Notes for the Debate at Jonesboro, Illinois

Student Activities:

- The debate forum called for the first person to speak for one hour. The second person spoke for 90 minutes. The first person finished with a 30 minute rebuttal. Go to lookingforlincoln.com to find information about all of the debates and the communities where they are held. Even more detailed information on all the debates can be found at www.nps.gov/search/index.htm?query=lincoln+douglas+debates. Who spoke first in Jonesboro? Compare Lincoln’s notes with what he actually said. Does he follow his outline: respond to Douglas, share Democratic resolutions, and ask two questions? The transcript can be found on the National Park Service’s website at: www.nps.gov/liho/historyculture/debate3.htm

- There are two quotations in Lincoln’s notes. He is actually quoting himself. Have students refer to the transcript on the second debate at Freeport to find the original questions. (www.nps.gov/liho/historyculture/debate2.htm)
  Why does Lincoln ask the same questions at Jonesboro that he did at Freeport?

- Discuss why Lincoln needed so few notes during this debate. Did Lincoln have anything else with him besides these few notes? (Refer to the debate transcript.) Discuss the advantages to a few notes as opposed to reading a prepared speech.

- Have students take part in debates. Assign debate topics and sides. Follow the same debate format but reduce the duration to 5 minutes, ten minute rebuttal, and 5 minute response. Have students work together in teams to prepare their arguments, selecting one person to deliver the arguments. Limit the speaker to one card of notes.
Middle School

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Research/Compare and Contrast: In preparation for his speech, Lincoln listed basic bullet points to organize his ideas which resulted in a 90 minute speech. Feel free to pull from the list of activities below using the letter Lincoln wrote to gain support during this specific debate.

- Read through both speeches (Douglas and Lincoln) for the third debate and outline the speech based on your understanding of taking notes. How does your outline/notes compare to Lincoln’s?
- Compare and contrast the points made between Douglas and Lincoln in both speeches.
- Compare and contrast Lincoln’s debate speech with a current speech given by President Obama. Are there any similar themes?
- How is the writing of a speech different for political figures from Lincoln’s time to today?
- Based on the notes that Lincoln did jot down in preparing for his speech…
  1. Why would Lincoln not prepare more bullet points/notes to be better prepared for an important debate?
  2. How was Lincoln able to give a 90 minute speech with such few notes or prompts to assist his thinking?
  3. What do the notes reflect on his level of confidence?

The following website may be helpful for some of the activities listed above:
http://www.nps.gov/liho/historyculture/debate3.htm

Research: Students will look further into the development and process of debates during this time period.

- How would the speech be heard with the lack of technology?
- How did each side prepare, research, campaign, etc.?
- Was there a time frame for the length a speech would need to be delivered in on both sides?
- How many people attended these debates and what types of people?
- How was listening to a debate in 1858 much different from today?

Debate/Speech: Students will draw a topic from a hat which will then be the focus of a two minute speech. Students will research, organize, outline and share their overall statement.

Journal: Write a reflection on the feelings you have experienced after completing a task that was very overwhelming and required other people to watch you complete. Be sure to include your emotions, details of the surroundings, and sense of accomplishment when you were done with the task. Some examples may be a speech, recital, performance, etc.

Map Skills: Students research the sites of the Lincoln-Douglas Debates. They plot the debates and their dates on a map of Illinois. Discuss why debates were held in each district so that both men’s views could be voiced throughout the state.
High School
Notes for the Debate at Jonesboro, Illinois

Discussion: Students look at the notes that Lincoln prepared for his debate. Let them know that these are all the notes that Lincoln had for the 90 minute presentation he was to make. Discuss with students the use of notes in speechmaking and their reaction to the amount of notes Lincoln used. What does this say about Lincoln? Discuss the current use of professional speechwriters for elected officials, rather than writing their own as Lincoln did. Discuss the advantages to a few notes as opposed to reading a prepared speech.

Public Speech: In order to appreciate the ability of Lincoln as a public speaker, students prepare a 3 minute speech on a topic in current events. They prepare notes for their presentation and compare them to the notes Lincoln used for his 90 minute presentation.

Research: Students research the Lincoln-Douglas Debates to identify themes and positions on major issues of the time. Compare and contrast points made by Douglas and Lincoln in their individual debates.

Research: Have students research the Northwest Ordinance and identify the conditions for an area to become a territory and then a state. This document set the framework for the expansion of the U.S. and creation of new states. Make sure students understand that even with the limits placed in the Northwest Ordinance that these were often disregarded (See notes on Kansas in the selection)