceptions of history. The lesson is Integrative because it utilizes primary sources and technology to enhance the presentation. It is also Integrative in the sense that it requires students to use skills garnered in other subject areas, such as literary analysis from English class. This lesson is Value Based, in that it raises the present-day issue of race relations in a manner that is less direct (given its position as a historicized object of analysis) and perhaps safer manner. The lesson is Challenging because it requires students to critically analyze documents, draw conclusions, and apply these conclusions to new questions posed by the teacher. The lesson also promotes Active learning through use of group work and discussion.