

Speech at Peoria, October 16th, 1854

A Common Core Unit

by Lois MacMillan

Metadata

- Era: National Expansion and Reform (1801-1861)
- Theme: Slavery
- Grade Level: 8, 9, 10, 11, 12
- Number of Class Periods: 3
- Coverage People: Abraham Lincoln, Stephen Douglas
- Coverage Documents: *Speech at Peoria*

Unit Standards

Common Core State Standards

- ✓ Key Ideas and Details: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH9-10 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.
- ✓ Craft and Structure: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH9-10 Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

United States History Content Standards for Grades 5-12

- Era 4: Expansion and Reform (1801-1861)
 - Standard 4: The sources and character of cultural, religious, and social reform movements in the antebellum period.
 - Analyze changing ideas about race and assess the reception of proslavery and antislavery ideologies in the North and South.
 - Historical Thinking Standard 3: Compare and contrast differing sets of ideas, values, personalities, behaviors, and institutions by identifying likenesses and differences.

Unit Overview

This lesson is part of a bigger unit, *Compromise to Conflict: March to Civil War*. This lesson was created for the Gilder Lehrman's online graduate course from Dickinson's College, *Understanding Lincoln*. This unit has lessons that enable students to understand, summarize and analyze original text of historical significance. Students will demonstrate this knowledge by writing summaries of excerpts from Lincoln's *Speech at Peoria*. Through a step-by-step process, students will acquire skills to analyze any primary or secondary source material.

- Lesson One-“Wolf by the Ear”
- Lesson Two-“Missouri Compromise”
- Lesson Three-“Compromise of 1850”
- Lesson Four-“Speech at Peoria”
- Lesson Five-“Dred Scott Decision”
- Lesson Six-“Perspectives of Slavery”
- Lesson Six-“John Brown”

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Lesson Four Overview-“Speech at Peoria”

Grade Level: 8, 9, 10 11, 12

Number of class periods: 3

Common Core State Standards:

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Objectives of Lesson Four-“Speech at Peoria”

Essential Question:

How did Lincoln use the Declaration of Independence to prove that slavery should not extend westward?

SWBAT

- Determine the meaning of words or phrases within an excerpt of Lincoln’s Peoria Speech
- Determine the central idea behind of the beginning of Lincoln’s Peoria Speech
- Disaggregate the excerpt from the into three categories from the preamble of the Declaration of Independence:
 - “All Men are Created Equal”
 - “Life, Liberty, and pursuit of Happiness”
 - “Consent of the Governed”

Introduction for Lesson Four – “Speech at Peoria”

“The doctrine of self government is right—absolutely and eternally right—but it has no just applications, as here attempted. Or perhaps I should say that whether it has such just application depends upon whether a negro is not or is not a man...If the negro is a man, why then my ancient faith teaches me that ‘all men are created equal’ and that there can be no moral right in connection with one man’s making of a slave of another.”

Abraham Lincoln, October 16, 1854

After serving one term in Congress, Lincoln came home to Illinois. “Between 1849 and 1854, while sitting on the political sidelines and devoting himself outwardly to the practice of law,” Lincoln is catapulted back into politics with the passage of the Kansas Nebraska Act.ⁱ “Sponsored by Illinois Senator Stephen A. Douglas (and former justice on the Illinois State Supreme Court) this legislation voided the congressional prohibition on slavery in that section of the Louisiana Territory north of the 36’, 30’ parallel, a restriction on the spread of slavery agreed to in the Missouri Compromise of 1820. Lincoln was appalled by this reversal of three decades of settled policy.”ⁱⁱ Lincoln later writes in an autobiographical sketch in 1859, “I was losing interest in politics, when the repeal of the Missouri Compromise aroused me again.”ⁱⁱⁱ

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“For Lincoln, 1854 was an annus mirabilis.”^{iv} He went from the “judicial circuit to the political circuit.”^v *Letter to Richard Yates* was his reentry into Illinois politics.^{vi} Out of his political support of Yates came his great speech at Peoria where he denounces the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Lincoln biographer Albert J Beveridge describes that Lincoln “had prepared with uncommon thoroughness, even for him” in researching and preparation for the speech. He combed over Douglas’s speeches, pamphlets, the debates in Congress, the Illinois State Library and census data. Considered “a rhetorical and literary masterpiece,” the speech at Peoria is considered a turning point in Lincoln’s life. As historian Lewis Lehrman writes “there is an unmistakable wholeness of character, genius, and enterprise to his public life from 1854 to 1865.”^{vii}

