

ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND FREDERICK DOUGLASS

American History

Grades 5–12

OBJECTIVES

CONTENT

Students will learn about the roles of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass in ending slavery in this country and will clarify the difference between being opposed to slavery and being an abolitionist.

THINKING SKILL/PROCESS

Students will compare and contrast effectively by determining similarities and differences between two leaders, by detecting patterns in the significant similarities and differences, and by developing an interpretation or conclusion based on the similarities and differences.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

CONTENT

This lesson features passages about Lincoln and Douglass used in conjunction with background knowledge about them. Guided reading, random calling, higher order questioning, and directed essay writing are employed in this lesson.

THINKING SKILL/PROCESS

Compare and contrast is guided by structured questioning and the use of a graphic organizer. (See pp. 102–107 for reproducible diagrams.) A think/pair/share activity is used to encourage the clear expression of students' conclusions about the two men.

LESSON

INTRODUCTION TO CONTENT AND THINKING SKILL/PROCESS

- Think about a time that you understood something better, or learned to do something more easily, by relating it to what you already knew. For example, when people move from one place to another, they usually note similarities and differences between their new location and their former home. Perhaps the school bus stop is within walking distance in both places but is farther away in the new location than it was where they used to live. Recognizing the difference in distance will help in planning when to leave for the bus. It should probably be earlier than in the previous location.
- When you notice similarities and differences and use that information to make a decision or judgment, you are “comparing and contrasting.” Describe to your partner an example in which you learned something important by comparing and contrasting. Explain how comparing and contrasting the new thing with something you already knew helped you to understand or do things better. After peer discussion, briefly discuss three or four examples.
- In this lesson we are going to learn about the lives of two leaders—Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. Which do we know better? *Abraham Lincoln.*
- What do we know about Abraham Lincoln and the time in which he lived that might help us understand the experiences of Frederick Douglass, who lived at the same time? Students may discuss conditions in the United States prior to the Civil War, including their understanding of slavery and the legal debate surrounding it, as well as the fact that Lincoln was president during the Civil War.

THINKING ACTIVELY

- First read the passage about Abraham Lincoln.** As you read the information about Frederick Douglass, be alert to ways that he and Lincoln are alike. Each time you find a similarity, write it on a line in the box of the diagram under "How Alike." Also, look for ways that Lincoln and Douglass are different. Write the differences on the lines under "How Different." Think about what that difference means and write it over the arrow. For example, Abraham Lincoln was Caucasian and Frederick Douglass was Black. What term describes that difference? *Race*. Write "race" over the arrow. Give the students enough time to list at least three similarities and three differences on the diagram. After they have finished reading the passages, call on students randomly to report similarities and differences that they have found. Ask for only one similarity or difference from each student. Record their responses on a transparency, on an overhead projector, or on a large diagram on the chalkboard. Encourage students to add any similarities or differences that they find interesting, suggested by other class members, to their individual diagrams.

OPEN COMPARE AND CONTRAST		
LINCOLN		DOUGLASS
HOW ALIKE?		
HOW DIFFERENT?		
WITH REGARD TO		
	→	
	→	
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PATTERNS OF SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES:		
CONCLUSION OR INTERPRETATION:		

- How are Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass alike?** After they have finished reading the passages, randomly call on four or five students to report one similarity that they have found. Record their responses on an overhead transparency or on a large diagram on the chalkboard. Draw out the student's thoughts by asking for clarification or extension of the responses—the cause, effect, significance, implications, etc. POSSIBLE ANSWERS: *Both men lived in the same period, were born into very poor families, were self-educated, were intelligent, lost their mothers at an early age, spent their young adulthood on farms, and moved from border slave states to free states. Both men used language to persuade others and contributed to ending slavery in America.*
- How are Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass different?** Record differences, asking what each difference describes and writing it over the arrow. Continue to ask extending questions about the cause, effect, significance or implications of each difference between the two men. After the class diagram is completed, encourage students to add any similarities and differences they wish to their own diagrams. POSSIBLE ANSWERS: *Lincoln was Caucasian; Douglass was of African descent. Lincoln was born free with all the civil rights guaranteed to Americans; Douglass was born a slave with no civil rights, even the right to life. Lincoln was born free; Douglass purchased his freedom. Lincoln was a lawyer and a politician; Douglass was a writer and newspaper publisher. Lincoln used the war powers of the presidency to free slaves in the confederate states; Douglass used his newspaper to influence public opinion regarding rights and opportunities for blacks. Lincoln was assassinated at age 56; Douglass died of natural causes at age 77. Lincoln was primarily an orator; Douglass was both an orator and writer. Students also include among the differences that while both men opposed slavery, Douglass was an abolitionist and Lincoln was not. To clarify the distinction between being an abolitionist and just opposing slavery, students' comments or teacher explanations may include the following*

factors: Abolitionists believed that the assumption that one person could own another was wrong and that slavery should be abolished by whatever means necessary. Lincoln, on the other hand, believed that while slavery was undesirable, should not be extended to new territories, and should be abandoned if legal means could be found to do so, it was nevertheless sanctioned by the right to property in the Constitution. The war powers of the president, invoked by Lincoln during the Civil War to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, allowed Lincoln to confiscate the property of slaveholders and free the slaves by legal means.

