

LESSON 2: LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATES

GRADE LEVEL 5-8

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Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum

Objectives

- Identify the two men who participated in the debates and why they were debating.
- Identify at least two cities in which the debates took place.
- Define the term "debate" and be familiar with its structure.
- Define the term "popular sovereignty."
- Identify slavery as a key issue in the debates.
- Explain Lincoln's stance on slavery in the debates.
- Explain Douglas' stance on slavery in the debates.



INTRODUCTION

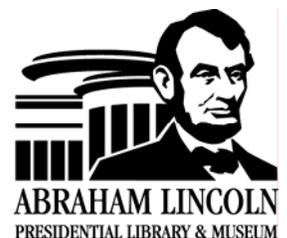
The Lincoln-Douglas Debates were a series of seven political debates between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas who were both campaigning for a seat in the U.S. Senate in 1858. Although Lincoln lost the election, the debates propelled him into a national spotlight and helped him secure the nomination for President in 1860. Slavery was the main issue of the debates and reflected the viewpoints that divided the nation. Lincoln opposed the expansion of slavery, but believed that it could not be banned from states where it already existed. Douglas advocated each state's right to choose whether it became a slave state or a free state.

PROCEDURE

1. Assign the "Debate Vocabulary List" to your students and have them look up the names and terms and create definitions for each word.
2. Divide the class into five teams and provide each team with a copy of *Lincoln-Douglas Debates*, by Brendan January and a copy of the "Lincoln-Douglas Debates Bubble Map."
3. Using information they found in completing their vocabulary list and in the book, have students complete the Bubble Map. Students will fill in what Lincoln believed, what Douglas believed and what beliefs the two had in common. Higher level students may wish to read the actual transcripts of the debates.
4. Discuss their findings as a class. Brainstorm who in America might support Lincoln's view and who might support Douglas. Think about Northerners, Southerners, East Coast, Westerners, farmers, city folk, religious groups, etc. Who might these groups support in the debates?
5. Divide the class into the groups identified in step 4. Have each group make posters or placards supporting their candidate.
6. Using various online resources or books and articles from the school library, have students map the debate cities on the "Mapping the Debates Activity Sheet."
7. Have students plan a visit to the debate towns. Students may work alone or in groups. Using various online resources, research what there is to see in each town, how the towns commemorate the debates, places to stay and restaurants to eat at. Determine the mileage to each town and the best way to travel there (car, bus, train, plane, etc.), how long it will take to get there, how many days you should stay, and how much money the trip might cost.

Materials

- "Debate Vocabulary List" (in this lesson plan).
- "Lincoln-Douglas Debates Bubble Map" (in this lesson plan).
- Multiple copies of *Lincoln-Douglas Debates*, by Brendan January found in the "Lincoln Biography Reading Kit" or similar resource.
- "Mapping the Debates Activity Sheet" (in this lesson plan).
- Various online resources or books and articles from the school library.
- Transcripts of the debates found at <http://www.nps.gov/archive/liho/debates.htm> (optional).



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ONLINE RESOURCES

Illinois History Teacher, Illinis Historic Preservation Agency: Lincoln-Douglas Debates Lesson Plan and Documents

<http://www.lib.niu.edu/ipo/2001/ibt820111.html>

Lincoln Home National Historic Site: Lincoln-Douglas Debates, including transcriptions of each debate.

<http://www.nps.gov/archive/liho/debates.htm>

Lincoln/Net, Northwestern Illinois University: Lincoln-Douglas Debates of 1858, including lesson plans, transcriptions and interactive maps.

