



## **Did Everyone Cry at the Assassination of President Lincoln?**

Student Activity created by David McKenzie, Associate Director for Interpretive Resources, Ford's Theatre

Adapted from a lesson created by Kia Hunter, 2016 History Intern, Ford's Theatre

6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grade

### **Introduction**

Use first-person, primary-source documents to understand how differently people around the country responded to the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln.

In this activity, you will:

1. Follow the events of the Lincoln assassination on a timeline. What events might have influenced the events of the assassination? What might have a direct affect versus an indirect effect on Booth's decision to kill Lincoln?
2. Read excerpts from John Wilkes Booth's diary to try to understand his motivations. You'll use the S.O.A.P.S.Tone chart to help you try to make sense of his words.
3. Explore four first-person accounts from people learning about the assassination of the President. Using the annotation guide, mark up the accounts to analyze them.
4. With the primary sources you just read as inspiration, use the Brainstorming Worksheet to imagine you are a young person living in 1865. Then, write a diary entry or letter describing how you learned about the assassination and your feelings about it.

***Turn the page...***

## Activity 1:

### Setting the Stage: Timeline of Lincoln Assassination Events

*What events led up to Lincoln's assassination? What happened afterward?*

*As you read, ask yourself, "Why is this event important? Does this event look like it's related to/ result of another event on the timeline?"*

*Draw arrows between events on the timeline to show cause and effect. Highlight what you think are the most important events leading up to Booth's assassination of Lincoln. Then, revisit after you've looked at the rest of the lesson to see if your opinion has changed.*

**May 10, 1838:** John Wilkes Booth is born in the state of Maryland, where slavery was legal.

**November 6, 1860:** Abraham Lincoln is elected 16th president of the United States.

**December 20, 1860:** South Carolina becomes the first state to leave the Union.

**January 1, 1863:** Abraham Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring all enslaved people in "states in rebellion" free. The Emancipation Proclamation also allows Black men to enlist in the U.S. Army. By the end of the Civil War, 180,000 do so.

**July 30, 1863:** Because of Confederate enslavement and killing of Black Union soldiers, U.S. government halts prisoner exchanges with Confederates. Confederacy loses manpower as a result.

**August 9, 1864:** John Wilkes Booth, actor who sympathizes with the Confederacy, begins plotting with a group of conspirators to kidnap Lincoln. His goal: To exchange Lincoln for Confederate prisoners of war.

**January 31, 1865:** Congress passes the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, outlawing slavery in all states. The amendment would be ratified on December 6, 1865.

**March 4, 1865:** Lincoln begins his second term as President of the United States and delivers his Second Inaugural Address. Booth is in the audience.

**March 17, 1865:** John Wilkes Booth and his co-conspirators attempt to kidnap President Lincoln on a trip they thought he was taking to a military hospital. Lincoln was elsewhere.

**April 9, 1865:** Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrenders to Union General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Courthouse, a symbolic ending of the Civil War.

**April 11, 1865:** Lincoln gives his last public address on the balcony of the White House where he discusses the possibility of giving African American men the right to vote. Booth is in the audience and vows to kill Lincoln.

**April 14, 1865:** John Wilkes Booth shoots President Lincoln in the back of the head using a deringer pistol.

Student Activity: Did Everyone Cry at the Assassination of President Lincoln?

**April 14, 1865:** John Wilkes Booth flees to southern Maryland, where his broken leg is set.

**April 15, 1865:** Abraham Lincoln dies at the Petersen boarding house, across the street from Ford's Theatre.

**April 26, 1865:** After a 12-day escape, John Wilkes Booth is shot by U.S. Army soldier Boston Corbett in a barn in Port Conway, Virginia.

**May 4, 1865:** After a 12-city train trip, President Abraham Lincoln's body is buried in Springfield, Illinois.

**July 7, 1865:** Trial of Lincoln assassination conspirators ends with execution of four conspirators, life sentences for three, and a six-year sentence for another.

