

Lesson Plan: Abraham Lincoln & the Civil War (50 Minutes) 8th grade

Grade Level

8th Grade

Time

50 minutes

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Explain why the Civil War began
 - Describe Abraham Lincoln's role in preserving the Union
 - Analyze how Lincoln's leadership changed the war (especially slavery)
 - Evaluate what might have happened without Lincoln
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Materials

- Your transcript (teacher reference)
 - Whiteboard / projector
 - Student worksheet (included below)
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Lesson Structure

◆ 1. Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Bell Ringer Question:

“What makes a great leader during a crisis?”

Have students write 2–3 sentences.

Then briefly share responses.

◆ 2. Mini Lesson / Direct Instruction (10 minutes)

Key Points to Teach:

- Slavery divided the country for decades
- Compromises failed (1820, 1850, 1854)
- Lincoln's main goal: **preserve the Union**
- Civil War transformed the U.S. into a stronger, freer nation
- Without Lincoln, the U.S. might have split permanently

Highlight:

- "A house divided against itself cannot stand"
 - Lincoln's leadership + determination kept the country together
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◆ 3. Primary Source Activity (15 minutes)

📖 Use Lincoln's Words (from your doc)

Focus on:

- Gettysburg Address excerpt
- Personal background story

Student Task:

In pairs, answer:

1. What does Lincoln believe about equality?
 2. Why is the Civil War important to the nation?
 3. What kind of person was Lincoln based on his life story?
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◆ 4. Critical Thinking Discussion (10 minutes)

Big Question:

“What if Abraham Lincoln was never president?”

Guide students to think about:

- Would the U.S. still exist as one country?
- Would slavery have ended?
- Would the Confederacy still exist?

(These ideas come directly from your content)

◆ 5. Closing Activity (10 minutes)

👉 Exit Ticket:

Students answer:

1. What was Lincoln’s most important goal?
 2. How did the Civil War change the United States?
 3. Why do some people say Lincoln saved the country?
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📄 Student Worksheet (Ready to Copy)

Abraham Lincoln & Civil War Worksheet

Name: _____

Part 1: Short Answer

1. What issue divided the United States before the Civil War?
 2. What was Lincoln’s main goal during the war?
 3. What did the Emancipation Proclamation do?
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Part 2: Thinking Questions

4. What does “a house divided cannot stand” mean?
 5. Why was Lincoln an effective leader?
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Part 3: Opinion

6. Do you think the United States would be different without Lincoln? Explain.

Optional Extensions (if time or homework)

- Compare Abraham Lincoln and John Quincy Adams on slavery
- Debate: “Was the Civil War unavoidable?”
- Writing: “Lincoln’s greatest strength as a leader was...”



Abraham Lincoln & the Civil War Quiz

Name: _____

Date: _____

Part 1: Multiple Choice (1 point each)

1. What issue most divided the United States before the Civil War?

- A. Taxes
 - B. Slavery
 - C. Trade
 - D. Immigration
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2. What was Abraham Lincoln’s main goal at the start of the Civil War?

- A. End all wars
 - B. Free all slaves immediately
 - C. Preserve the Union
 - D. Expand the country
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3. What does the phrase “a house divided cannot stand” mean?

- A. The country can survive disagreements
- B. The country cannot remain split forever

- C. Houses must be strong
 - D. War is unavoidable
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4. What did the Emancipation Proclamation do?

- A. Ended the war
 - B. Freed all slaves everywhere
 - C. Declared slaves in Confederate states free
 - D. Gave land to freed slaves
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5. What battle gave Lincoln the opportunity to announce the Emancipation Proclamation?

- A. Gettysburg
 - B. Antietam
 - C. Bull Run
 - D. Yorktown
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6. Who was the Union general that Lincoln trusted to win the war?

- A. Robert E. Lee
 - B. George McClellan
 - C. Ulysses S. Grant
 - D. Stonewall Jackson
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7. What happened to Abraham Lincoln in 1865?

- A. He resigned
 - B. He was re-elected
 - C. He was assassinated
 - D. He retired
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8. What amendment officially ended slavery in the United States?

- A. 10th Amendment
- B. 13th Amendment
- C. 15th Amendment
- D. 1st Amendment

 **Part 2: Short Answer (2 points each)**

9. Why did Southern states leave the Union?

10. How did the Civil War change the United States?

11. Describe one leadership quality of Abraham Lincoln.

 **Part 3: Critical Thinking (4 points)**

12. Do you think the United States would be different without Abraham Lincoln? Why or why not?

 **Answer Key**

Multiple Choice:

1. **B – Slavery**
2. **C – Preserve the Union**
3. **B – The country cannot remain split forever**

4. **C – Declared slaves in Confederate states free**
 5. **B – Antietam**
 6. **C – Ulysses S. Grant**
 7. **C – He was assassinated**
 8. **B – 13th Amendment**
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Short Answer (Sample Answers):

9.

- Southern states feared Lincoln would limit or end slavery
 - They wanted to protect their way of life and states' rights
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10.

- Preserved the Union
 - Ended slavery
 - Made the U.S. stronger and more unified
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11. (Any of the following)

- Determination
 - Strong leadership
 - Compassion
 - Ability to unite people
 - Refused to give up during difficult times
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Critical Thinking (Sample Answer):

12.

- Yes, the U.S. might have split into two countries

- Slavery may have lasted longer
- The nation might not be as unified today