- **Now let's think about the similarities and differences on your diagram. There are many true things that we could say about the two men that may not be very important. For example, both men wore trousers. This, however, does not add to our understanding of these two men. We want to base our understanding of them on factors that are important. Draw a line through any similarities and differences that are not important.** Student responses will vary. Students may predictably ask what is meant by "important." Any information, the omission of which would limit our understanding of the two men, their characters and interests, and / or their impact on others would be considered important.
- **Are there any common ideas that you find in the important similarities and differences? For example, many of the similarities and differences mentioned describe the backgrounds of the two men. What other patterns of similarities and differences do you find? Write these in the "patterns" box.** After students have an opportunity to reflect and write, ask for three or four responses. POSSIBLE ANSWERS: *Their backgrounds, the value they placed on education, their impact on slavery, their rise from poverty to become self-supporting in distinguished professions.*
- **Now think about something interesting that you have learned about the two men based on your comparing and contrasting. What do the similarities and differences you have noted tell you about Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass? In the bottom box, write one sentence that expresses a conclusion or interpretation that is suggested by important similarities and differences in the lives of the two men.** Ask students to write their conclusions.
- **We're going to do an activity called "Think-Pair-Share." Each of you should pair up with a partner. One student in the pair should then read his or her statement. The partner serves as a listener to assist the speaker in expressing the conclusion clearly. The listener may only ask questions:**

Questions of clarification: If you don't understand what a word means or the meaning of the statement, you may ask questions which help you understand what is being said. For example, you may ask, "What do you mean when you say _____?"

Questions which extend the idea: If you think your partner is saying something interesting, but it is too brief, you can ask for more details about your partner's idea. You might say something like "What more can you tell me about _____?"

Questions to challenge what is said: If you think the speaker is misled or confused, you may ask questions that you think may prompt your partner to rethink or restate some part of his or her statement like "Why do you think _____?" Maybe the speaker will explain why and you won't think the statement is confused anymore, or maybe the speaker will reconsider aspects of the statement.

After two minutes of reflection, signal students to change roles. After both partners have served as speaker and listener, allow students an opportunity to rewrite their statement in any way they see fit. Ask for volunteers to read their statements to the whole class. Ask them to repeat their statements so that other students can listen to each statement twice, once for content and once

to identify the kind of statement the student is reading (comparison, contrast, both comparison and contrast, cause/effect, generalization, etc.). Ask the class which details from the diagram could be used to support the conclusion if the statement was the main idea for an essay assignment. Create a composite bulletin board of students' conclusions about the two stories. POSSIBLE ANSWERS: *Although Lincoln and Douglass experienced hardship and limitations as young men, they were able to rise to positions of influence and power. Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass were of different races but worked for the same purpose. While Lincoln and Douglass opposed slavery for different reasons, they both contributed significantly to ending it in this country. Both men showed determination in bettering themselves and, through this achievement, bettered the lives of countless others in this country. Frederick Douglass, in contrast to Abraham Lincoln, had to win his freedom and then used its advantages to work for the freedom of Blacks and for women's suffrage.*

THINKING ABOUT THINKING

- **Let's stop thinking about Lincoln and Douglass and focus our attention on what we did to think about these two men in order to learn something important about them. The kind of thinking we did was called "comparing and contrasting." What did we do to compare and contrast Lincoln and Douglass? What, for example, did you think about first? Next?** Prompt students to recall the steps in the process. Record their strategy on the board or use a transparency of the thinking map, uncovering each step as students identify it. Review the discussion for each step of the thinking map of open compare and contrast.
- **How was the compare-and-contrast process different from just identifying similarities and differences?** Student answers should focus on thinking about the differences by asking what kind of differences they are, by looking for patterns in the similarities and differences, and by drawing conclusions from the similarities and differences noted.
- **Is comparing and contrasting in this way helpful in thinking about things? How?** Students comment that it allows them to think about what the similarities and differences mean.
- **How did the way that you compared and contrasted the two men differ from the way you usually study historical characters?** Students say that comparing and contrasting helps them look for important information as they read about these people, in contrast to just attending to their names and when they lived. Students often comment that this process "personalizes" these leaders in the sense that they seem like real people.
- **Was using the graphic organizer helpful to you? How?** Students comment that using the diagram assists them in recording details that they notice and might otherwise forget. They also say that the graphic organizer helps them draw a conclusion from the similarities and differences they have listed.
- **In the Think-Pair-Share activity, was writing out your statement beforehand important?** Students recognize that, for clarity and ownership, having their thoughts written down before discussion frees them to examine the meaning and implications of their conclusions.

