

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-Four

Abraham Lincoln

LESSON IDEA

To increase understanding of the issues that divided the North and the South, and ultimately led to the War Between the States, by learning about the debates between Lincoln and Douglas, and Lincoln's subsequent election as President.

PREPARATION

Review Lesson #63, particularly the discussion of slavery in the Western territories and the Compromise of 1850, so that you can fill in any memory gaps family members may have as we discuss the Lincoln-Douglas debates and the events leading to the Southern secession from the Union.

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«**B**ORN, February 12, 1809, in Hardin County, Kentucky. Education defective. Profession a lawyer. Have been a captain of volunteers in the Black Hawk War. Postmaster at a very small office. Four times a member of Illinois Legislature. And was a member of the lower house of Congress." This is how Abraham Lincoln described himself to the voters of Illinois in 1858 when he was seeking election to the United States Senate. His critics, undoubtedly would have added the following: A gangly, awkward fellow with a sallow, wrinkled face, coarse dark hair, and a large crooked nose. A failure at business. A political reject who had lost races for the Illinois Legislature, the United States Congress, the United States Senate, and the Vice Presidency. He had even failed in his bid for an appointment to the United States Land Office.

Lincoln's Democratic opponent was the in-

cumbent Senator, Stephen Douglas, a popular leader who certainly could be forgiven for failing to take his opponent seriously. Douglas was a Congressman of note whose name had made headlines in newspapers from East to West. He had worked hard and long in the Senate to find a solution to the problem of slavery in the new territories of the West. He thought the answer was popular sovereignty — which meant letting the inhabitants of each territory determine by majority vote whether or not to permit slave ownership in their state. During the Senate battle over the Compromise of 1850, Douglas had said:

"The position that I have ever taken, has been that this and all other questions relating to the domestic affairs and domestic policy of the Territories, ought to be left to the decision of the people themselves; and that we ought to be content with whatever way they may decide the question, because they have a much deeper interest in these matters than we have, and know much better what institutions suit them than we, who have never been there, can decide for them. Why except African slavery? If the inhabitants are competent to govern themselves upon all other subjects and in reference to all other descriptions of property, — if they are competent to make laws and determine the relation between husband and wife, and parent and child, and municipal laws affecting the rights and property of citizens generally, they are competent, also, to make laws to govern themselves in relation to slavery and negroes."

