LESSON TITLE: Looking for Lincoln during the Civil War

GRADE LEVELS: 9-12

TIME ALLOTMENT: two to three 45-minute class periods

OVERVIEW: Abraham Lincoln’s presidency was defined by the Civil War. Before he even took office—and largely because of his election—southern states were seceding from the Union, and he would barely live to see peace finally restored. Using segments from the PBS film LOOKING FOR LINCOLN and a detailed interactive game from the National Constitution Center, this lesson will explore the unique challenges Lincoln faced during the five years of bloody civil war that made him America’s greatest but most controversial wartime leader.

The Introductory Activity uses the “Lincoln’s Crossroads” online interactive to challenge students to make two of the earliest and most difficult decisions Lincoln faced during his presidency. A segment from the series is then used to promote discussion of the relative similarities and differences between Lincoln and another wartime president: George W. Bush. The Learning Activities continue with film segments providing background on Lincoln’s presidency and additional rounds of the “Lincoln’s Crossroads” interactive, which call on students to “walk in his shoes.” The Culminating Activity asks students to write a hypothetical speech for Lincoln.

This lesson is best used as an introduction to a unit on the American Civil War.

SUBJECT MATTER: U.S. History/Social Studies

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Students will be able to:

- Describe the unprecedented scale of the losses sustained by both sides during the American Civil War.
- Identify significant events and milestones of Lincoln’s presidency.
- Articulate the difficult choices faced by President Lincoln in leading the nation during an often unpopular civil war.
- Discuss the development of how Lincoln’s position on the issue of slavery and emancipation changed during the course of the war, and why.
STANDARDS:

**History Standards for Grades 5-12**

**Historical Thinking Standards**
Standard 1: Chronological Thinking
   E. Interpret data presented in time lines and create time lines.
   F. Reconstruct patterns of historical succession and duration; explain historical continuity and change.

Standard 2: Historical Comprehension
   B. Reconstruct the literal meaning of a historical passage.
   F. Appreciate historical perspectives.

Standard 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretation
   A. Compare and contrast differing sets of ideas.
   B. Consider multiple perspectives.
   C. Analyze cause-and-effect relationships and multiple causation, including (a) the importance of the individual in history; (b) the influence of ideas, human interests, and beliefs.
   F. Compare competing historical narratives.

Standard 5: Historical Issues-Analysis and Decision-Making
   A. Identify issues and problems in the past.
   E. Formulate a position or course of action on an issue.

**United States History Standards**

Era 5

**Civil War and Reconstruction (1850-1877)**

STANDARD 1: The causes of the Civil War
   Standard 1A: The student understands how the North and South differed and how politics and ideologies led to the Civil War.
      • Explain the causes of the Civil War and evaluate the importance of slavery as a principal cause of the conflict. [Compare competing historical narratives]

STANDARD 2: The course and character of the Civil War and its effects on the American people.
   Standard 2A: The student understands how the resources of the Union and Confederacy affected the course of the war.

Learn more at [http://www.pbs.org/lookingforlincoln](http://www.pbs.org/lookingforlincoln)
• Identify the turning points of the war and evaluate how political, military, and diplomatic leadership affected the outcome of the conflict. [Assess the importance of the individual in history]
• Evaluate provisions of the Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln's reasons for issuing it, and its significance. [Examine the influence of ideas]

MEDIA COMPONENTS:

Video:

Looking for Lincoln, selected segments

Clip 1: An interview with President George W. Bush about his and Lincoln’s presidencies.
Clip 2: An introduction to the Civil War and Lincoln’s view of the Confederacy.
Clip 3: Lincoln’s need to ennoble the Civil War’s horrors with the cause of abolition.

Access the streaming and downloadable video segments for this lesson at the Video Segments Page (http://www.pbs.org/wnet/lookingforlincoln/lessons/looking-for-lincoln-during-the-civil-war/video-segments/186/).

