



John Wilkes Booth



Teaching Guide

SEGMENT 9, WEBISODE 6

Please note: Each segment in this Webisode has its own Teaching Guide

After the fall of Richmond and the surrender at Appomattox, John Wilkes Booth, an actor and Southern sympathizer, decided to assassinate the president while two co-conspirators would kill Secretary of State Seward and Vice President Andrew Johnson. Booth hoped that this would throw the country into political chaos.

On Good Friday, April 14, 1865, Lincoln met with his cabinet. Lincoln wanted to restore the South with as little enmity and punishment as possible. Finally, the pressures and strain of leading the nation through a bloody civil war were ending, and the President could begin to relax. That evening, Lincoln took his wife and a young couple to see a play at Ford's Theatre. The Washington policeman guarding the presidential box, John Parker, left his post to either have a better view of the play or get a drink at a nearby tavern. John Wilkes Booth entered the presidential box and fired a single pistol shot into the president's head. The unconscious president was carried to the Petersen boarding house across the street from the theater. Throughout the night, as a light rain fell, scores of physicians and government officials crowded into the small room where the president lay dying. Finally, a little after seven o'clock in the morning, Lincoln died.

The assassination of President Lincoln shocked and grieved both North and South and thwarted plans for an orderly, charitable reconstruction.

Teacher Directions

1. Write the following words of John Wilkes Booth on the chalkboard, chart paper, or a transparency.

"Our country owed all her troubles to him, and God simply made me the instrument of his punishment."
2. Tell the students that John Wilkes Booth wrote these words in his diary several days after he had shot President Lincoln.
3. Ask the students.
 - Who else in history believed they were doing God's will?
4. Make sure students understand the following points in discussing the question.
 - Many people have done good believing that they are doing God's will. But some deranged people (John Brown) or people with very rigid belief



Segment Overview



Let's Discuss

Let's Discuss, Cont.



History Sleuth

systems (Salem Puritans), or self-serving motives (slave holders) justified their actions as doing God's will. Kings and queens believe that God has chosen them to rule, so anything they do is fine with God. Countries at war often believe that their cause is holy and hope that God will help them to carry out his will. John Wilkes Booth believed so strongly in the Southern cause, that he believed he did God's will by assassinating Lincoln.

Teacher Directions

1. Share the following information with students.

With the death of Abraham Lincoln, the new president Andrew Johnson carried out his own plans for Reconstruction (bringing the seceded states back into the Union). Some Northerners went south to help the newly freed African Americans and the citizens who had lost everything in the war. They went as doctors, nurses, and teachers. But others went south to make personal fortunes at the expense of Southern citizens. Many Northern politicians wanted to punish the South and make it pay for causing the war. Terrible things happened in the South, and Reconstruction nurtured seeds of bitterness and regional and racial hatred that flourished for over a century.

2. Distribute the Student Sheets: *What Might Have Been*, one set per team. We often wonder what might have been if some event had not happened or had happened differently. Direct the students, working in their teams, to read each quotation from Lincoln's speeches and writings to discover the president's attitude toward the South and to speculate what course Reconstruction might have taken if he had lived. Students take turns recording the team's responses.
3. When teams have completed their Student Sheets, invite them to take turns reading Lincoln's words and their responses to the questions. Help students understand Lincoln's attitude toward the South and his plans for a fair and forgiving peace. Remind students of what really happened in Reconstruction from the information shared at the beginning of the activity.

Teacher Directions

1. Tell students that Confederate General George Pickett, who had lost many men at the battle of Gettysburg, said of Lincoln's death, "The South has lost her best friend and protector in this her direst hour of need."
2. Ask students.
 - Do you agree or disagree with Pickett's statement?
 - Why would a Confederate general say this?
 - Do you think people in the South agreed with Pickett?
3. Tell students many Southerners hated Lincoln. They did not hear or did not believe Lincoln's words of charity and peace.



What do you Think?

What Do You Think,
Continued.



4. Students, working in their small teams, compose a poem reflecting the South's attitude toward Lincoln. They may choose any point of view: Pickett's, a freed African American's, a defeated Southerner's.

