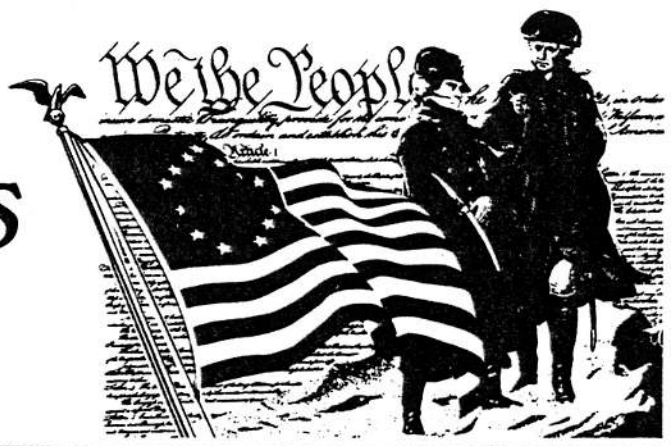


The Family Heritage Series

A weekly discussion of Americanist truths and traditions for those "heirs of all the ages" who will have to preserve that most important inheritance of all — freedom. Produced by the Movement To Restore Decency.



Volume II

Lesson Sixty-Eight

The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln

LESSON IDEA

To discuss the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, and to show it was not the work of a "lone fanatic" but of a conspiracy whose purpose and leaders are still unknown.

PREPARATION

How many American presidents have been assassinated? Who were the assassins? Were they involved in conspiracies? Check the library or encyclopedia for the answers. Be prepared for a discussion. Also, read "During The Week" and prepare the "time line" suggested.

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IN THE DIMLY LIT HALLWAY of an empty theatre, a handsome young man quietly and carefully drilled a hole through the door leading to the Presidential box. He peered through the hole to make certain he could see the rocking chair which had been placed there for the President of the United States; satisfied, he scooped up the wood shavings which had fallen to the floor, pocketed them, and left.

The man was John Wilkes Booth, an actor who was the romantic idol of hundreds of theatregoers. The place was Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C.; the date was April 14, 1865 — only five days after the end of one of the bloodiest and most tragic wars in American history.

Booth planned to assassinate President Abraham Lincoln, boldly and dramatically, while the Washington audience who had come to laugh over the comic lines and stage antics of the players in *Our American Cousin* watched in horror. It was not intended to be a suicidal effort, or even a final gesture of revenge against the Commander-in-Chief of the Northern

Army who forced the South to its knees. Booth had every intention of escaping unpunished, and the conspirators with whom he worked planned to assist him in every way.

Months earlier this same group had planned to kidnap the President from his box in Ford's Theatre and take him to Richmond, Virginia, the capital of the Confederacy. He was to be bound and gagged, lowered from his box to the stage, spirited out the rear door of the theatre, and thrust into a wagon bound for Richmond. It might have worked, except for one thing — the President did not attend the theatre as planned the night of January 18. The conspirators scattered and waited for another opportunity.

It came in March with the announcement that the President would attend a play, *Still Waters Run Deep*, at the Soldier's Home three miles from Washington. Again, the conspirators planned carefully, then waited patiently; but when the Presidential carriage arrived at the appointed hour, the man who stepped out was not Abraham Lincoln.

[Optional question for discussion: Many persons naturally prefer to believe that any murder of a President, or a Cabinet officer, or another important official, is the work of an insane person, rather than the result of a carefully planned conspiracy by brilliant and ruthless men. But when such a horrifying event occurs anywhere in the world, is it usually planned by a group, or is it the demented act of one deranged person? Offer examples and reasons for your answer.]

Lincoln was well aware of the constant danger. In fact, he kept an envelope in his desk labelled