Websites:

Abraham Lincoln’s Crossroads
http://constitutioncenter.org/lincoln/flash/index.html
An interactive game from the National Constitution Center in which players are challenged to make the difficult decisions faced by Abraham Lincoln.

MATERIALS:

For the class:

A computer with internet access connected to a projector and speakers for classroom use.

For each student:

“Lincoln’s Crossroads” Student Organizer

PREP FOR TEACHERS:

Learn more at http://www.pbs.org/lookingforlincoln
Prior to teaching this lesson, you will need to:

Preview all of the video segments and Web site used in the lesson.

Download the video segments used in the lesson to your classroom computer, or prepare to watch them using your classroom’s Internet connection.

Bookmark the Web site used in the lesson on each computer in your classroom. Using a social bookmarking tool such as del.icio.us or diigo (or an online bookmarking utility such as portaportal) will allow you to organize all the links in a central location.

Play the “Lincoln’s Crossroads” interactive to familiarize yourself with the flow of gameplay and learn where you will need to pause it for classroom participation.

Print and copy the “Lincoln’s Crossroads” student organizer.

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

1. Ask students who they think is the greatest American president? (Answers will vary but will likely include Abraham Lincoln.) Explain that while Lincoln is now commonly regarded as our greatest president (second perhaps only to Washington), in his own time he was a highly controversial figure. Tell students that this lesson will take a closer look at some of the decisions Lincoln made that contributed to his widespread unpopularity at the time—even as they guaranteed his place in history.

2. Distribute to each student the “Lincoln’s Crossroads” student organizer. Log on to “Lincoln’s Crossroads” (at http://constitutioncenter.org/lincoln/flash/index.html). Explain that this interactive will give them the opportunity to make some of the key decisions Lincoln faced during the Civil War. As a class, play the interactive’s third “Crossroad” about Ft. Sumter using the following Interactive Instructions:

   • 1) After the onscreen Lincoln outlines his two options in this scenario, ask for a show of hands of everyone who thinks Lincoln made the first or second choice.

   • 2) Select the response in “Lincoln’s Crossroads” chosen by the classroom majority.

   • 3) Once Lincoln’s response has been revealed, have students mark the corresponding checkbox on their organizer. Ask them if they would have made the same choice? Why or why not?

   • 4) Have students circle the checkbox corresponding to their own choice.
Tell students that if they had been president and chosen, as Lincoln chose, to defend Ft. Sumter, their decision would have triggered the Civil War. Make sure students understand that their decisions in this and forthcoming rounds of “Lincoln’s Crossroads” are not necessarily “right” or “wrong,” but rather only what Lincoln either did or didn’t do. Explain that many of Lincoln’s decisions—including his resolve to fight the Confederacy in the first place—were highly controversial at the time, and that many remain so today.

3. As a class, play the interactive’s fifth “Crossroad” about The Merryman Case, according to the Interactive Instructions outlined in Step 2. Explain that Lincoln’s decision to suspend the constitutional writ of habeas corpus in Maryland in 1861—a policy he would extend nationwide the following year—remains one of his most controversial acts as president. [NOTE: If students are unclear on the definition of habeas corpus, explain that its basic premise is that one cannot be imprisoned without just cause. An interactive timeline about the history of habeas corpus can be found at http://www.aclu.org/safefree/detention/habeastimeline.html.]

4. Ask students if anyone knows of any other occasions in American history when the writ of habeas corpus has been suspended. Explain that several presidents, including Ulysses Grant, Franklin Roosevelt, and Bill Clinton, have suspended or restricted this basic right during crises of war or terrorism, but that perhaps the most controversial example in our own time has been President George W. Bush’s policy toward detaining prisoners without trial at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba as part of the post-9/11 “War on Terror.”

5. Tell students that they will now be looking at a segment from the PBS film LOOKING FOR LINCOLN in which President Bush himself addresses the parallels between his own controversial presidency and that of Lincoln. Provide students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION by asking them: “What was one of the nicknames given to Lincoln by his opponents and detractors?” (“Abraham the Tyrant.”) PLAY Segment 1, “Bush on Lincoln.” Access the streaming and downloadable video segments for this lesson at the Video Segments Page (http://www.pbs.org/wnet/lookingforlincoln/lessons/looking-for-lincoln-during-the-civil-war/video-segments/186/).

