

Lincoln's Assassination
8th Grade or Higher
Cassie Gibson

Directions:

- Answer the corresponding questions following each document.
- After answering the questions for documents 1-3, please then respond to the essay prompt using the information obtained from the following documents.
- The essay will be graded based on your ability to integrate and utilize relevant information from the documents provided to create a well organized.

Essay Prompt: Compare and contrast feelings of Northerners and Southerners upon hearing the news that Lincoln has been assassinated.

Document #1: Carl Sandberg's description of Lincoln's assassination.

The following is an excerpt from Sandberg's biography of Lincoln. In the first paragraph, Sandberg describes a lady in the theatre and tells the reader what is in the letter that she is writing to her father about the evening. The second paragraph is the description of Boothe shooting Lincoln.

"...Out in a main-floor seat is one Julia Adalaide Shephard, writing a letter to her father about this ...evening at the theater. ...the President is in yonder upper right hand private box so handsomely decked with silken flags festooned over a picture of George Washington. The young and lovely daughter of Senator Harris is the only one of his party we see as the flags hide the rest. But we know Father Abraham is there like a Father watching with interests his children.

"....he (Boothe) raises the derringer, lengthens his right arm, runs his eye along the barrel in a line with the head of his victim less than five feet away-and pulls the trigger.

"A lead ball somewhat less than a half-inch in diameter crashes into the left side of the head of the Human Target, into the back of the head, in a line with and three inches from the left ear....

For Abraham Lincoln it is lights out, a good night, farewell—and a long farewell to the good earth and its trees, its enjoyable companions, and the Union of States and the world Family of Man he has loved. He is not dead yet. He is to linger in dying. But the living man can never again speak, see, hear, or awaken into conscious being."

After reading this excerpt, answer the following questions.

1. Based upon Julia's words in her letter, how do you think she would react to hearing the President be shot?
2. In the second paragraph, Sandberg uses the words "world Family of Man he has loved." What is he trying to say about Lincoln?
3. Based upon this account of the events of April 14, 1865, if Sandberg had been there to witness the assassination, how do you think he would have felt knowing someone had just shot Lincoln?

Document #2: Letter from Edwin Bates to his parents recounting the assassination.

On the night of April 14, Edwin Bates had been a member of the audience watching the play along with Lincoln. The following is an excerpt to his parents in which he detailed the events of the evening.

".....I went to the theatre last night and saw him for the first time and soon after an event did occur, not happy as I had predicted in my letter, but one the most horrible and atrocious that as ever been recorded in the annals of history—the assassination of Mr. Lincoln. ...was seated in the orchestra chairs next to the stage and nearly underneath the box occupied by Mr. Lincoln and friends....The excitement here is terrific, the street corners and hotels are crowded with people swearing deep and deadly vengeance to all rebels and the whole south. And so it will be over the north and what the results will be none can tell. Mr. Lincoln was certain a "Saul among the people" and the early peace and prosperity that I had hoped under his hand would soon return to the country I am afraid now is far distant.....No event except those of the family history has ever filled me with such profound sadness as this. I have no heart to prosecute further the business upon which I came here and which I had reason to hope I would soon successfully accomplish....I hope for the sake of the Union men of the South and the south generally that it will be found when the assassins are caught and examined that no part of this plot was concocted at the South or was known to Southern leaders."

After reading this excerpt, answer the following questions.

4. Describe Bates' feelings about the fact Lincoln was shot.
5. When Bates calls Lincoln a "Saul among the people", what does he mean by this?
6. From this reading, describe Bates' feelings toward the South?
7. Bates describes the people outside the theatre immediately after the incident. How does he describe their feelings?

Document #3: Mary Chestnut's journal entry.

The following is an excerpt from Mary Chestnut's journal. At the beginning of the war, Mary had written in her journal that she could not sleep from all the celebrations when South Carolina left the Union. Now, at the end of the war, Chestnut's home has been turned into makeshift home for the defeated Southern Soldiers.

"April 19th, (1865)-Just now, when Mr. Clay dashed upstairs, pale as a sheet, saying, "General Lee has capitulated," I saw it reflected in Mary Darby's face before I heard him speak. Staggered to the table, sat down and wept aloud. Mr. Clay's eyes were not dry. Quite beside herself, Mary shrieked, "Now we belong to negroes and Yankees!" Buck said, "I do not believe it."Night and day this landing and these steps are crowded with the elite of the Confederacy, going and coming and when night comes, or rather, bedtime, more beds are made on the floor of the landing-place for the war worn soldiers to rest upon. The whole house is a bivouac. ...we are an 'armed camp'.....my room given up to soldiers. We are to stay here. Running is useless now; so we mean to bide a Yankee raid, which they say is imminent. Why fly? They are everywhere, these Yankees, like red ants, like the locusts, and frogs which were the plagues of Egypt."

8. What does the word capitulated mean in this entry?
9. Using her words and phrases, describe Mary's feelings toward the Northern Soldiers. Though we are unsure if Mary has heard of Lincoln's assassination, based upon this

- entry, what do you think her feelings might have been upon hearing the news of Lincoln's mortal wound?
10. Though we are unsure if Mary has heard of Lincoln's assassination, based upon this entry, what do you think her feelings might have been upon hearing the news of Lincoln's mortal wound?

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As you prepare and write your essay you should remember to:

- Include an introduction paragraph or thesis statement.
- Use information from the documents as supporting details and examples to enforce your ideas.