

Understanding the Primary Text: What Does It Say?

Student Name _____ Date _____

From Abraham Lincoln, “Fragment on the Constitution and Union” [c. January, 1861]:
<http://www.teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=29>

All this is not the result of accident. It has a philosophical cause. Without the *Constitution* and the *Union*, we could not have attained the result; but even these, are not the primary cause of our great prosperity. There is something back of these, entwining itself more closely about the human heart. That something, is the principle of “Liberty to all”—the principle that clears the *path* for all—gives *hope* to all—and, by consequence, *enterprize*, and *industry* to all.

The *expression* of that principle, in our Declaration of Independence, was most happy, and fortunate. *Without* this, as well as *with* it, we could have declared our independence of Great Britain; but *without* it, we could not, I think, have secured our free government, and consequent prosperity. No oppressed people will *fight*, and *endure*, as our fathers did, without the promise of something better, than a mere change of masters.

The assertion of that *principle*, at *that time*, was *the* word, “*fitly spoken*” which has proved an “apple of gold” to us. The *Union*, and the *Constitution*, are the *picture* of *silver*, subsequently framed around it. The picture was made, not to *conceal*, or *destroy* the apple; but to *adorn*, and *preserve* it. The *picture* was made *for* the apple—*not* the apple for the picture.

So let us act, that neither *picture*, or *apple*, shall ever be blurred, or bruised or broken.

That we may so act, we must study, and understand the points of danger.

Source: *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, ed. Roy P. Basler, 8 vols. plus Index (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953), Volume 4, pp. 168-169.

Understanding the Primary Text: What Does It Say?

Student Name _____ Date _____

Directions: As you work your way through Lincoln’s “Fragment on the Constitution and Union,” answer the following questions in the space provided.

Questions	Answers
<p>What does Lincoln call “the primary cause” of America’s prosperity? (Hint: It is <i>not</i> the Constitution or the Union.)</p>	
<p>Who does Lincoln think should benefit from this cause of America’s prosperity, and what four things result from this cause?</p>	
<p>Where does Lincoln find the principle of “Liberty to all” expressed among America’s founding documents? In other words, where can someone find the philosophy of the American people?</p>	
<p>What symbol does Lincoln use to represent the principle of “Liberty to all”?</p>	
<p>What symbol does Lincoln use to represent the Union and the Constitution?</p>	

How does Lincoln describe the proper relationship between the “apple of gold” and the “picture of silver”?

What is the proper relationship between the principle of equal liberty and the U.S. Constitution (i.e., which exists for the sake of the other)?

Supplementary Texts: How Do They Shed Light on the Primary Text?

Student Name _____ Date _____

From the Declaration of Independence (July 4, 1776):

http://www.archives.gov/national-archives-experience/charters/declaration_transcript.html

IN CONGRESS, July 4, 1776.

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America,

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,—That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. . . .

Supplementary Texts: How Do They Shed Light on the Primary Text?

Student Name _____ Date _____

Directions: After reading the Declaration of Independence, answer the following questions in the space provided.

Questions	Answers
In the second paragraph, what truths are held to be "self-evident"?	
What does "self-evident" mean?	
According to the Declaration, in what way are human beings created equal? Does this apply to some human beings and not others?	
According to the Declaration, where do rights come from?	
According to the Declaration, what is the purpose of government and what is its only legitimate basis?	
In the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence, what statement does Lincoln paraphrase as "Liberty to all"?	

Supplementary Texts: How Do They Shed Light on the Primary Text?

Student Name _____ Date _____

Directions: After reading Proverbs 25:11, answer the following questions in the space provided.

Questions	Answers
What do the “pictures [or settings] of silver” represent?	
What do the “apples of gold” represent?	
What is the purpose of a good setting?	

Supplementary Texts: How Do They Shed Light on the Primary Text?