After reviewing the focus question, ask students what they think is similar in the situations faced by Presidents Lincoln and Bush? What’s different? (Accept all answers, but explain that wartime poses particularly difficult challenges for U.S. presidents, who are charged with maintaining often conflicting standards of constitutional law and national security. Tell students that the rest of this lesson will be devoted to exploring several such challenges in Lincoln’s presidency.)

LEARNING ACTIVITIES:

1. Tell students that they will now be taking a look at some more of Lincoln’s controversial wartime policies, starting with a segment from LOOKING FOR LINCOLN that discusses the
unprecedented scale of the Civil War itself. Provide students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION by asking them: “How many soldiers died in the Civil War?” PLAY Segment 2, “Proving Ground,” PAUSING at 1:40, after Professor Gates says, “There’s no better place to try and find the answers to these questions than here at Gettysburg.” Access the streaming and downloadable video segments for this lesson at the Video Segments Page (http://www.pbs.org/wnet/lookingforlincoln/lessons/looking-for-lincoln-during-the-civil-war/video-segments/186/).

After reviewing the focus question, explain that the answer—620,000—exceeds the number of fatal American casualties in ALL other wars from the Revolution to the present day, and is over 200 times greater than the number of people killed on September 11th, 2001.

2. Ask students what they think the answer is to Professor Gates’ question in the segment: Why DID Lincoln order so many men to their deaths? What was it all for? (Answers will vary, but many students will answer that the war was fought to end slavery.) As a class, log on to the “Lincoln’s Crossroads” interactive and play the sixth “Crossroad” about the Fremont Proclamation according to the Interactive Instructions outlined in Step 2 of the Introductory Activity. Ask what Lincoln’s decision to revoke the Fremont Proclamation indicates about his initial purpose in pressing the war? (That it was being fought not primarily to free slaves, but rather to defeat the Confederacy and preserve the Union.)

3. Explain that as the war progressed, Lincoln gradually revised his opinion about the importance of freeing slaves as part of the Union cause. After a string of humiliating military defeats, he took the occasion of the Union army’s victory at the battle of Antietam to issue his Emancipation Proclamation. This often misunderstood document in fact only freed the South’s slaves; it did nothing to free the slaves in northern states still loyal to the Union.

4. As a class, proceed to the eighth “Crossroad” about Black Troops, and play it according to the Interactive Instructions outlined in Step 2 of the Introductory Activity. Ask students what they think Lincoln’s primary motivations were for including the provision for black troops in the Emancipation Proclamation? (Answers will vary, but explain that Lincoln at this point was more concerned with raising additional manpower to save the Union, and raising morale among Northern abolitionists, than he was in ending slavery for its own sake.)

5. Tell students that they will now be watching the remainder of the second LOOKING FOR LINCOLN segment. Provide a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION by asking: “What did Lincoln called the Confederates?” (Insurgents, rebels.) PLAY the remainder of Segment 2 (from where Gates asks “How many men were here?”) Access the streaming and downloadable video segments for this lesson at the Video Segments Page (http://www.pbs.org/wnet/lookingforlincoln/lessons/looking-for-lincoln-during-the-civil-war/video-segments/186/).

After reviewing the focus question, ask students where else they may have heard the term “insurgents” in our own time. (Iraq.)
6. Explain to the class that these terrible casualties sustained by the Union Army at Gettysburg on July 1-3, 1863 helped fan the flames of the next great crisis in Lincoln’s presidency. As a class, return to “Lincoln’s Crossroads” and play the eleventh “Crossroad” about the Draft Riots according to the Interactive Instructions outlined in Step 2 of the Introductory Activity. Explain that it was the poor who rioted against the draft in New York City. Ask students why they think this was? (They could not afford the $300 required to buy their way out of conscripted military service.) Ask students if they can think of another instance where a national draft provoked unrest and resistance? (The Vietnam War in the 1960s.)

