

SANDBURG'S LINCOLN



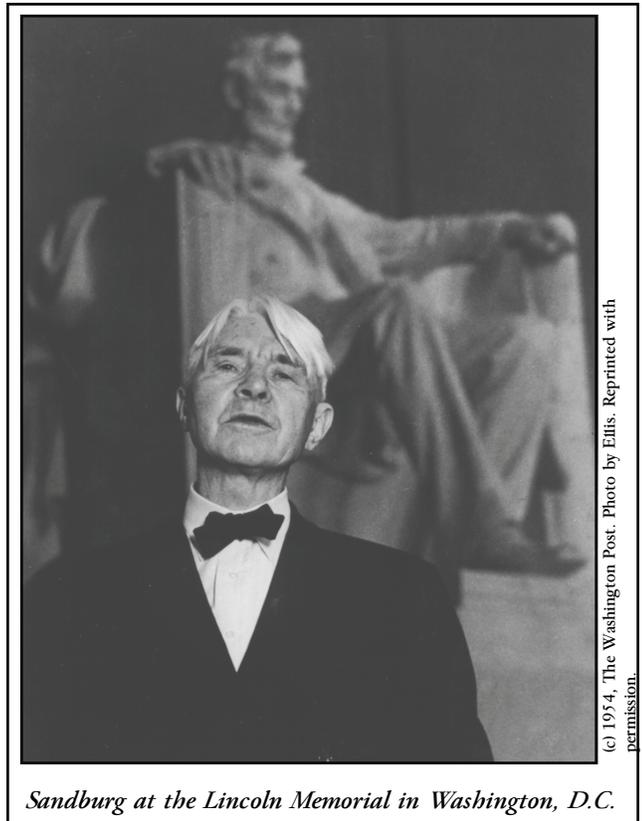
Objectives

- The students will be able to explain Sandburg's relationship with Lincoln and how he became involved in telling the stories of this great president.
- Students will be able to write, deliver and discuss the process and importance of public speaking.
- Students will discover what freedom means to them and how Sandburg reflected freedom throughout his work.

Background

As a young boy growing up in Galesburg, Illinois, Carl Sandburg often listened to stories of old-timers who had known Abraham Lincoln. He would regularly take a shortcut through Knox College in Galesburg where he saw the bronze plaque marking the location where, on October 7, 1858, Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas had met for the fifth joint debate in the famous Senatorial contest. At age twenty in 1898 Sandburg served in the 6th Illinois, Volunteers in Puerto Rico during the Spanish-American War. Carl was assigned to General Nelson A. Miles who was a brigadier general in some of the bloodiest battles of the Army of the Potomac in 1864. His uniform was the same light blue trousers and dark blue jackets with brass buttons as worn by the troops of the Army of the Potomac. During his travels as a soldier, Sandburg swam in the salt water of Charleston Harbor just across the water from Fort Sumter, the sight of the first battle of the Civil War.

These experiences and the Lincoln lore that was prevalent during Sandburg's formative years sparked his curiosity and interest in the person of Abraham Lincoln. Sandburg often felt that he was fortunate to grow up in such a rich Lincoln area and that perhaps he would write a biography of Abraham Lincoln for young people that would give American children an opportunity to learn of Lincoln as he did. This dream of adding to the American literature for children began in 1923 and for the next two years Sandburg researched and wrote about Lincoln. However, this book for young people had changed. It had grown into a two-volume 344,000 word study which covered Lincoln's life up to his



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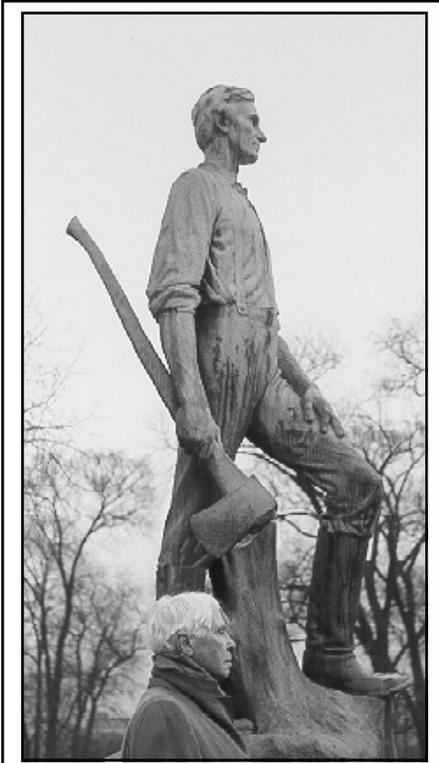
Sandburg at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.





move from Springfield to Washington to become the President of the United States. The book was published in 1925 and was called *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years*.