*Turn the page....*

## Activity 2:

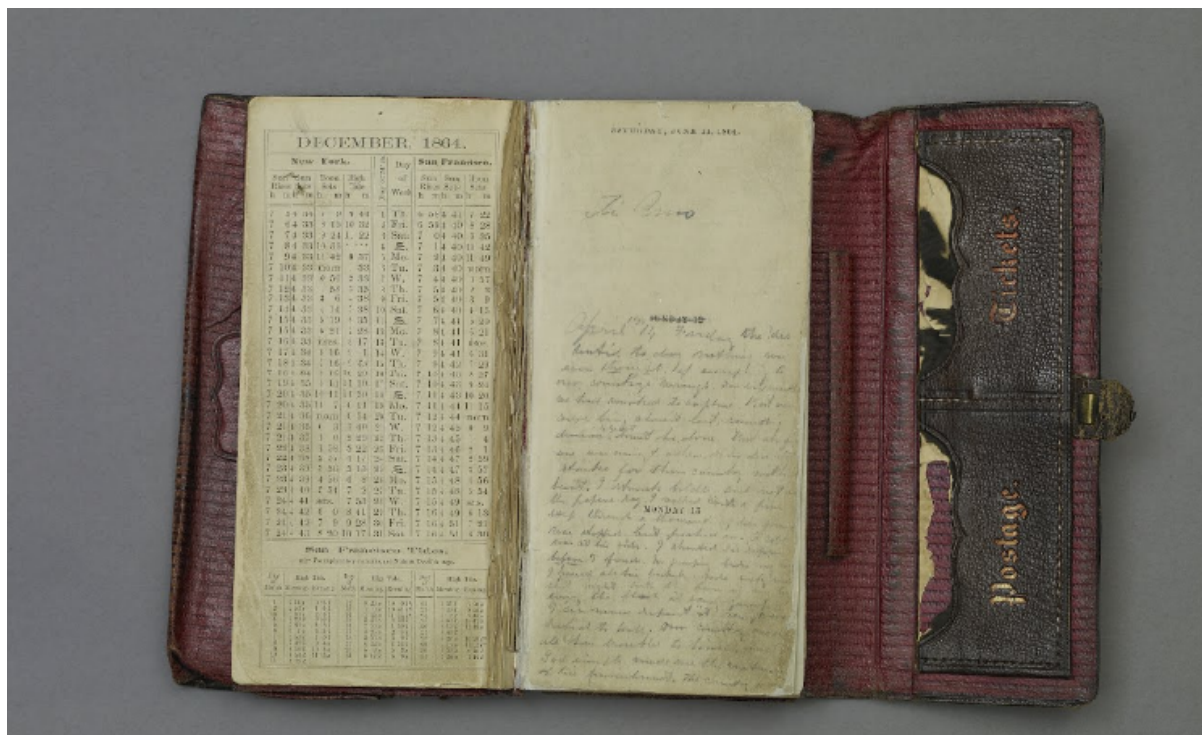
### John Wilkes Booth's Diary

After Booth refused to surrender to U.S. Army soldiers on April 26, 1865, one shot him. The soldiers retrieved many objects on Booth's body, showing how much planning he had put into his escape. He had a dagger and revolver, along with a map and compass to navigate. He left behind a diary, which gives us insight into his motives. Booth scribbled his thoughts while he hid in southern Maryland.

Read what Booth wrote about the assassination on the next page. As you read, highlight Booth's motives.

Then, use the S.O.A.P.S. Tone Analysis Guide to help you determine how Booth justified his actions.

After you have completed the Analysis Guide, identify and write down 2 to 6 motivations for killing the president you notice Booth mention in the diary.



Turn the page...

## Transcript from the Diary of John Wilkes Booth

Excerpted Entries for April 17-22, 1865 [Ford's Theatre NHS, FOTH 3221]

*Highlight Booth's motives.*

Until today nothing was ever thought of sacrificing to our country's wrongs. For six months we had worked to capture, but our cause being almost lost, something decisive and great must be done. But its failure was owing to others, who did not strike for their country with a heart. I struck boldly, and not as the papers say. I walked with a firm step through a thousand of his friends, was stopped, but pushed on. A colonel was at his side. I shouted **Sic semper** before I fired. In jumping broke my leg. I passed all his pickets, rode sixty miles that night with the bone of my leg tearing the flesh at every jump. I can never repent it, though we hated to kill. Our country owed all her troubles to **him**, and God simply made me the instrument of his punishment. The country is not what it was. This forced Union is not what I have loved. I care not what becomes of me. I have no desire to outlive my country. The night before the deed I wrote a long article and left it for one of the editors of the **National Intelligencer**, in which I fully set forth our reasons for our proceedings. He or the gov'r—[*Sic*]