Student Name _____ Date _____

No "Mere Change of Masters": Reflecting upon Lincoln's View of American Independence and Union

Assessment: Instruct students to answer the following questions in one or two paragraphs.

Questions	Answers
<p>Why does Lincoln think people should see a "philosophical cause," and not the Constitution or the Union, as the key to America's prosperity? Is this distinction relevant for how Americans govern themselves today? Explain.</p>	
<p>How did Lincoln connect the principle of "liberty to all" in the Declaration of Independence to the deeper meaning and ultimate goal of the American Union? (Students should utilize what they gained from peer feedback in answering this question.)</p>	

* Optional: Lincoln argues that the "picture was made, not to *conceal*, or *destroy* the apple; but to *adorn*, and *preserve* it," and closes with an appeal "that neither *picture*, or *apple*, shall ever be blurred, or bruised or broken."

Given the state of the American union in early 1861, how did he believe some Americans were interpreting the Constitution and union to conceal or destroy the apple of freedom? What examples of blurring or breaking might he have been thinking of?

* Optional: Lincoln appealed to a principle in the Declaration of Independence, that of "liberty to all," to show the purpose or goal of American constitutional government. Can you find other principles in the second paragraph of the Declaration that might be applied to contemporary issues facing the American public? Identify the principle and explain how it could be used to shed light on a current issue.

Extending the Lesson

Student Name _____ Date _____

Two Opponents of Lincoln: Politicians Who “Blurred” the Apple of Liberty (John C. Calhoun and Stephen A. Douglas)

From John C. Calhoun, “Slavery a Positive Good” (February 6, 1837):
http://douglassarchives.org/calh_a59.htm

I do not belong, said Mr. C., to the school which holds that aggression is to be met by concession. Mine is the opposite creed, which teaches that encroachments must be met at the beginning, and that those who act on the opposite principle are prepared to become slaves. In this case, in particular. I hold concession or compromise to be fatal. If we concede an inch, concession would follow concession—compromise would follow compromise, until our ranks would be so broken that effectual resistance would be impossible. We must meet the enemy on the frontier, with a fixed determination of maintaining our position at every hazard. Consent to receive these insulting petitions, and the next demand will be that they be referred to a committee in order that they may be deliberated and acted upon. At the last session we were modestly asked to receive them, simply to lay them on the table, without any view to ulterior action. . . . I then said, that the next step would be to refer the petition to a committee, and I already see indications that such is now the intention. If we yield, that will be followed by another, and we will thus proceed, step by step, to the final consummation of the object of these petitions. We are now told that the most effectual mode of arresting the progress of abolition is, to reason it down; and with this view it is urged that the petitions ought to be referred to a committee. That is the very ground which was taken at the last session in the other House, but instead of arresting its progress it has since advanced more rapidly than ever. The most unquestionable right may be rendered doubtful, if once admitted to be a subject of controversy, and that would be the case in the present instance. The subject is beyond the jurisdiction of Congress—they have no right to touch it in any shape or form, or to make it the subject of deliberation or discussion. . . .

As widely as this incendiary spirit has spread, it has not yet infected this body, or the great mass of the intelligent and business portion of the North; but unless it be speedily stopped, it will spread and work upwards till it brings the two great sections of the Union into deadly conflict. This is not a new impression with me. Several years since, in a discussion with one of the Senators from Massachusetts (Mr. Webster), before this fell spirit had showed itself, I then predicted that the doctrine of the proclamation and the Force Bill—that this Government had a right, in the last resort, to determine the extent of its own powers, and enforce its decision at the point of the bayonet, which was so warmly maintained by that Senator, would at no distant day arouse the dormant spirit of abolitionism. I told him that the doctrine was tantamount to the assumption of unlimited power on the part of the Government, and that such would be the impression on the public mind in a large portion of the Union. The consequence would be inevitable. A large portion of the Northern States believed slavery to be a sin, and would consider it as an obligation of conscience to abolish it if they should feel themselves in any degree responsible for its continuance, and that this doctrine would necessarily lead to the belief of such responsibility. I then predicted that it would commence as it has with this fanatical portion of society,

and that they would begin their operations on the ignorant, the weak, the young, and the thoughtless,—and gradually extend upwards till they would become strong enough to obtain political control, when he and others holding the highest stations in society, would, however reluctant, be compelled to yield to their doctrines, or be driven into obscurity. But four years have since elapsed, and all this is already in a course of regular fulfilment.