Sandburg had planned to stop writing about Lincoln after the publication of *The Prairie Years*. The rest of Lincoln’s four years before his assassination would be covered in the Preface to *The Prairie Years*. However, Sandburg was so caught up in the stories of Lincoln that he found it difficult to stop. Sandburg become engaged in Lincoln’s life and for the next thirteen years he researched and wrote about the President’s last four years.



Sandburg and “The Rail Splitter”

Sandburg conducted his research on Lincoln as he traveled throughout America. He met with historians, collectors, librarians, and sons and daughters of those who played a part in the Civil War times. He spent time in the White House researching Lincoln. He read newspapers from the North and the South from that period. He read more than 1,000 books in his first year of research alone. The more he studied, the more intrigued he became with Lincoln and the war years. In 1939 Carl Sandburg published the four-volume Pulitzer-Prize winning biography *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years*.

In these writings, the stories of Lincoln and the people and their times are told. In a *Time* magazine article upon the completion of *The War Years* it was written, in part, “This four-volume biography... is a work whose meaning will not soon be exhausted, whose greatness will not soon be estimated. It can be said that no U.S. biography surpasses it in wealth of documentation and fidelity to fact, that none, not even Douglas Southall Freeman’s monumental *Robert E. Lee*, can compare with it in strength, scope and beauty...”

Sandburg, however, didn’t end his relationship with Lincoln at the publishing of *The War Years*. He continued to work with Lincoln even after he moved to North Carolina in 1945, and in 1954 Sandburg published an abridged (or “distilled” as Sandburg referred to it) one-volume edition of *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years and The War Years*.



ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND CARL SANDBURG – THOUGHTS ON FREEDOM

Background

After the famed Civil War battle of Gettysburg, a 1-acre plot of land was allocated to become the burial place for all those who lost their lives in the battle. This plot is known as the “Soldiers’ National Cemetery”.

Abraham Lincoln was invited to participate in the dedication of this cemetery by adding a few “Presidential” words after the keynote speaker was finished. This address, which took all of three minutes, made a lasting impression. These thoughtfully chosen words talk of freedom and unity. Look at these words carefully and discover for yourself their significance to our country and to Carl Sandburg.

Procedures

1. Refer to the time line in Unit 3 Lesson 1 to refresh the students’ knowledge of lives of Lincoln and Sandburg.
2. Provide each student with a copy of “The Gettysburg Address”.
3. Read and discuss the Address.
4. Separate students in groups of three to identify and write in each student’s journal or notebook the key words pertaining to freedom.
5. Have entire class gather in circle for discussion of key words and freedom. Students do not take notes during this time. They concentrate entirely on the discussion.
6. Students return to individual seats and write down additional ideas in their journal or notebook on what freedom really means to them.
7. Have students create a project which depicts a representation of what freedom means to them.

Modifications

- Have the students memorize and perform the Gettysburg Address.
- As a class, write Gettysburg National Military Park [97 Tanetown Rd; Gettysburg, PA 17325] to gain more information about Lincoln and the Gettysburg Address. When the information arrives, have students post on a bulletin board.

Subjects
English
History
Social Studies

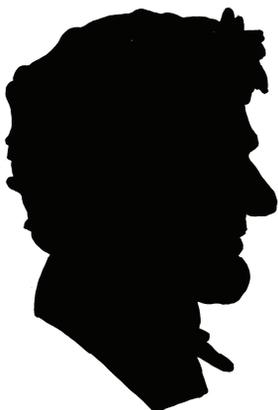
Handouts

- The Gettysburg Address
- the poems listed and included in Lesson 2

Teaching Techniques

-  Writing assignment(s)
-  Handout(s)
-  Class discussion
-  Send for more info
-  Additional research





THE GETTYSBURG ADDRESS

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the full last measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom, and that that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from this earth.