7. Tell students they will now be looking at a third segment from LOOKING FOR LINCOLN, and ask them to look for what Professor Gates believes is “the key to understanding the greatness” of Lincoln. (His language.) PLAY Segment 3, “How Could God Have Allowed This?” Access the streaming and downloadable video segments for this lesson at the Video Segments Page (http://www.pbs.org/wnet/lookingforlincoln/lessons/looking-for-lincoln-during-the-civil-war/video-segments/186/).

After reviewing the focus question, ask students how Lincoln defined the purpose of the war differently at Gettysburg than he had earlier? Why? (Answers will vary, but encourage an understanding that the unanticipated and unprecedented human cost of the war now required a larger, greater purpose: the war was no longer just a struggle to save the political entity of the Union, but a moral crusade to end slavery. “Our honored dead” were now to be sacrifices made in the name of the higher ideal “that all men are created equal.”)

8. As a class, return to “Lincoln’s Crossroads” and play the twelfth “Crossroad” about the Thirteenth Amendment according to the Interactive Instructions outlined in Step 2 of the Introductory Activity. Ask students what Lincoln’s support for the Thirteenth Amendment suggests about his views on slavery at this late point in the war. (Answers will vary, but encourage an understanding that Lincoln no longer saw the permanent abolition of slavery as a means to an end—i.e. the preservation of the Union, which is at this point all but guaranteed—but as an end in itself, which he finally has the political capital to impose upon the nation as a whole.)

CULMINATING ACTIVITY

1. Have students review their “Lincoln’s Crossroads” student organizer and identify one crossroad at which they personally would have chosen differently from Lincoln. Have those students who selected the same crossroad form a group. Note that many students will not have personally decided differently than Lincoln on any issue, in which case they must now be assigned to one of the groups until there are six groups of approximately equal size—one for each crossroad explored in the lesson.
2. Either as an in-class research project or as a homework assignment (depending on available time and classroom/library resources) assign each group to research the context and consequences of their crossroad and write a short speech justifying the choice that Lincoln didn’t historically make. These speeches are not to exceed 272 words—the length of Lincoln’s most famous—and brief—speech: the Gettysburg Address. Encourage students to examine the Gettysburg address in the “Analyzing the Evidence” interactive available here [http://www.pbs.org/wnet/lookingforlincoln/analyzing-the-evidence/overview/87/].
**“LINCOLN’S CROSSROADS”**  
Student Organizer  
Place a checkmark in the box corresponding to Lincoln’s decision. Circle the box corresponding to what you would have done.

**Crossroad #3: Ft. Sumter**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Defend Ft. Sumter and risk war with the newly established Confederacy.</th>
<th>Surrender Ft. Sumter as a gesture of goodwill in hopes of avoiding war.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Crossroad #5: The Merryman Case**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obey Chief Justice Taney’s order and do NOT suspend the writ of <em>habeas corpus</em>.</th>
<th>Refuse Chief Justice Taney’s order and suspend the writ of <em>habeas corpus</em>.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Crossroad #6: The Fremont Proclamation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Endorse Fremont’s order and risk the secession of border states.</th>
<th>Revoke Fremont’s order and risk the support of Northern abolitionists.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Crossroad #8: Black Troops**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Enlist black troops for the Union army and risk the morale of white troops.</th>
<th>Do NOT enlist black troops and risk the support of Northern abolitionists.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Crossroad #11: Draft Riots**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Abandon the draft to appease those who believe it to be unconstitutional.</th>
<th>Proceed with the draft to help replace Union army losses on the battlefield.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Crossroad #12: Thirteenth Amendment**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Rely on individual states to abolish slavery in their own state constitutions.</th>
<th>Support a constitutional amendment for permanent emancipation.</th>
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</table>

Learn more at [http://www.pbs.org/lookingforlincoln](http://www.pbs.org/lookingforlincoln)