Standing at the point of time at which we have now arrived, it will not be more difficult to trace the course of future events now than it was then. They who imagine that the spirit now abroad in the North, will die away of itself without a shock or convulsion, have formed a very inadequate conception of its real character; it will continue to rise and spread, unless prompt and efficient measures to stay its progress be adopted. Already it has taken possession of the pulpit, of the schools, and, to a considerable extent, of the press; those great instruments by which the mind of the rising generation will be formed.

However sound the great body of the non-slaveholding States are at present, in the course of a few years they will be succeeded by those who will have been taught to hate the people and institutions of nearly one-half of this Union, with a hatred more deadly than one hostile nation ever entertained towards another. It is easy to see the end. By the necessary course of events, if left to themselves, we must become, finally, two people. It is impossible under the deadly hatred which must spring up between the two great nations, if the present causes are permitted to operate unchecked, that we should continue under the same political system. The conflicting elements would burst the Union asunder, powerful as are the links which hold it together. Abolition and the Union cannot coexist. As the friend of the Union I openly proclaim it,—and the sooner it is known the better. The former may now be controlled, but in a short time it will be beyond the power of man to arrest the course of events. We of the South will not, cannot, surrender our institutions. To maintain the existing relations between the two races, inhabiting that section of the Union, is indispensable to the peace and happiness of both. It cannot be subverted without drenching the country in blood, and extirpating one or the other of the races. . . . But let me not be understood as admitting, even by implication, that the existing relations between the two races in the slaveholding States is an evil:—far otherwise; I hold it to be a good, as it has thus far proved itself to be to both, and will continue to prove so if not disturbed by the fell spirit of abolition. I appeal to facts. Never before has the black race of Central Africa, from the dawn of history to the present day, attained a condition so civilized and so improved, not only physically, but morally and intellectually.

In the meantime, the white or European race, has not degenerated. It has kept pace with its brethren in other sections of the Union where slavery does not exist. It is odious to make comparison; but I appeal to all sides whether the South is not equal in virtue, intelligence, patriotism, courage, disinterestedness, and all the high qualities which adorn our nature.

But I take higher ground. I hold that in the present state of civilization, where two races of different origin, and distinguished by color, and other physical differences, as well as intellectual, are brought together, the relation now existing in the slaveholding States between the two, is, instead of an evil, a good—a positive good. I feel myself called upon to speak freely upon the subject where the honor and interests of those I represent are involved. I hold then, that there never has yet existed a wealthy and civilized society in which one portion of the community did not, in point of fact, live on the labor of the other. Broad and general as is this assertion, it is fully borne out by history. This is not the proper occasion, but, if it were, it would not be difficult to trace the various devices by which the wealth of all civilized communities has been so unequally divided, and to show by what means so small a share has been allotted to those by whose labor it was produced, and so large a share given to the non-producing classes. The devices are almost innumerable, from the brute force and gross superstition of ancient times, to the subtle and artful fiscal contrivances of modern. I might well challenge a comparison