Subjects
English
Social Studies

Handouts

- “Is There Any Easy Road to Freedom?”
- “Freedom Is a Habit”
- “The Long Shadow of Lincoln”

Teaching Techniques

-  Lecture
-  Writing assignment(s)
-  Handout(s)
-  Class discussion
-  Small group discussion

CARL SANDBURG, ABRAHAM LINCOLN, AND FREEDOM

Background

Carl Sandburg was known as “The Poet of the People” throughout his life as he wrote poetry that reflected the heart and emotion of the American public. He wrote about the common things like work, struggle, and love. He also wrote about the things that were not as common, such as freedom. Throughout his poetry one can find various pieces of work that reflect freedom and Carl’s interpretation and reflection of it. This lesson will provide opportunities to discuss Sandburg and Lincoln through poetry.

This lesson will focus on linking poetry to Lincoln and freedom. Take some time to discuss Sandburg’s poetry with the students. What is free verse and how did Sandburg defend this style? Sandburg was often questioned about free verse and he would often respond with his definitions and explanations of poetry. In the preface to *Early Moon*, he writes a short discussion of poetry, an excellent source for teachers and students alike to better understand Sandburg’s explanation of poetry.

Sandburg took another opportunity to define poetry in his own poetic way. In his work *Good Morning, America* Sandburg begins with 38 Definitions of Poetry. Sandburg creativity comes through in this piece of work. Sandburg didn’t argue poetic style, but in his definitions he causes one to think about what poetry really is and how it fits into various styles. A few examples of Sandburg’s definitions include:

6. *Poetry is a puppet-show, where riders of skyrocket and divers of sea fathoms gossip about the sixth sense and the fourth dimension;*

9. *Poetry is an echo asking a shadow dancer to be a partner;*

10. *Poetry is the journal of a sea animal living on land, wanting to fly the air, Poetry is the opening and closing of a door, leaving those who look through to guess about what is seen during a moment;*

38. *Poetry is the capture of a picture, a song, or a flair, in a*



Freedom is a Habit

Freedom is a habit
and a coat worn
some born to wear it
some never to know it.
Freedom is cheap
or again as a garment
is so costly
men pay their lives
rather than not have it.
Freedom is baffling:
men having it often
know not they have it
till it is gone and
they no longer have it.
What does this mean?
Is it a riddle?
Yes, it is first of all
in the primers of riddles.
To be free is so-so;
you can and you can't:
walkers can have freedom
only by never walking
away their freedom:
runners too have freedom
unless they overrun:
eaters have often outeaten
their freedom to eat
and drinkers overdrank
their fine drinking freedom.

[June 31, 1943]



THE LONG SHADOW OF LINCOLN: A LITANY

(We can succeed only by concert.... The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves.... December 1, 1862. *The President's Message to Congress.*)

Be sad, be cool, be kind,
Remembering those now dreamdust
Hallowed in the ruts and gullies,
Solemn bones under the smooth blue sea,
Faces warblown in a falling rain.

Be a brother, if so can be,
to those beyond battle fatigue
each in his own corner of earth
 or forty fathoms undersea
 beyond all boom of buns,
 beyond any bong of a great bell,
 each with a bosom and number,
 each with a pack of secrets,
each with a personal dream and doorway
and over them now the long endless winds
 with the low healing song of time,
 the hush and sleep murmur of time.

Make your wit and guard and cover.
Sing low, sing high, sing wide.
Let your laughter come free
remembering looking toward peace:
"We must disenthrall ourselves."

Be a brother, if so can be,
to those thrown forward
for taking hardwon lines,
for holding hardwon points
 and their reward so-so,
little they care to talk about,
their pay held in a mute calm,
highspot memories going unspoken,
what they did being past words,
what they took being hardwon.
 Be sad, be kind, be cool.
 Weep if you must
And weep open and shameless
 Before these altars.

There are wounds past words.
There are cripples less broken
Than many who walk whole.
 There are dead youths
 with wrists of silence
 who keep a vast music
 under their shut lips,
what they did being past words,
their dreams like their deaths
beyond any smooth and easy telling,
having given till no more to give.

