



## The Assassination of President Lincoln

*Original lesson created by:*

Ryan Kelly, Quaker Valley Middle School

*Self-directed lesson adapted by:*

Tamekia Jackson, Ford's Theatre

*6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grade / One Hour*

### **Introduction:**

The assassination of President Abraham Lincoln was an unprecedented event. Lincoln had just started his second term as president and was looking towards rebuilding the nation after the Civil War when he became the first president to be assassinated.

How could such a thing have taken place—and in Washington, the fortified capital of the nation? In this lesson, you will use primary source documents and accounts from the night of the assassination to explore Lincoln's investigation.

### **How to Do This Lesson:**

This lesson uses the [Lincoln's Assassination](#) page on the Ford's Theatre website to explore and analyze the assassination. On the webpage, there is a red box on the left side to guide you through the investigation. Use the graphic organizers in this lesson to record your findings and form conclusions about Lincoln's assassination.

Let the investigation begin!

## **Events of April 14, 1865**

*Before you begin, record your thoughts on the following questions:*

What do you know about Abraham Lincoln's assassination?

What questions do you have about the assassination?

**Now, read the information at the top of the Lincoln's Assassination webpage and explore the Events of April 14, 1865 tab.**

*As you read, consider the following questions, and add your thoughts below:*

How did Booth gain such access to the theatre? Why didn't Lincoln's security people stop him?

Was it a lone act or part of a larger conspiracy?

When all was said and done, what was the outcome—for those involved in the crime, for their victims, for the nation and even for Ford's Theatre?

## Eyewitness Testimonies

Click on “Eyewitness Testimony” on the Lincoln’s Assassination page.

Follow the events of the night of April 14, 1865, a photo of Ford’s Theatre with chronological annotations documents the location of the action within the theatre and includes the specific eyewitness testimony for each event. Examine the action and the eyewitness testimony. As you analyze the information, fill in the graphic organizer below to capture your findings.

## Eyewitness Testimonies

Witness Name	Where they were	What they said	Thoughts/ Connections

**Answer these Questions:**

How are the statements from different witnesses the same? How are they different?

Sometimes eyewitnesses have different versions of what they saw. Why do you think this is?

In what ways, if any, do the statements from the witnesses in 1865 differ from those made many years later? Why might that be?

What does this tell us about our understanding of historic events? What does this tell us about the Lincoln Assassination specifically?

### Examine the Evidence

Click on “Examine the Evidence” on the Lincoln’s Assassination webpage. Explore the clues from the night of April 14, 1865, at Ford’s Theatre through material evidence, which includes the items Booth was wearing and carrying as well as President Lincoln’s clothing that evening. Record findings on the graphic organizer below.

### Evidence Analysis

Artifact	Where it was found	Importance to investigation	Thoughts/Connections

### Answer These Questions:

What can we learn from analyzing the physical evidence?

How does analyzing the historical images, physical artifacts and primary source accounts help us to understand the Lincoln assassination and make connections to present day?

## **Investigation Conclusions and Connecting to Present Day**

*Consider the questions below. Answer them based on your discoveries from this investigation.*

What can the physical evidence help us to understand or know about the assassination?

How does analyzing the historical images, physical artifacts and primary source accounts help us to understand the Lincoln assassination and make connections to present day?

Do you think it's OK for Ford's Theatre to display the pistol Booth used to assassinate Lincoln in its museum? Why or why not?

What does the Lincoln Assassination help us to understand about our country, then in 1865 and now?