between them and the more direct, simple, and patriarchal mode by which the labor of the African race is, among us, commanded by the European. I may say with truth, that in few countries so much is left to the share of the laborer, and so little exacted from him, or where there is more kind attention paid to him in sickness or infirmities of age. Compare his condition with the tenants of the poor houses in the more civilized portions of Europe—look at the sick, and the old and infirm slave, on one hand, in the midst of his family and friends, under the kind superintending care of his master and mistress, and compare it with the forlorn and wretched condition of the pauper in the poorhouse. But I will not dwell on this aspect of the question; I turn to the political; and here I fearlessly assert that the existing relation between the two races in the South, against which these blind fanatics are waging war, forms the most solid and durable foundation on which to rear free and stable political institutions. It is useless to disguise the fact. There is and always has been in an advanced stage of wealth and civilization, a conflict between labor and capital. The condition of society in the South exempts us from the disorders and dangers resulting from this conflict; and which explains why it is that the political condition of the slaveholding States has been so much more stable and quiet than that of the North. . . . Surrounded as the slaveholding States are with such imminent perils, I rejoice to think that our means of defense are ample, if we shall prove to have the intelligence and spirit to see and apply them before it is too late. All we want is concert, to lay aside all party differences and unite with zeal and energy in repelling approaching dangers. Let there be concert of action, and we shall find ample means of security without resorting to secession or disunion. I speak with full knowledge and a thorough examination of the subject, and for one see my way clearly. . . . I dare not hope that anything I can say will arouse the South to a due sense of danger; I fear it is beyond the power of mortal voice to awaken it in time from the fatal security into which it has fallen.

Source: U.S. Senate, *Congressional Globe*, 24th Congress, 2nd Sess (Feb. 6, 1837), 157-59. John C. Calhoun, Speech on the Reception of Abolition Petitions: Revised Report.

Extending the Lesson

Student Name _____ Date _____

Two Opponents of Lincoln: Politicians Who “Blurred” the Apple of Liberty (John C. Calhoun and Stephen A. Douglas)

Directions: As you read the excerpt from John C. Calhoun’s “Slavery a Positive Good” (February 6, 1837), answer the following questions in the space provided.

Questions	Answers
<p>Who does John C. Calhoun say benefits from slavery?</p>	
<p>According to Calhoun, what justifies American slavery? In other words, why does he think whites can legitimately enslave blacks?</p>	
<p>According to Calhoun, what kind of labor and economics system must be devised to produce a prosperous society? Explain.</p>	

Extending the Lesson

Student Name _____ Date _____

Two Opponents of Lincoln: Politicians Who “Blurred” the Apple of Liberty (John C. Calhoun and Stephen A. Douglas)

From Stephen A. Douglas, “Homecoming Speech at Chicago” (July 9, 1858):
<http://www.teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=156>

. . . It is an expression of your devotion to that great principle of self-government, to which my life for many years past has been, and in the future will be, devoted. If there is any one principle dearer and more sacred than all others in free governments, it is that which asserts the exclusive right of a free people to form and adopt their own fundamental law, and to manage and regulate their own internal affairs and domestic institutions. . . .

I regard the great principle of popular sovereignty, as having been vindicated and made triumphant in this land, as a permanent rule of public policy in the organization of Territories and the admission of new States. Illinois took her position upon this principle many years ago. You all recollect that in 1850, after the passage of the Compromise measures of that year, when I returned to my home, there was great dissatisfaction expressed at my course in supporting those measures. I appeared before the people of Chicago at a mass meeting, and vindicated each and every one of those measures; and by reference to my speech on that occasion, which was printed and circulated broad-cast throughout the State at that time, you will find that I then and there said that those measures were all founded upon the great principle that every people ought to possess the right to form and regulate their own domestic institutions in their own way, and that that right being possessed by the people of the States, I saw no reason why the same principle should not be extended to all of the Territories of the United States. A general election was held in this State a few months afterward, for members of the Legislature, pending which all these questions were thoroughly canvassed and discussed, and the nominees of the different parties instructed in regard to the wishes of their constituents upon them. When that election was over, and the Legislature assembled, they proceeded to consider the merits of those Compromise measures and the principles upon which they were predicated. And what was the result of their action? They passed resolutions, first repealing the Wilmot proviso instructions, and in lieu thereof adopted another resolution, in which they declared the great principle which asserts the right of the people to make their own form of government and establish their own institutions. That resolution is as follows:

Resolved, That our liberty and independence are based upon the right of the people to form for themselves such a government as they may choose; that this great principle, the birthright of freemen, the gift of Heaven, secured to us by the blood of our ancestors ought to be secured to future generations, and no limitation ought to be applied to this power in the organization of any Territory of the United States, of either Territorial Government or State Constitution, provided the Government so established shall be Republican, and in conformity with the Constitution of the United States.