There is dust alive
with dreams of The Republic,
with dreams of the Family of Man
flung wide on a shrinking globe
 with old timetables,
 old maps, old guide-posts
 torn into shreds,
 shot into tatters,
 burnt in a firewind,
 lost in the shambles,
 faded in rubble and ashes.

There is dust alive.
Out of a granite tomb,
Out of a bronze sarcophagus,
Loose from the stone and copper
Steps a whitesmoke ghost
Lifting an authoritative hand
In the name of dreams worth dying for,
In the name of men whose dust breathes
 of those dreams so worth dying for,
 what they did being past words,
 beyond all smooth and easy telling.

Be sad, be kind, be cool,
remembering, under God, a dreamdust
hallowed in the ruts and gullies,
solemn bones under the smooth blue sea.
faces warblown in a falling rain.

Sing low, sing high, sing wide.
Make your wit a guard and cover.
Let your laughter come free
like a help and a brace of comfort.

The earth laughs, the sun laughs
over every wise harvest of man,
over man looking toward peace
by the light of the hard old teaching:
 "We must disenthrall ourselves."

*Read as the Phi Beta Kappa poem at the Mother
Chapter of William and Mary College,
Williamsburg, Virginia, December 1944.
Published in the Saturday Evening Post, February,
1945.*



IS THERE ANY EASY ROAD TO FREEDOM?

A relentless man loved France
 Long before she came to shame
 And the eating of bitter dust,
 Loving her as mother and torch,
 As bone of his kith and kin
 And he spoke passion, warning:
 "Rest is not a word of free peoples –
 Rest is a monarchical word."

A relentless Russian loved Russia
 Long before she came to bare agony

And valor amid rivers of blood,
 Lover her as mother and torch,
 As bone of his kith and kin:
 He remembered an old Swedish saying:
 "The fireborn are at home in fire."

A Kentucky-born Illinoisan found himself
 By journey through shadows and prayer
 the Chief Magistrate of the American people
 Pleading in words close to low whispers:
 "Fellow citizens... we cannot escape history.
 The fiery trial through which we pass
 Will light us down in honor or dishonor
 To the latest generation...
 We shall nobly save or meanly lose
 the last best hope of earth."
 Four little words came worth studying over:
 "*We must disenthral ourselves.*"
 And what is a thrall? And who are thralls?
 Men tied down or men doped, or men drowsy?
 He hoped to see them
 shake themselves loose
 and so be disenthralled.

There are freedom shouters.
 There are freedom whisperers.
 Both may serve.
 Have I, have you, been too silent?
 Is there an easy crime of silence?
 Is there any easy road to freedom?

[December, 1941]



LINCOLN ON PENNIES

Background

When the framers of the U.S. Constitution created a new government for their untried Republic, they realized the critical need for a respected monetary system. Soon after the Constitution's ratification, Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton personally prepared plans for a national Mint. On April 2, 1792, Congress created the United States Mint, and authorized construction of a Mint building in the nation's capital, Philadelphia. This was the first federal building erected under the Constitution.

President George Washington appointed Philadelphian David Rittenhouse, a leading American scientist, as the first Director of the Mint. Under Rittenhouse, the Mint produced its first circulating coins — 11,178 copper cents, which were delivered in March 1793. Soon after, the Mint began issuing gold and silver coins as well. President Washington, who lived only a few blocks from the new Mint, is believed to have donated some of his own silver for minting.

The likeness of President Lincoln on the one-cent coin is an adaptation of a plaque executed by Victor David Brenner, an outstanding portraitist and sculptor. President Theodore Roosevelt was so impressed with Mr. Brenner's design of a Lincoln plaque that he recommended to the Secretary of the Treasury that this design be placed on a coin to be issued in the Lincoln Centennial Year, 1909. Congress approved the design and in 1909 the first Lincoln penny was minted.

In 1959 the reverse of the one-cent coin changed to honor the 150th anniversary of President Lincoln's birth. This is the event that inspired Carl Sandburg to write a short piece about Abraham Lincoln and the penny (following).