OPEN COMPARE AND CONTRAST

1. How are they similar?
2. How are they different?
3. What similarities and differences seem significant?
4. What categories or pattern do you see in the significant similarities and differences?
5. What interpretation or conclusion is suggested by the significant similarities and differences?

APPLYING THINKING

Immediate Transfer

- Compare and contrast the experiences of Frederick Douglass and Josiah Henson, the escaped slave whose life is depicted as “Uncle Tom” in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, to illustrate life under slavery, escape, and assistance to other slaves.
- We are studying Sojourner Truth and Harriet Beecher Stowe. Compare and contrast the two women to examine how they affected public opinion about slavery.
- We have been studying conditions in the North and the South at the start of the Civil War. Compare and contrast the population, industry, food production, coastline, and railroads in the North and the South to determine their relative ability to sustain a lengthy war.
- Compare and contrast literary works about Lincoln and Douglass. What do these works tell us about the writers’ views of these two men? Lincoln poems include “When Lilacs Last on the Dooryard Bloomed” and “Oh Captain, My Captain” by Walt Whitman; “What is God’s Will” and “Abraham Lincoln” by Stephen Vincent Benet; and “Lincoln” by John Gould Fletcher. Douglass Poems include “I Was Frederick Douglass” by Hildegard Smith and “Frederick Douglass” by Paul Laurence Dunbar.
- Compare and contrast two characters from stories you have read recently to understand how the two characters responded differently to conditions in the stories.
- Compare and contrast two breakfast cereals in order to decide which is a better buy and which is more nutritious.

Reinforcement Later

- Compare and contrast two different pieces of music or stories.
- Compare and contrast the civil rights of blacks and whites during Reconstruction.

FOCUSED COMPARE AND CONTRAST OPTION

This lesson can be taught as a focused compare and contrast lesson. If you take this option, use the focused compare and contrast graphic organizer, and guide students to compare and contrast Lincoln and Douglass. They should define the purpose of the comparison and contrast, list the factors to consider in order to achieve this purpose, and then search in the passages for information about Lincoln and Douglass that falls into the categories they have specified. As they find information, it should be recorded under “How Alike” or “How Different,” as appropriate. Sample student responses using a focused compare and contrast graphic organizer are included on page 128.

RESEARCH EXTENSION

Corroborate details in the passages about Lincoln and Douglass by consulting other works in the school library. Make sure your sources are reliable. Modify your comparison and contrast diagram, if necessary, to reflect what you find. Students may obtain more information from biographies of Lincoln and Douglass. *Two Roads to Greatness* (Macmillan Company, New York, 1967) provides biographical and literary works about the two leaders.

WRITING EXTENSION

Use your concluding statement as the main idea or conclusion for a short essay about Lincoln and Douglass. Use what you have written in the graphic organizer for your supporting details. You may include additional information about the two leaders from resources you find in the school library.

ASSESSING STUDENTS' THINKING ABOUT COMPARING AND CONTRASTING

To assess this skill, ask students to write an essay on any of the application questions or others which you select, using a graphic organizer to assist themselves. Ask students to describe how they compared and contrasted the two subjects. Determine whether they are attending to each of the steps in the thinking map for comparing and contrasting.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND FREDERICK DOUGLASS

Abraham Lincoln

Abraham Lincoln was born in Hardin County, Kentucky in 1809. When he was eight, the family moved to Spencer County, Indiana, where he grew up. His mother died when he was ten years old. Since his family was very poor, Lincoln began working at an early age. Although there were some schools in the Indiana territory, he had little formal schooling and was largely self-taught. He worked on a farm until he was twenty-two years old, and then in 1831 moved to Menard County, Illinois, where he worked as a clerk in a store. From 1834 to 1840, Lincoln served in the Illinois legislature, studied to become a lawyer, and moved to Springfield, Illinois, to practice law. He served one term in the U. S. House of Representatives from 1847 to 1849 then returned to his law practice.