That resolution, declaring the great principle of self-government as applicable to the Territories and new States, passed the House of Representatives of this State by a vote of sixty-one in the affirmative, to only four in the negative. Thus you find that an expression of public opinion, enlightened, educated, intelligent public opinion on this question by the representatives of Illinois, in 1851, approaches nearer to unanimity than has ever been obtained on any controverted question. That resolution was entered on the journal of the Legislature of the State of Illinois, and it has remained there from that day to this, a standing instruction to her Senators and a request to her Representatives in Congress, to carry out that principle in all future cases. Illinois, therefore, stands pre-eminent as the State which stepped forward early and established a platform applicable to this slavery question, concurred in alike by Whigs and Democrats, in which it was declared to be the wish of our people that thereafter the people of the Territories should be left perfectly free to form and regulate their domestic institutions in their own way, and that no limitation should be placed upon that right in any form.

Hence what was my duty, in 1854, when it became necessary to bring forward a bill for the organization of the Territories of Kansas and Nebraska? Was it not my duty, in obedience to the Illinois platform, to your standing instructions to your Senators, adopted with almost entire unanimity, to incorporate in that bill the great principle of self-government, declaring that it was "the true intent and meaning of the act not to legislate slavery into any State or Territory, or to exclude it therefrom, but to leave the people thereof perfectly free to form and regulate their domestic institutions in their own way, subject only to the Constitution of the United States?" I did incorporate that principle in the Kansas-Nebraska bill, and perhaps I did as much as any living man in the enactment of that bill, thus establishing the doctrine in the public policy of the country. I then defended that principle against assaults from one section of the Union. During this last winter it became my duty to vindicate it against assaults from the other section of the Union. I vindicated it boldly and fearlessly, as the people of Chicago can bear witness, when it was assailed by Freesoilers; and during this winter I vindicated and defended it as boldly and fearlessly when it was attempted to be violated by the almost united South. I pledged myself to you on every stump in Illinois in 1854, I pledged myself to the people of other States, North and South—wherever I spoke—and in the United States Senate and elsewhere, in every form in which I could reach the public mind or the public ear, I gave the pledge that I, so far as the power should be in my hands, would vindicate the principle of the right of the people to form their own institutions, to establish Free States or Slave States as they chose, and that that principle should never be violated either by fraud, by violence, by circumvention, or by any other means, if it was in my power to prevent it. I now submit to you, my fellow-citizens, whether I have not redeemed that pledge in good faith! Yes, my friends, I have redeemed it in good faith, and it is a matter of heart-felt gratification to me to see these assembled thousands here to-night bearing their testimony to the fidelity with which I have advocated that principle and redeemed my pledges in connection with it.

I will be entirely frank with you. My object was to secure the right of the people of each State and of each Territory, North or South, to decide the question for themselves, to have slavery or not, just as they chose; and my opposition to the Lecompton Constitution was not predicated upon the ground that it was a proslavery Constitution, nor would my action have been different had it been a Freesoil Constitution. My speech against the Lecompton fraud was made on the 9th of December, while the vote on the slavery clause in that Constitution was not taken until the 21st of the same month, nearly two weeks after. I made my speech against the Lecompton monstrosity solely on the ground that it was a violation of the fundamental principles of free government; on the ground that it was not the act and deed of the people of Kansas; that it did not embody their will; that they were averse to it; and hence I denied the right of Congress to force it upon them, either as a free State or a slave State. I deny the right of Congress to force a slaveholding State upon an unwilling people. I deny their right to force a free State upon an unwilling people. I deny their right to force a good thing upon a people who are unwilling to