Procedures

1. Discuss "Lincoln on Pennies" as it relates to common people.
2. Ask the students to reflect on the Penny writing. The students should then design a new reverse side of the penny using concepts discussed by Lincoln in The Gettysburg Address, Sandburg in his poems, and in "Lincoln on Pennies".

Subjects

Art
English
Math

Handouts

- Copy of "Lincoln on Pennies"
- a penny for each student

Teaching Techniques

-  Lecture
-  Writing assignment(s)
-  Handout(s)
-  Class discussion
-  Internet search





3. Begin design in class and finish overnight or in two days depending on thoroughness expected of class. Have students write a one to two paragraph statement explaining their design.
4. Bring finished design to class to show and discuss reasons why this particular design was chosen.

Modifications

- The class could conduct a vote to pick the best design and justification for the design.
- Have students research the process of design on money and how the U.S. Department of Treasury decides on the denominations and designs of currency. How many different pennies have been made throughout our American History and what was the symbolism of each? A local coin collector, the U.S. Mint and/or the Dept. of Treasury may be good places to start.
- Have the students research the worth of a penny. How many pennies are in circulation? How does U.S. currency compare to that of other countries?
- Have your students begin a “penny drop-off” campaign. This can become a place where people drop off their excess pennies and could become a chance for your students to collect money to donate to an organization of their choice. Good places would be the educational programs at a favorite national park unit, a freedom organization, or another not-for-profit organization.



LINCOLN ON PENNIES CARL SANDBURG, 1909

The face of Abraham Lincoln on the copper cent seems well and proper. If it were possible to talk with the great, good man, he would probably say that he is perfectly willing that his face is to be placed on the cheapest and most common coin in the country.

The penny is strictly the coin of the common people. At Palm Beach, Newport and Saratoga you will find nothing for sale at one cent. No ice cream cones at a penny apiece there.

“Keep the change,” says the rich man, “How many pennies do I get back?” asks the poor man.

Only the children of the poor know the joy of getting a penny for running around the corner to the grocery.

The penny is the bargain counter coin. Only the common people walk out of their way to get something for 9 cents reduced from 10 cents. The penny is the coin used by those who are not sure of tomorrow, those who know that if they are going to have a dollar next week they must watch the pennies this week.

Follow the travels of the penny and you find it stops at many cottages and few mansions.

The common, homely face of “Honest Abe” will look good on the penny, the coin of the common folk from whom he came and to whom he belongs.

The above was Carl Sandburg’s first published writing on Lincoln. It appeared in the Milwaukee Daily News in 1909, when the now-familiar penny was minted in observance of the centennial of Lincoln’s birth. Mr. Sandburg was then a reporter on the Daily News staff.



<p>Subjects English Social Studies Speech</p>
<p>Materials <input type="checkbox"/> Sandburg's works on Lincoln</p>
<p>Handouts <input type="checkbox"/> Sandburg's speech to the Joint Session of Congress <input type="checkbox"/> How to Create an Outline</p>
<p>Teaching Techniques</p> <p> Writing assignment(s)</p> <p> Handout(s)</p> <p> Class discussion</p> <p> Small group discussion</p> <p> Additional research</p>

WHAT FREEDOM MEANS TO ME

Background

In order to make money to support his family while writing *The War Years*, Sandburg found it necessary to go on a lecture route as a part of his career. This traveling seemed to fit Sandburg's wandering spirit and became a regular activity for the "Poet of the People." Sandburg traveled primarily in the winter months that allowed him to stay at home from April through October to continue to write *Lincoln*.

His appearances on the road covered such topics as Lincoln, labor laws, civil rights, poetry, literature, and song. Sandburg turned his style of lecturing into an "art" as he traveled across America speaking for and about the American people. Anyone who was asked during Sandburg's life, "Who is Carl Sandburg?" could surely answer with a candid and prompt response. Virtually every American came to know Sandburg through his life, lecture, and works.

In 1959 Sandburg was invited to address the joint session of Congress on the 150th anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln. This was a very special engagement for Sandburg, as very few private citizens were ever asked to address the joint session of Congress. The Senators and Representatives, the members of the Supreme Court, the Cabinet and attending diplomats all rose and gave him a standing ovation.

