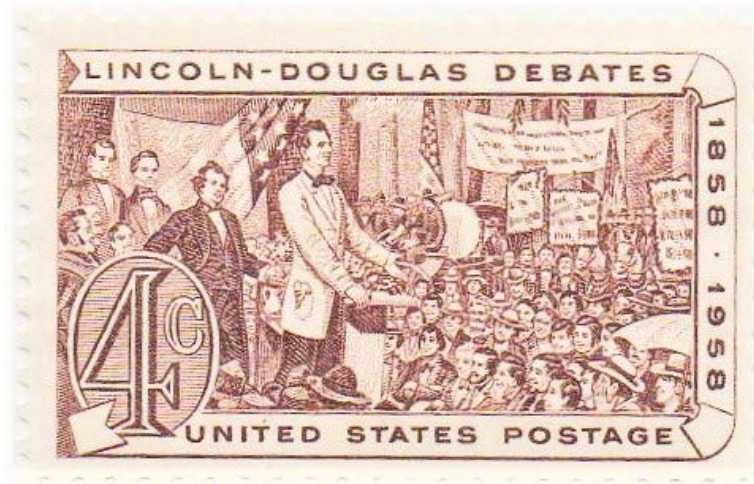


The Lincoln-Douglas Debates

Name \_\_\_\_\_



In 1858, Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas engaged in a series of seven debates in the congressional districts of Illinois over the issue of slavery. Both were vying for the Illinois Senate seat to be elected by the state legislature. Lincoln was an anti-slavery Republican and Douglas, nicknamed the "Little Giant" for his small stature but powerful voice, was the pro-slavery Democrat. Although Douglas would ultimately win the Senate, the debates helped propel Lincoln to national prominence.

The major theme of the debate was the extension of slavery into new territories. In 1854, the passing of the Kansas-Nebraska Act (authored by Douglas) allowed for popular sovereignty in the new territories. Popular sovereignty meant that residents of a state or territory could vote whether to allow slavery.

Throughout the seven debates, Douglas claimed that Lincoln was a "dangerous radical" for his stance against popular sovereignty. He frequently referenced Lincoln's famous Republican nomination speech in which he claimed "a government cannot permanently endure half slave, half free," in accusing him of threatening the stability of the nation.

Lincoln attacked the "monstrous injustice" of slavery and referenced the murderous events in Kansas as evidence that popular sovereignty was harmful to the nation. He claimed that "the crisis would be reached and passed when slavery was put in the course of ultimate extinction." Despite his stance against slavery, the debates revealed that Lincoln did not necessarily consider Blacks his equal. He denied he was an abolitionist in saying "And in as much as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior, and I as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race."

Despite winning the popular vote for the senate seat by more than 30,000 votes, it was Douglas who prevailed because he won the electoral vote. During the debates, however, Lincoln's tough questioning of Douglas caused a split in Democratic Party resulting in Lincoln's victory over Douglas in the Presidential Election of 1860.

**1. In 1858, Lincoln and Douglas...**

- A. were hoping to become the next president.
- B. were hoping to become senator.
- C. were hoping to end slavery.
- D. were against popular sovereignty.

**2. Despite his setback against Douglas, Lincoln...**

- A. became senator of Illinois.
- B. rose to national prominence.
- C. won the Lincoln-Douglas debates.
- D. became president in 1858.

**3. Circle all of the following that ARE NOT true.**

- A. Lincoln believed slavery should end and claimed he was an abolitionist
- B. Lincoln believed that slavery should end and all races were equal
- C. Douglas believed in popular sovereignty and that Lincoln was a radical
- D. Douglas and Lincoln agreed on popular sovereignty

**4. Which of the following best defines Lincoln's quote as used below?**

... "a government cannot permanently endure half slave, half free."

- A. The government will succeed if both sides agree to be half slave, half free
- B. Good governments do not last forever
- C. A government will fail if it continues to allow slavery
- D. A government will fail if there are two sides that are not united

**5. What does the author seem surprised about?**

- A. That Lincoln did not consider Blacks to be equal to whites
- B. That Stephen A. Douglas won the electoral vote for the senate
- C. That Stephen A. Douglas was called "the Little Giant"
- D. That Lincoln considered slavery to be an injustice

**6. For which of the following questions would "residents of the state vote on whether or not to allow slavery" be the answer?**

- A. What was the major theme of the Lincoln-Douglas Debates?
- B. Why did Douglas refer to Lincoln as a dangerous radical?
- C. What is popular sovereignty?
- D. What was Lincoln's stance on popular sovereignty?

**7. What was an effect of the Lincoln Douglas debate?**

- A. The split in the Democratic Party
- B. Lincoln won the popular vote by more than 30,000 votes
- C. The stability of the nation was threatened
- D. Lincoln would eventually become Senator