receive it. The great principle is the right of every community to judge and decide for itself, whether a thing is right or wrong, whether it would be good or evil for them to adopt it; and the right of free action, the right of free thought, the right of free judgment upon the question is dearer to every true American than any other under a free government. My objection to the Lecompton contrivance was, that it undertook to put a Constitution on the people of Kansas against their will, in opposition to their wishes, and thus violated the great principle upon which all our institutions rest. It is no answer to this argument to say that slavery is an evil, and hence should not be tolerated. You must allow the people to decide for themselves whether it is a good or an evil. You allow them to decide for themselves whether they desire a Maine liquor law or not; you allow them to decide for themselves what kind of common schools they will have; what system of banking they will adopt, or whether they will adopt any at all; you allow them to decide for themselves the relations between husband and wife, parent and child, guardian and ward; in fact, you allow them to decide for themselves all other questions, and why not upon this question? Whenever you put a limitation upon the right of any people to decide what laws they want, you have destroyed the fundamental principle of self-government. . . .

The framers of the Constitution well understood that each locality, having separate and distinct interests, required separate and distinct laws, domestic institutions, and police regulations adapted to its own wants and its own condition; and they acted on the presumption, also, that these laws and institutions would be as diversified and as dissimilar as the States would be numerous, and that no two would be precisely alike, because the interests of no two would be precisely the same. Hence, I assert, that the great fundamental principle which underlies our complex system of State and Federal Governments, contemplated diversity and dissimilarity in the local institutions and domestic affairs of each and every State then in the Union, or thereafter to be admitted into the Confederacy. I therefore conceive that my friend, Mr. Lincoln, has totally misapprehended the great principles upon which our government rests. Uniformity in local and domestic affairs would be destructive of State rights, of State sovereignty, of personal liberty and personal freedom. Uniformity is the parent of despotism the world over, not only in politics, but in religion. Wherever the doctrine of uniformity is proclaimed, that all the States must be free or all slave, that all labor must be white or all black, that all the citizens of the different States must have the same privileges or be governed by the same regulations, you have destroyed the greatest safeguard which our institutions have thrown around the rights of the citizen.

How could this uniformity be accomplished, if it was desirable and possible? There is but one mode in which it could be obtained, and that must be by abolishing the State Legislatures, blotting out State sovereignty, merging the rights and sovereignty of the States in one consolidated empire, and vesting Congress with the plenary power to make all the police regulations, domestic and local laws, uniform throughout the limits of the Republic. When you shall have done this, you will have uniformity. Then the States will all be slave or all be free; then negroes will vote everywhere or nowhere; then you will have a Maine liquor law in every State or none; then you will have uniformity in all things, local and domestic, by the authority of the Federal Government. But when you attain that uniformity, you will have converted these thirty-two sovereign, independent States into one consolidated empire, with the uniformity of disposition reigning triumphant throughout the length and breadth of the land.

Source: Lincoln, Abraham. *Political Debates Between Lincoln and Douglas* (Cleveland: Burrows Bros. Co., 1897).

Extending the Lesson

Student Name _____ Date _____

Two Opponents of Lincoln: Politicians Who “Blurred” the Apple of Liberty (John C. Calhoun and Stephen A. Douglas)

Directions: As you work your way through an excerpt from Stephen A. Douglas’s “Homecoming Speech at Chicago” (July 9, 1858), answer the following questions in the space provided.

Questions	Answers
<p>What does Douglas mean by “popular sovereignty”?</p>	
<p>What practical examples of “popular sovereignty” does he give to establish its legitimacy?</p>	
<p>Why does he think “popular sovereignty” should not be limited in any way?</p>	