Procedures

1. Cover in a short classroom discussion the Lincoln/Sandburg connection and how Sandburg lectured throughout his life.
2. Spend time discussing the process of designing, writing, and delivering a speech. Cover objectives, themes, and outlines.
3. Have students read Sandburg's speech to the Joint Session of Congress. Work in small groups to uncover Sandburg's objectives and themes of speech. Write an outline of his speech as a class.
4. Give students the topic "What Freedom Means to Me" and have them begin to think about what they may present in a speech with this topic. This can be individual or could be conducted as a pop corn discussion or a brainstorming session as a class.



Address of Carl Sandburg before the Joint Session of Congress
FEBRUARY 2, 1959

Not often in the story of mankind does a man arrive on earth who is both steel and velvet, who is as hard as rock and soft as drifting fog, who holds in his heart and mind the paradox of terrible storm and peace unspeakable and perfect. Here and there across centuries come reports of men alleged to have these contrasts. And the incomparable Abraham Lincoln born 150 years ago this day, is an approach if not a perfect realization of this character. In the time of the April lilacs in the year 1865, on his death, on the casket with his body was carried north and west a thousand miles; and the American people wept as never before; bells sobbed, cities wore crepe; people stood in tears and with hats off as the railroad burial car paused in the leading cities of seven states ending its journey at Springfield, Illinois, the home town. During the four years he was President he at times, especially in the first three months, took to himself the powers of a dictator; he commanded the most powerful armies till then assembled in modern warfare; he enforced conscription of soldiers for the first time in American History; under imperative necessity he abolished the right of habeus corpus; he directed politically and spiritually the wild, massive, turbulent forces let loose in Civil War. He argued and pleaded for compensated emancipation of the slaves. The slaves were property, they were on the tax books along with horses and cattle, the valuation of each slave next to his name on the tax assessor's books. Failing to get action on compensated emancipation, as a Chief Executive having war powers he issued the paper by which he declared the slaves to be free under "military necessity." In the end, nearly \$4,000,000 worth of property was taken away from those who were legal owners of it, property confiscated, wiped out as by fire and turned to ashes, at his instigation and executive direction. Chattel property recognized and lawful for 300 years was expropriated, seized without payment.

In the month the war began, he told his secretary, John Hay, "My policy is to have no policy." Three years later in a letter to a Kentucky friend made public, he confessed plainly, "I have been controlled by events." His words at Gettysburg were sacred, yet strange with a color of the familiar: "We cannot consecrate - we cannot hallow - this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far beyond our poor power to add or detract." He could have said "The brave union men." Did he have a purpose in omitting the word "union?" Was he keeping himself and his utterance clear of the passion that would not be good to look back on when the time came for peace and reconciliation? Did he mean to leave an implication that there were brave Union men and brave Confederate men, living and dead, who had struggled there? We do not know, of a certainty. Was he thinking of the Kentucky father whose two sons died in battle, one in Union blue, the other in Confederate gray, the father inscribing on the stone over their double grave, "God knows which was right?" We do not know. His changing policies from time to time aimed at saving the Union. In the end his armies won and his nation became a world power. In August of 1864, he wrote a memorandum that he expected to lose the next November election; sudden military victory brought the tide his way; the vote was 2,200,000 for him and 1,800,000 against him. Among his bitter opponents were such figures as Samuel F. B. Morse, inventor of the telegraph, and Cyrus H. McCormick, inventor of the farm reaper. In all its essential propositions the Southern Confederacy had the moral support of powerful, respectable