In 1860, Abraham Lincoln was elected president of the United States. He immediately was faced with the secession of southern states from the Union and the beginning of the Civil War. Although he disapproved of slavery, Lincoln was not an abolitionist (one who believed that slavery should be done away with). He recognized that slave owners had paid for their slaves. Since slaves were considered to be property, it was believed to be unlawful to take someone's property away. Once the southern states had become enemies of the Union, President Lincoln used his war powers as Commander-in-Chief of the Army to abolish slavery in the southern states. In September 1862, Lincoln proclaimed that unless the southern states rejoined the Union by January 1, 1863, their slave property would be considered legally confiscated. Thus, Lincoln acquired the legal right to free the slaves.

Abraham Lincoln was re-elected President in 1864 but was assassinated in 1865.

Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass was born a slave in Tuckahoe, Maryland. Since slaves were seldom told their ages, Douglass estimated that he was born about 1818. His mother, Harriet Bailey, was hired out to a distant farmer shortly after his birth and died when Douglass was about eight years old. Like many slaves, Douglass never knew who his father was.

Frederick Douglass was taught the alphabet by Mrs. Thomas Auld until his master, Mr. Auld, discovered that she was teaching Frederick to read. It was unlawful to teach a slave to read. Frederick realized that reading was an important distinction between slaves and free men. Frederick taught himself to write by copying words in the spaces of his young master's writing book.

In 1838, Douglass bluffed his way onto a train to Delaware, a slave state, then went by boat to Philadelphia and freedom. He moved to Massachusetts and selected the name Douglass to replace his slave name.

Douglass bought his freedom from his old master. In 1847, he started a newspaper in Rochester, New York, advocating the abolition of slavery and supporting women's voting rights.

Douglass encouraged Lincoln to include black troops in the Union Army and used the power of his newspaper to encourage blacks to enlist. The first black regiment was formed in 1863, with Douglass' own sons among the first to enlist. In 1864, Douglass met with Lincoln to secure the same wages, protection, and awards for black soldiers as for white soldiers.

In 1866, Douglass was the only black delegate elected to attend the post-war convention on reconstruction. In 1877, President Hayes appointed Douglass marshal of the District of Columbia. He later served as the U. S. representative to Haiti.

Frederick Douglass died in 1895 of a heart attack.

Adapted from *Organizing Thinking Book II* by Sandra Parks and Howard Black, Critical Thinking Press & Software.

Sample Student Responses • Lincoln and Douglass

OPEN COMPARE AND CONTRAST

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

HOW ALIKE?

Both were born into very poor families.

Both were self-educated.

Both used language to persuade others.

Both contributed to ending slavery in the United States.

HOW DIFFERENT?

He was born a free citizen with all the rights guaranteed to Americans.

His opportunities were not limited by his race.

He was opposed to slavery but was not an abolitionist.

He used the War Powers Act to free slaves and establish military service for blacks.

WITH REGARD TO

CIVIL RIGHTS

EFFECTS OF RACE

ABOLITION

INFLUENCE

He was born a slave with none of the rights guaranteed to Americans.

Even as a free black man, his opportunities were limited.

He was an abolitionist who believed that one person could not own another.

He used his newspaper to inspire both blacks and whites to respect the rights of blacks.

PATTERNS OF SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES:
Family background, leadership, effect on ending slavery.

CONCLUSION OR INTERPRETATION:
Both men showed determination to better themselves and, through this achievement, used its advantages to better the lives of countless others in this country.

Sample Student Responses • Lincoln and Douglass • Focused Compare and Contrast

FOCUSED COMPARE AND CONTRAST

LINCOLN

DOUGLASS

GOALS: To clarify how Lincoln and Douglass contributed to ending slavery in the United States

FACTORS TO CONSIDER: Goals, priorities, attitudes towards slavery, methods, accomplishments, effectiveness

FACTORS CONSIDERED IN THIS ACTIVITY:

Goals

Methods

Effectiveness

Priorities

Attitudes towards slavery

Methods

Accomplishments

Effectiveness

HOW ALIKE?

They opposed slavery.

They both used language persuasively.

Both influenced a great many people to oppose slavery.

HOW DIFFERENT?

To save the Union and uphold the Constitution while opposing slavery

Believed slavery was unacceptable, (though it was legal)

Legal means; the power of the presidency

The Emancipation Proclamation

Legally freed slaves in southern states.

Abolition of slavery

Believed that no person could own another

Oratory and writings; any means acceptable

Newspaper and his own writings

Increased public awareness of the plight of slaves

CONCLUSION OR INTERPRETATION:

While both Lincoln and Douglass worked towards the goal of ending slavery, Lincoln was constrained by legal considerations, regarding slaves as property, that Douglass did not accept, but ultimately Lincoln used the power of the presidency to work within the law to free slaves.