<http://lincoln.lib.niu.edu/lincolndouglas/>

Debate Vocabulary List

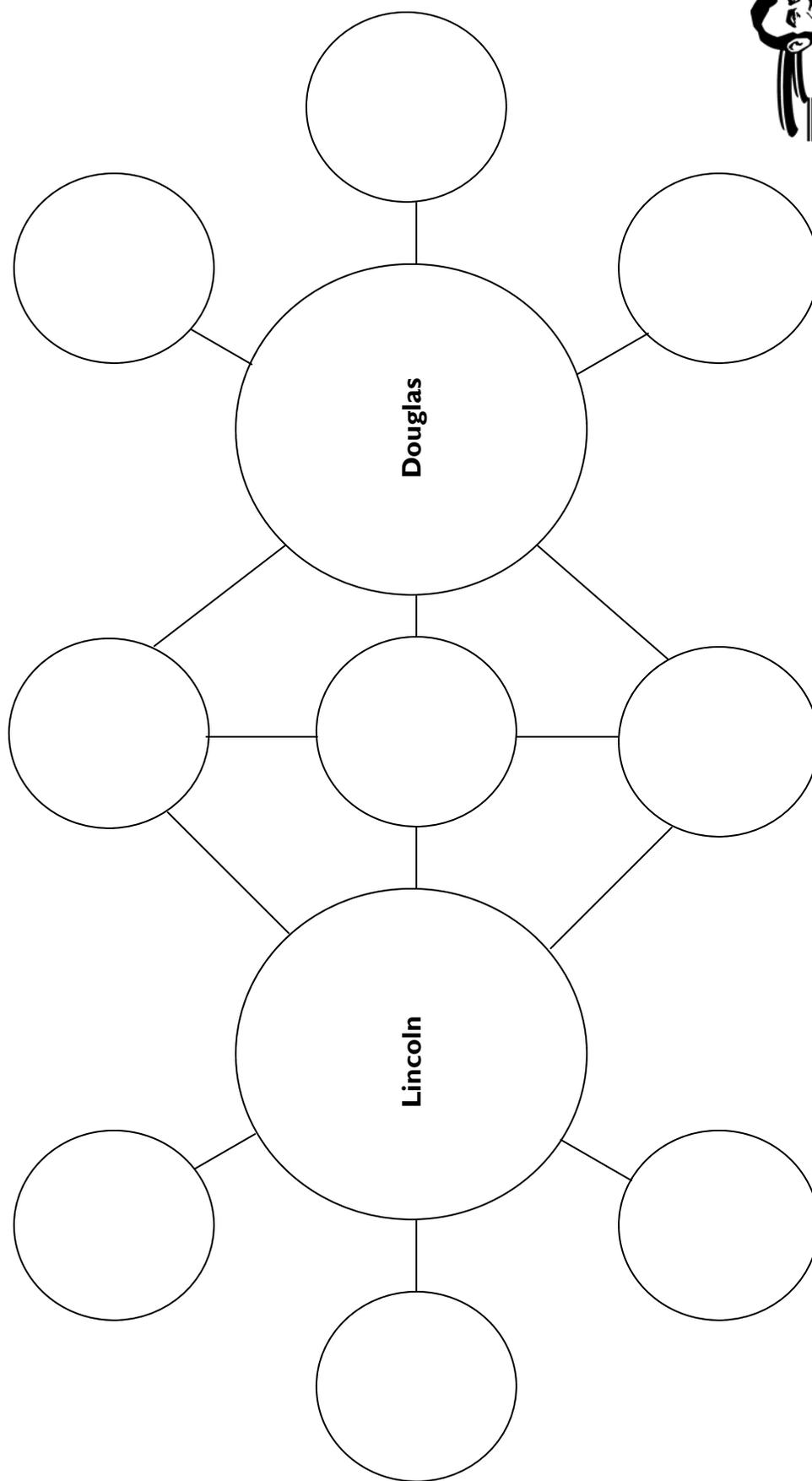
Debate
Candidate
Missouri Compromise
Immoral
Legislature
Supreme Court
Kansas-Nebraska Act
Popular Sovereignty
Dred Scott
Abolitionist
Democrat
Republican
Freeport Doctrine
Territory