Materials for Lesson Four- “Speech at Peoria”

- Preview of Lincoln’s Speech at Peoria -PDF
- Summary Organizer and Analysis-Speech at Peoria-PDF
- Assessment of Text-Speech at Peoria-PDF

Procedure (Instruction and Assessment) for Lesson Four – “Speech at Peoria”

Day One

1. **Preview of Lincoln’s Speech at Peoria-PDF:** The lesson begins with a preview assignment. A preview assignment is a short, engaging task that foreshadows upcoming content. This preview assignment is an excerpt from the beginning of Lincoln’s speech and is designed to model in a whole group setting.
 - The teacher “share reads” the excerpt with the students. This is done by having the students follow along silently while the teacher begins by reading aloud. (The excerpt should be displayed in a large format using an overhead projector, Elmo projector, or similar device.) The teacher models prosody, inflection, and punctuation. The teacher then asks the class to join in with the reading after a few sentences while the teacher continues to read along with the students, still serving as the model for the class. This technique will support struggling readers as well as English Language Learners (ELL).
 - Using the large format, the teacher will explain that the first objective is to select “Key Words” from the selection. The teacher will explain that the endgame is that these key words will be used to summarize the excerpt.
 - **Note:** Key words are very important contributors to understanding the paragraph. With those words the selection would not make sense. These words are usually nouns or verbs. Warn not to pick words that are connector words such as are, is, or the. This selection is 163 words so the students with guidance from the teacher should pick between five to seven words.
 - The next step is a whole-class discussion and negotiation process in constructing a summary sentence using the key words selected by the class. The final negotiated sentence (or sentences) is/are copied in the summary section of the organizer.
 - After the summary, the teacher can question the students on Lincoln’s purpose of starting his speech with ‘ground rules.’
2. **Summary Organizer of Lincoln’s Speech at Peoria:** After the modeling of how to select key words and summarize text, the students are then put in pairs to analyze the large excerpt of the Speech at Peoria. The excerpt is divided into smaller excerpts with opportunity to find key words and summarize each part. Each part is when Lincoln shifts subject emphasis.
 - The student pair may review each excerpt for vocabulary words that the student may encounter and not understand in the reading. The teacher may want to define some vocabulary and have students find meaning through context clues. The students may underline the vocabulary words and put the

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meaning above the word. Emphasize that just because they are vocabulary words, they are not necessary words that should be key words.

- After the pair reads each excerpt, they begin the negotiation process of choosing key words and using those key words to construct a summary sentence. The students will agree on a constructed summary sentence using the key words selected by their groups. The final negotiated sentence (or sentences) is/are copied in the summary section of the organizer.

Day Two

3. **Analysis of Lincoln’s Speech at Peoria:** Using the students’ work from day one’s four “finding the key words and writing a summary statement” for each of the four excerpts, the pair of students will then go back to the text and find phrases that match three main phrases from the Declaration of Independence.
4. **Assessment of Lincoln’s Speech at Peoria:** Using Jefferson’s letter to Lydia Sigourney, *Wolf by the Ear*, the students will write a paragraph using textual evidence on how Lincoln struggles with the emancipation of the enslaved peoples in 1854.

ⁱ Burlingame, Michael. “Abraham Lincoln.” The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008. iBooks.

ⁱⁱ Lehrman, Lewis. “Lincoln at Peoria.” Stackhold Books, 2008, xvi.

ⁱⁱⁱ Abraham Lincoln to Jesse W. Fell, December 20, 1859, Springfield, IL, Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/alhtml/malhome.html>.

^{iv} Burlingame, Michael. “Abraham Lincoln.” The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008. iBooks.

^v Lehrman, Lewis. “Lincoln at Peoria.” Stackhold Books, 2008. 10.

^{vi} Abraham Lincoln to Richard Yates, Springfield, Illinois, August 18, 1854 in Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (8 vols., New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 2:226, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/l/lincoln/>

^{vii} Ibid. xvi.