After being hunted like a dog through swamps, woods, and last night being chased by gunboats till I was forced to return wet, cold, and starving, with every man's hand against me, I am here in despair. And why? For doing what **Brutus** was honored for. What made **[William] Tell** a hero? And yet I, for striking down a greater tyrant than they ever knew, am looked upon as a common cutthroat. My action was purer than either of theirs. One hoped to be great himself. The other had not only his country's but his own, wrongs to avenge. I hoped for no gain. I knew no private wrong. I struck for my country and that alone. A country that groaned beneath this tyranny, and prayed for this end, and yet now behold the cold hands they extend to me. God cannot pardon me if I have done wrong. Yet I cannot see my wrong, except in serving a degenerate people. The little, the very little, I left behind to clear my name, the Government will not allow to be printed. So ends all. For my country I have given up all that makes life sweet and holy, brought misery upon my family, and am sure there is no pardon in the Heaven for me, since man condemns me so. I have only heard of what has been done (except what I did myself), and it fills me with horror. God, try and forgive me, and bless my mother. Tonight I will once more try the river with the intent to cross. Though I have a greater desire and almost a mind to return to Washington, and in a measure clear my name - which I feel I can do. I do not repent the blow I struck. I may before my God, but not to man. I think I have done well. Though I am abandoned, with the **curse of Cain** upon me, when, if the world knew my heart, that one blow would have made me great, though I did desire no greatness. Tonight I try to escape these bloodhounds once more. Who, who can read his fate? God's will be done. I have too great a soul to die like a criminal. Oh, may He, may He spare me that, and let me die bravely. I bless the entire world. Have never hated or wronged anyone. This last was not a wrong, unless God deems it so, and it's with Him to damn or bless me. As for **this brave boy** with me, who often prays (yes, before and since) with a true and sincere heart - was it crime in him? If so, why can he pray the same?

I do not wish to shed a drop of blood, but 'I must fight the course.' 'Tis all that's left to me.

***Glossary***

*Sic Semper*: Part of the Latin phrase “Sic Semper Tyrannis” that Booth supposedly shouted when he jumped from the box to the stage at Ford’s Theatre. The phrase means “thus always to tyrants,” and is Virginia’s state motto.

*Him*: Here Booth is referring to Lincoln

*National Intelligencer*: A Washington newspaper

*Brutus*: One of the assassins of Roman leader Julius Caesar in 44 BCE, and an inspiration for Booth

*William Tell*: A Swiss folk hero known for assassinating a tyrannical leader

*Curse of Cain*: Reference to the man who, in the biblical Book of Genesis, killed his brother, then wandered the land scorned for his action

*This brave boy*: Booth is referring to David Herold, who travelled with him during his twelve-day escape.

***Turn the page...***

## S.O.A.P.S.Tone Primary Source Tool

Write your answers in the boxes.


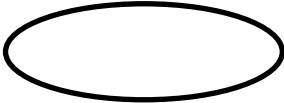




S.O.A.P.S.Tone Primary Source Tool		
S	What is the Subject?  What are the general topics/ideas?	
O	What is the Occasion?  What are the time, place, and setting of the piece?	
A	Who is the Audience?  To whom is the piece directed?	
P	What is the Purpose?  What is the reason this was written/spoken?	
S	Who is the Speaker?  Who is the voice or author?	
Tone	What is the Tone of the piece?  What is the attitude or tone of the piece?	

*Identify and write down 2 to 6 motivations for killing the president you notice Booth mention in the diary. Did you identify the same motivations from the timeline that you did from the diary? What might that tell us about what we can learn from a timeline compared with reading someone's personal writing?*

### Activity 3:

#### Responses to Lincoln's Assassination

Look at the annotation symbol guide below. Then, read the documents on the next four pages. Draw symbols around words or phrases that you want to remember from each document.

Annotation Symbol Guide	
Symbol	Concept
	This is an important detail
	This is an emotion or opinion
	This is a fact
	I have a question about this
	This reminds me of something else
	This confirms something I already thought



## Document 1: Emilie Davis Diary

Emilie Davis. "Emilie Davis Diary". *Remembering Lincoln*.