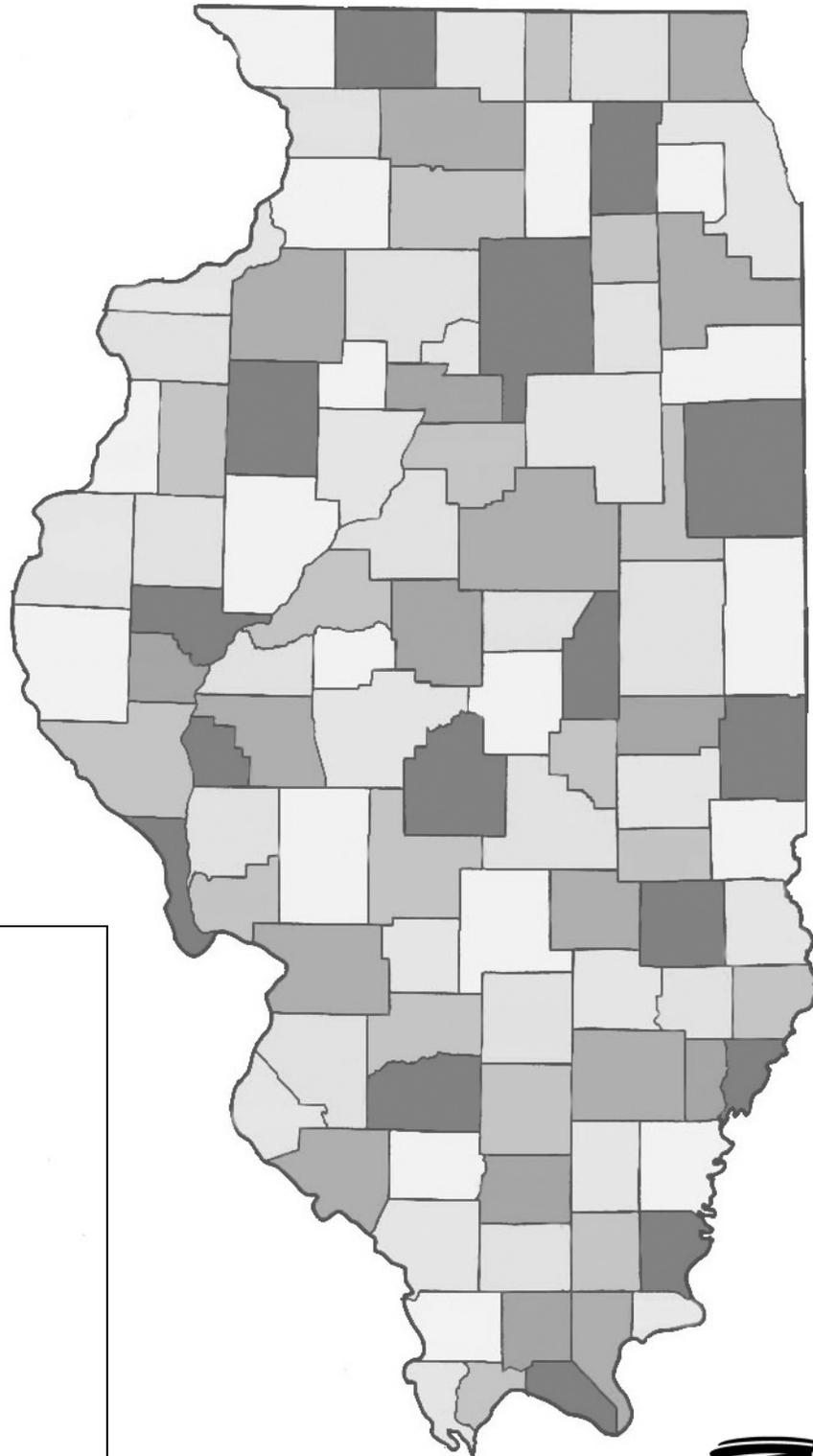
Lincoln-Douglas Debates Bubble Map

Name: _____



Mapping the Debates Activity Sheet

Name: _____



Legend