elements throughout the north, probably more than a million voters believing in the justice of the Southern cause. While the war winds howled he insisted that the Mississippi was one river meant to belong to one country, that railroad connection from coast to coast must be pushed through and the Union Pacific Railroad a reality. While the luck of war wavered and broke and came again, as generals failed and campaigns were lost, he held enough forces of the Union together to raise new armies and supply them, until generals were found who made war as victorious war has always been made, with terror, frightfulness, destruction, and on both sides, north and south, valor and sacrifice past words of man to tell. In the mixed shame and blame of the immense wrongs of two crashing civilizations, often with nothing to say, he said nothing, slept not at all, and on occasions he was seen to weep in a way that made weeping appropriate, decent, majestic. As he rode alone on horseback near soldiers home on the edge of Washington one night his hat was shot off; a son he loved died as he watched at the bed; his wife was accused of betraying information to the enemy, until denials from him were necessary. An Indiana man at the White House heard him say, "Voorhees, don't it seem strange to you that I, who could never so much as cut off the head of a chicken, should be elected, or selected, into the midst of all this blood?" He tried to guide general Nathaniel Prentiss Banks, a Democrat, three times Governor of Massachusetts, in the governing of some 17 of the 48 parishes of Louisiana controlled by the Union armies, an area holding a fourth of the slaves of Louisiana. He would like to see the state recognize the Emancipation Proclamation, "And while she is at it, I think it would not be objectionable for her to adopt some practical system by which the two races could gradually live themselves out of their old relation to each other, and both come out better prepared for the new. Education for the young blacks should be included in the plan." To Governor Michel Hahn elected in 1864 by a majority of the 11,000 white male voters who had taken the oath of allegiance to the Union, Lincoln wrote, "Now that you are about to have a convention which, among other things, will probably define the elective franchise, I barely suggest for your private consideration, whether some of the colored people may not be let in - as for instance, the very intelligent and especially those who have fought gallantly in our ranks."

Among the million words in the Lincoln utterance record, he interprets himself with a more keen precision than someone else offering to explain him. His simple opening of the house divided speech in 1858 serves for today: "If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending we could better judge what to do, and how to do it." To his Kentucky friend, Joshua F. Speed, he wrote in 1855, "Our progress in degeneracy appears to me to be pretty rapid. As a nation we began by declaring that 'All men are created equal, except Negroes.' When the know-nothings get control, it will read 'All men are created equal except Negroes and foreigners and Catholics.' When it comes to this, I shall prefer emigrating to some country where they make no pretense of loving liberty." Infinitely tender was his word from a White House balcony to a crowd on the White House lawn, "I have not willingly planted a thorn in any man's bosom," or a military governor, "I shall do nothing through malice; what I deal with is too vast for malice." He wrote for Congress to read on December 1, 1863, "In times like the present men should utter nothing for which they would not willingly be responsible through time and eternity." Like an ancient psalmist he warned Congress, "Fellow citizens, we cannot escape history. We will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance or insignificance can spare one or another of us.



The fiery trial through which we pass will light us down in honor or dishonor to the latest generation.” Wanting Congress to break and forget past traditions his words came keen and flashing. “The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate for the stormy present. We must think anew, we must act anew, we must disenfranchise ourselves.” They are the sort of words that actuated the mind and will of the men who created and navigated that marvel of the sea, the nautilus, and her voyage from Pearl Harbor and under the North Pole Icecap.

The people of many other countries take Lincoln now for their own. He belongs to them. He stands for decency, honest dealing, plain talk, and funny stories. “Look where he came from—don’t he know all us strugglers and wasn’t he a kind of tough struggler all his life right up to the finish?” Something like that you can hear in any nearby neighborhood and across the seas. Millions there are who take him as a personal treasure. He had something they would like to see spread everywhere over the world. Democracy? We can’t say exactly what it is, but he had it. In his blood and bones he carried it. In the breath of his speeches and writings it is there. Popular government? Republican institutions? Government where the people have the say-so, one way or another telling their elected rulers what they want? He had the idea. It’s there in the lights and shadows of his personality, a mystery that can be lived but never fully spoken in words.

Our good friend the poet and playwright Mark Van Doren, tells us, “To me, Lincoln seems, in some ways, the most interesting man who ever lived . . . He was gentle but this gentleness was combined with a terrific toughness, an iron strength.”

How did he say he would like to be remembered? His beloved friend, Representative Owen Lovejoy of Illinois, had died in May of 1864, and friends wrote to Lincoln and he replied that the pressure of duties kept him from joining them in efforts for a marble monument to Lovejoy. The last sentence of his letter saying, “Let him have the marble monument along with the well assured and more enduring one in the hearts of those who love liberty, unselfishly, for all men.” So perhaps we may say that the well assured and most enduring memorial to Lincoln is invisibly there, today, tomorrow and for a long time yet to come in the hearts of lovers of liberty, men and women who understand that wherever there is freedom there have been those who fought and sacrificed for it.