Teacher Directions

1. Distribute two copies of the Student Sheets: "O Captain! My Captain" and "O Captain! Lamenting the Loss of Lincoln" to each team. (Explain that to lament means to mourn or feel grief about something.)
2. Read the poem aloud with students following on their sheets.
3. Working with team partners, students discuss the poem and answer the questions. Each partner should share the task of recording the answers on the Student Sheet.
4. Student partnerships share their responses in a whole class discussion.
5. Tell the students that when Lincoln died at 7:20 in the morning on April 15, many government officials had gathered around his bed. Edwin Stanton, Secretary of War, had disliked Lincoln, but after three years in his cabinet, he came to have great respect for him. Stanton said when the president died, "Now he belongs to the ages."
6. Ask students.
 - What did Stanton mean?
 - Even though he did not live to see through his plans for a just and charitable Reconstruction, how did Abraham Lincoln move the nation toward freedom?

Teacher Directions

Use the following activities with your students.

Library/Media – Students read the history of Ford's Theater and view photographs of the theater and the house where Lincoln died on the Ford's Theater National Historic Site @ <http://www.nps.gov/foth/index2.htm>.

Science – Students learn about hospital shock trauma centers, which have had great success treating victims of gunshot wounds.

Math – Students calculate how many days Lincoln served as president.

Geography – Students trace the route of Lincoln's funeral train from Washington, D.C., to Springfield, Illinois.



What Might Have Been

Quotes from Lincoln to indicate his intentions toward the South



First Inaugural Address, March 1861

We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion¹ may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic² chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield, and patriot grave, to every living heart and hearthstone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.

1. anger, strong feelings
2. spiritual

Describe Lincoln's attitude toward the South.

What does he tell the Southern citizens they must be?

What does he hope will save the Union?

What Might Have Been

Quotes from Lincoln to indicate his intentions toward the South



Thanksgiving Proclamation, October 1863

I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States...to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent¹ Father who dwelleth in the Heavens. And I recommend to them that...they do...commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable³ civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently⁴ implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility and Union.

1. kind
2. lives
3. terrible
4. with strong feeling

Describe Lincoln's attitude toward the war.

Name three things for which he wants the citizens of the United States to pray.

What Might Have Been Quotes from Lincoln to indicate his intentions toward the South



Proclamation Of Amnesty And Reconstruction
December 8, 1863

I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, do proclaim, declare, and make known to all persons who have, directly or by implication¹, participated² in the existing rebellion... that a full pardon is hereby granted to them and each of them, with restoration of all rights of property, except as to slaves...upon the condition that every such person shall take and subscribe³ an oath [of loyalty to the United States], and thenceforward keep and maintain said oath inviolate⁴...

1. in an indirect way
2. took part in
3. sign
4. without breaking it

To whom is Lincoln speaking?

What is he offering to these people?

What must they do for their part of the bargain?

Do you think Lincoln is making a good offer? Explain your answer.

What Might Have Been

Quotes from Lincoln to indicate his intentions toward the South

Second Inaugural Address, March 1865



With malice¹ toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

1. hatred

Describe Lincoln's attitude toward those who fought in the war?

Which army is he speaking about? How do you know?

What is Lincoln's major goal?

What Might Have Been

Quotes from Lincoln to indicate his intentions toward the South

Last Public Address, April 1865



We all agree that the seceded States, so called, are out of their proper relation with the Union; and that the sole¹ object of the government, civil and military, in regard to those States is to again get them into that proper practical relation. I believe it is not only possible, but in fact, easier to do this, without deciding, or even considering, whether these States have ever been out of the Union, than with it. Finding themselves safely at home, it would be utterly immaterial² whether they had ever been abroad.

1. only
2. not matter at all

What does Lincoln say is the only object of the government?

What does he say is not important to decide?

How does he describe the seceded states' return to the Union?

O Captain! My Captain!

by Walt Whitman

O Captain! My Captain! our fearful trip is done;
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won;
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring:

But O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! My Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up— for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills;
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the shores
a-crowding;
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning:

Here Captain! dear father!
This arm beneath your head;
It is some dream that on the deck,
You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still;
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse or will;
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, it's voyage closed and
done;
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won:

Exult, O shores, and ring, O bells!
But I with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

rack - difficulty, storm
exult- rejoice
keel - the bottom and sides of a ship

trills - plays sweetly
tread - footsteps

O Captain! Lamenting Lincoln's Loss

1. Who is the Captain? _____

2. What was the "fearful trip"? _____

3. What does the poet mean when he says, "the prize we sought is won"?

4. What honors are being given to the Captain?

5. By what other name is the Captain called?

6. How does the poet make his poem more dramatic, or give more emphasis to certain lines?

7. How does the poet feel about the loss of "his" Captain?
How do you know this?
