K-2 EDITION · CLASSROOM

1860

Abraham Lincoln vs John C. Breckinridge

A 20-minute lesson on the 1860 U.S. presidential election. Includes lesson plan, student worksheet, answer key, and discussion prompts.

ERA Civil War	ELECTORAL VOTES 303 total
WINNER Abraham Lincoln (Republican) · 180 EV	RUNNER-UP John C. Breckinridge (Southern Democratic) · 72 EV
KEY ISSUE Slavery in the territories; Southern secession threats; preservation of the Union	TURNOUT 81.8%

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1. Cover
2. Story (with a picture)
3. Three questions
4. Teacher notes

1860

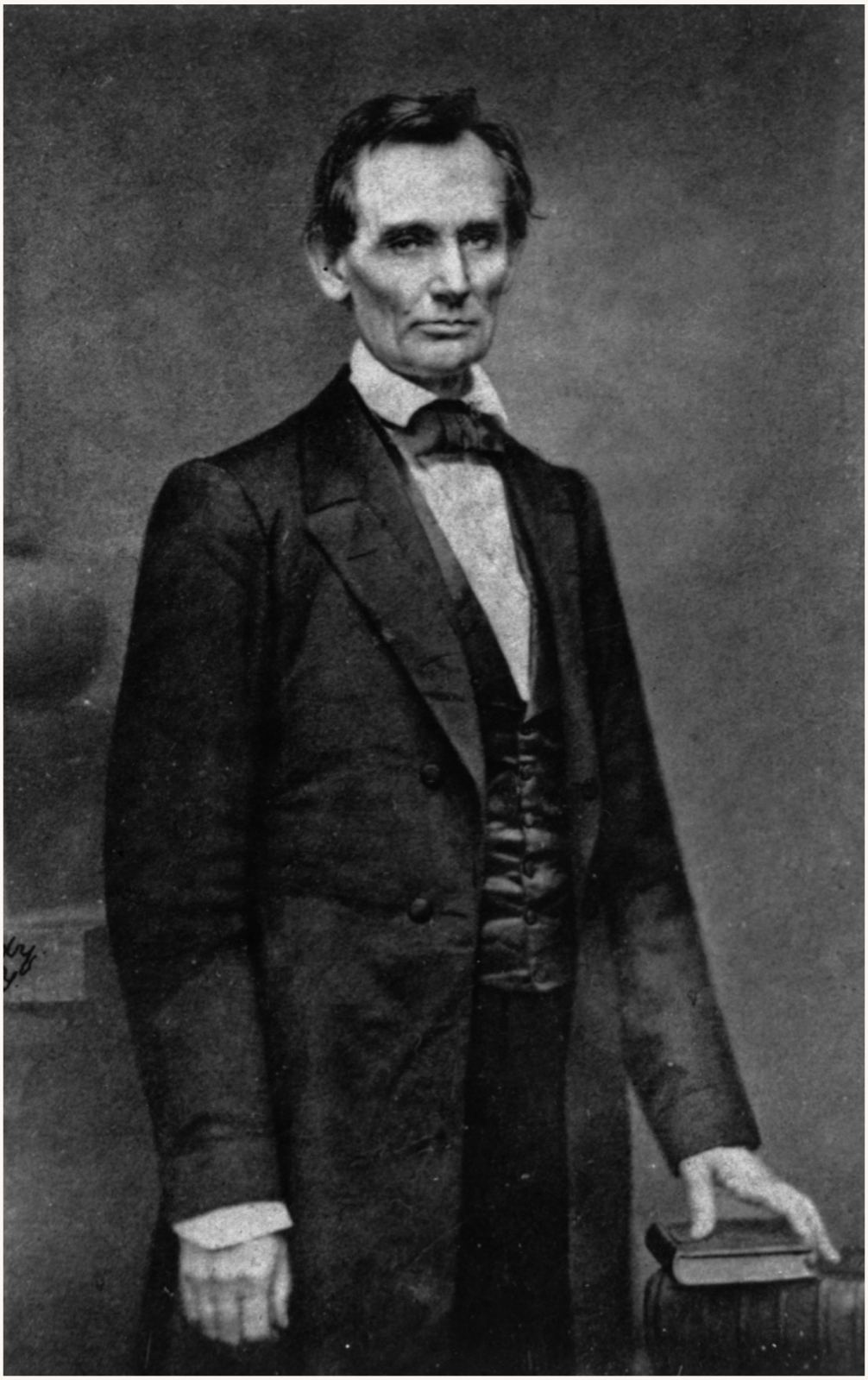
A long time ago, in 1860, the United States was getting ready to choose a new president. Look at the man in the picture. His name was Abraham Lincoln, and he wanted to be the president.

But the country had a big problem. People in the South used enslaved workers on their farms. Enslaved people could not choose where to live or where to work. Many people in the North said this was wrong. Many people in the South said it should not change.

Abraham Lincoln thought slavery was wrong. He said slavery should not spread into new lands in the West.

One winter morning, a photographer named Mr. Brady took this picture of Mr. Lincoln. A few hours later, Mr. Lincoln gave a famous speech in New York City. Later, Mr. Lincoln said that speech and this picture helped make him president.

In November, four men ran for president. Abraham Lincoln won. But many people in the South were so upset that they decided their states should leave the country. A few months later, a big war started. We call it the Civil War. Mr. Lincoln worked to keep the country together.



Abraham Lincoln, photographed by Mathew Brady in New York City on February 27, 1860 — the same day he gave his famous Cooper Union speech.
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS / MATHEW BRADY (C. 1823–1896)

Let's talk about the story

1.

What was the man in the picture trying to become in 1860? Say it out loud.

2.

Point to one thing in the picture that tells you it was taken a long time ago.

3.

What was the big disagreement that the country had in 1860?

Warm-up (5 min)

Before reading: look at the picture. Who do you think this man is?

What kind of person does he seem to be?

Answer key

1.

He wanted to be the president of the United States.

Lincoln was running for president as the Republican candidate in 1860. He won the election in November.

2.

Accept any specific observation: the black-and-white photo, the formal suit and tie, the beardless face, the formal studio setting, the old-fashioned hairstyle, the way he is posed standing still. Award credit for any verbal answer tied to a specific feature.

K-2 students need a concrete prompt and a low bar. Anything they can point to and describe should earn full credit.

3.

Whether enslaved people in the South should keep being enslaved, or whether slavery should end. The North and the South disagreed.

The age-appropriate framing is: people in one part of the country thought one thing, people in another part thought the opposite. The deeper economic and constitutional layers can wait for later grades.