<https://rememberinglincoln.fords.org/node/549>

*Emilie Davis, a free African American living in Philadelphia, recorded what happened in Philadelphia when Lincoln was assassinated and when his funeral train passed through the city. Davis spelled many words phonetically; the transcription preserves her original spelling.*

FRIDAY, APRIL 14, 1865

to day is the day we Celebrate the soldiers Parrade a flag was presented to the reggiment by the [...] very Plesent it every body seemed to have a holiday

SATURDAY, APRIL 15, 1865

very sad newes was received this morning of the murder of the President the city is in deep mourning we had a meeting of the association

SUNDAY, APRIL 16, 1865

it Decided to PosPone the fare very fine Day everyone seems to Partake of the solemnity of the times Docto Jones spoke for us

MONDAY, APRIL 17, 1865

to day was set aPart for a general holiday but seemes to me a day of mourning i went to mr livelys then to school mr ling was not very lively

TUESDAY, APRIL 18, 1865

nothing special on home to day meeting at night not good meeting after meeting Nell and went to Sarah Shines Vincent invisible

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 19, 1865

to day is a general holiday the churches are open and the day has the apperanece of Sunday the Preisedent is conidered buried today i was out in the afternoon we Did not have church mr gibbs being away Vincent was up a little while

THURSDAY, APRIL 20, 1865

everything assumes a solemn aspect the streets look mournful the people more so i went to Mr. Lively's in the afternoon i did not get far from it rained all the afternoon and evening i spent the evening with Nellie

FRIDAY, APRIL 21, 1865

cloudy and very dark the funeral procession [procession] Pass through tomorrow i have not been out to day i am tired of the St. Vincent was up this evening he is so full of business

SATURDAY, APRIL 22, 1865

lovely morning to is the day long to be remembered i have been very busy all morning the President comes in town this afternoon i went out about 3 in the afternoon it was the gravest funeral i ever saw

SUNDAY, APRIL 23, 1865

the coffin and hearse was beautiful this morning went down to see the President but could not for the crowd Mr. Robinson spoke for us in the afternoon very interesting sermon after church Vincent and i tried to get to see the President

MONDAY, APRIL 24, 1865

i got to see him after waiting four hours and a half it was [...] a sight worth seeing very pleasant i did not to Mr. Lively we went to the concert it was very nice with one exception Lizzie [...] sing

## **Document 2: *Wisconsin Daily News***

***Daily Wisconsin News. "Racine, Wisconsin Reaction: Wisconsin Daily News".  
Remembering Lincoln. <https://rememberinglincoln.fords.org/node/923>***

*The Wisconsin Daily News reported one of many incidents of what happened in different parts of the United States when people had a different reaction than expected to Lincoln's death.*

Racine, April 15—Two men glorifying over the death of Lincoln, came near being hanged by a mob; one of them escaped and the other was rescued by the Sheriff. The one rescued took back all he had said.

### Document 3: "P.W. Oakley to Norman Henry Ives"

*P.W. Oakley. "P.W. Oakley to Norman Henry Ives". Remembering Lincoln. Web.*

<http://RememberingLincoln.Fords.org/node/1016>

*P.W. Oakley of St. Louis, Missouri, wrote this letter to Norman Henry Ives in Nashville, Tennessee.*

April 22, 1865

St. Louis Mo

Friend Ives

Dear Sir,

I just got your note of Apr. 10th. I was glad to receive a line from my brother soldier. It has been a long time since I had a line from you. I am glad that you have got around once more. I can get around very well, but my limb discharges yet. It is very sore. I am haveing [sic] a peace of bone coming out, & I hope when it gets out that it will close up. We aught [sic] to be thankful to god that we came out as well as we did, many a poor man has lost his life since this war began. What a loss we have met with. (Aughful [sic] to think of, when we think of **Uncle Abe**. & to think that it was a **Reb**. that took his life. The Rebs. have lost a good friend in the death of our **Chief Magistrate**, for he has gave the Rebs more **lenity** than **Andy Johnson** will. I say when they struck at the heart of Mr. Lincoln they struck at the heart of all loyal men in America, & I hope to god that Andy Johnson will make the head men of the south **pull hemp**. You are aware how I once felt in regard to this war. But, I say today, kill the last traitor to his country. By the way, Ives, I have got the bigist son of his age in the west. 10 months old and his weight is 40 lbs. Have you seen a bigger one than that? If so, let me know it. My wife is well. And so is my son. Ives, some day you will get your money that I owe you. I **shant** forget your kindness nor nether shall I forget that I ow you. I would like to see you & if you should come to St Louis, come and see me. Say what you are at in your next.

Yours **&c**,

P.W. Oakley

#### **Glossary**

*Uncle Abe*: President Abraham Lincoln

*Reb.*: rebel, Confederate

*Lenity*: leniency, mercy

*Andy Johnson*: Andrew Johnson, the new president following Lincoln's assassination

*Pull hemp*: Executed by hanging

*Shant*: Shall not

*&c*: Et cetera

## Document 4: Abigail M. Brook's Diary

Abigail M. Brook. "Abigail M. Brook's Diary". *Remembering Lincoln*.

