

Making Memories Real: Lincoln Artifacts and Monuments
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Abstract:

In this lesson, the issue of how to memorialize the people of our past is examined, specifically, Abraham Lincoln. Who, why and how we memorialize will be explored. The necessity of peoples to connect memory with objects and physical places will be studied.

Essential questions/enduring understandings:

- What purposes do monuments serve?
- Why do people hold onto historic objects?
- What meaning do our historic relics have?
- Who decides what relics have value?
- How much contact must a historic figure have with an object before it has historic value?
- Is it important to preserve historic places?

Assessment:

The teacher will utilize feedback from class discussion and answers on worksheets to analyze student progress.

Setting the Purpose:

Students will brainstorm when and why objects become artifacts as well as the qualities of monuments and that those monuments convey historical interpretations. Students will sort through local Central Illinois Lincoln artifacts, monuments and places in order to critically assess why these particular things were kept or constructed. Students will self-reflect on the importance of artifacts and monuments in their own life.

Duration:

2 to 3 class periods

Procedure:

Part 1

-In this section, students will explore why monuments are erected and why artifacts of people are kept.

- At the start of class, have students brainstorm a list of American monuments around the country. Explain that all monuments are made to communicate a message about that person or event;

- monuments then contain opinions either of one or many people regarding the thing they are memorializing. For each, ask students to discuss what is the meaning or significance behind the marker.
- Explain that in today's lesson, the class will look at how people memorialize important people through the things that they keep and the monuments they erect.
 - Distribute [The Things We Keep Worksheet](#). You may also choose to do this as a class brainstorm. Students brainstorm what things qualify as artifacts, and important things to consider when constructing monuments.

Part 2

-In this section, students will examine local Lincoln artifacts (and national ones, if the teacher chooses) and try to formulate answers as to why the artifacts were kept and what messages the monuments about Lincoln were intended to give.

- Explain that there are many Lincoln artifacts that have been kept. In Central Illinois, and the places Lincoln lived and worked, artifacts are especially important. Why do students think this might be true?
- You may either project or print and distribute the following documents concerning artifact collection and monuments erected in Champaign County connected to Abraham Lincoln: [1880 Thesis and Abstract](#), [DAR Circuit Marker](#), [Lincoln Centenary Program](#), [Lincoln Circuit Ride](#), [Tolono Marker Rededication Program](#), [West Urbana Case](#), [1993 Rediscovered Records](#), [Boy Scout Circuit Trail](#), [Megalith Monument](#), [Taft Statue 1](#), [Tolono Marker Photo](#), [Fraternity House Relics](#), [Kuhn Book Article](#), [Land. Letter](#), [Lincoln Spit on This Brick](#), [Lincoln Table](#), [Main St. House](#), [Rantoul Lincoln Collector](#), [Urbana Exhibit](#), [Lincoln Signature](#). Certainly, teachers may adapt the amount of sources, or choose other sources from www.americanhistoryteachers.org and may want to accentuate this collection with artifacts held nationally (and national monuments): [American Treasures of the Library of Congress: Artifacts of Lincoln's Assassination](#), [Abraham Lincoln from the Smithsonian](#), [The Lincoln Memorial](#), [Lincoln Tomb Photo Tour from Abraham Lincoln Online](#) are just a few.
- Distribute [Lincoln's Memory: Artifacts and Monuments Worksheet](#). You may choose to have students work in teams in order to examine all the documents, or have individuals pick documents to analyze for this worksheet. Students should focus in on why the artifact was kept or monument made, why it was important to the

- person who kept or made it, and weigh whether they as students feel it was important to keep this item.
- Discuss the items from the worksheet as a class. Do students feel that artifacts collected in this area should stay with the person who found it or go to a museum?
 - Finish the session with a final question. How is memory connected to real items? Who gives value to these real items?

Analysis of local primary sources:

Students will use the following to guide their analysis:

- [Lincoln's Memory: Artifacts and Monuments Worksheet.](#)

Ties to National primary source or sources:

Teachers may optionally choose to mix some national Lincoln artifacts from the Smithsonian Collection, as well as the Lincoln Memorial and Lincoln's Tomb as a part of the analysis on how we memorialize Lincoln.

Attachments:

- [The Things We Keep Worksheet.](#)
- [Lincoln's Memory: Artifacts and Monuments Worksheet.](#)

[Ties to Illinois State Learning Standards](#)