<https://rememberinglincoln.fords.org/node/918>

*Abigail Brook, a teacher in Tennessee, recorded the events of her life from 1865 to 1870, including the end of the Civil War and the Lincoln assassination.*

Saturday, April 15, 1865

The day has been bright and pleasant, with the air coolish but no rain. I have not been well as usual. After dinner went up to Bishop \*\*Soule's\*\* to see Mrs. Connell a little while. The startling news has been received that Abraham Lincoln died this morning, by the hands of an assassin who shot him in the Theatre. Their act **evinces** the terrible condition in which our country is placed. The deed was done no doubt by a person who had suffered from injustice in some way and the memory of our wrongs **goaded** him to desperation. "Princes may be controlled, when they pass the bounds of reason."

Sunday, April 16, 1865

The day is bright and beautiful. I have spent most of it in writing to my father. I am thinking only of Lincoln's death. Yesterday they were in the midst of celebrating the surrender of Lee's army and when in the **height of their mirth** there came a shock equal to **Belchezzar's impious feast** when the hand writing appeared on the wall. The joy was turned into mourning. The merriment into sadness. A rash and heartless people is politically short-lived: where is the **magnanimity** which should characterize a great and mighty nation, to be preparing celebrations at the public expense, to exalt over a fallen foe.

Monday, April 17, 1865

My scholars are all here with the addition of a new one. I am not discouraged in regard to my school, but I feel that the South is the subjects of a relentless foe from whose **magnanimity** or **clemency** they may expect but little. I fear plans and schemes **replete** with bitterness, tyranny, and **usurpation**, will be laid by that deep, dark, scheming man Andy Johnson which will reduce all his foes to the condition of **vassals** to be governed by the right of conquest and not the laws of humanity. Perhaps he may profit by the example of his predecessor, who has characterized his movement by constant acts of tyranny.

Tuesday, April 18, 1865

The war is nominally over is the exclamation upon all sides. A hasty peace will be patched up, with a tottering foundation, and war will again **deluge** our land in blood. If Andy would repeal all these obnoxious acts passed by Lincoln, reversing those Abolition measures on granting to the South her inalienable rights, then would he be received as a benefactor. The dismemberment of the Southern army has not changed the materials of which it is composed and the rebellion yet lives although its pulsations are feeble. The task masters had better be lenient in their moves.

Wednesday, April 19, 1865

The condition of our country is all I have to trouble me now. I think the death of Lincoln at this time is a **retributive** rebuke to those who were **felicitating** over the misfortunes of a people whose love of country amounted to enthusiasm, personified who scorned submission to a man who was not their choice and whose name since has election has been a synonym of usurpation, except a short-time time before his death a slight streak of magnanimity displayed itself after the surrender of Lee's army, together with terms of **capitulation**, **stipulated** by him.

### ***Glossary***

*evinces*: Shows evidence of

*goaded*: Pushed, inspired

*height of their mirth*: Peak of their vengeful celebration

*Belshazzar's impious feast*: Biblical story from the Book of Daniel, in which the last king of Babylon sees writing on the wall foretelling his doom

*Magnanimity*: A generosity, especially toward a defeated opponent

*Clemency*: Mercy, especially from punishment

*Replete*: Full of

*Usurpation*: Overthrowing, taking power

*Vassals*: Subjects of a feudal lord or monarch

*Deluge*: Saturate, flood, overrun

*Retributive*: In a spirit of revenge

*Felicitating*: Celebrating

*Capitulation*: Surrender

*Stipulated*: Given and agreed to

***Turn the page...***

## **Activity 4:**

### **Writing About the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln**

*Brainstorm, then write your own diary entry or letter as if you were hearing about the Lincoln assassination in real time (in 1865), explaining your reactions to the news, based on the documents you have read.*

*Before writing your letter or diary entry, answer these questions to help you develop your argument:*

1. From what point of view do I write this letter? (How old? A boy or a girl? In what state do I live?)

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2. Did anyone in “my” family fight in the war? On the Union or the Confederate side?

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3. How will “my” life change because of the assassination?

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4. To whom am I writing? What do I want to tell them?

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***Turn the page...***

**Your Turn**

*Write your letter or diary entry below.*